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William Morris Society in the United States Newsletter January 1993

ON TO TORONTO: MLA 1993

For the 1993 Modern Language Association Convention, to be held 27–30 December in Toronto, Canada, we will return to our usual practice of having two scholarly sessions. The first topic, "Imperialism and William Morris," can be interpreted in a broad way, taking into account art and literature as well as politics. The second subject, "William Morris and Canada," has been chosen in the hope that some of our Canadian confreres will participate. As always papers (15 minutes in length) are welcomed from non-academics, for whom we can arrange special entrée to the convention. Proposals should be received by the session chairs no later than 15 March: "Imperialism" to Florence Boos, Department of English, University of Iowa, Iowa City, IA 52242; "Canada" to Pedro Beade, Department of History, Bryant College, Smithfield, RI 02917.

If there is enough interest--and provided transportation can be arranged--the Society envisions a trip to Ottawa to see "The Earthly Paradise: William Morris in Canada," which will be at the National Gallery of Canada until early January 1994. This major exhibition, in part arranged by our member Carole Silver, comprises several hundred items designed by and relating to Morris and his circle.

REPORT ON 1992 MLA IN NEW YORK

About thirty members and friends attended the business meeting/social gathering at the Grolier Club on 28 December. There was much discussion of future plans. One ambitious suggestion was to have a conference and exhibition to mark the centenary of Morris's death (1996). Several potential venues will be approached, including universities and libraries. We also considered various ways to increase membership, with the result that the Society experiment in paid advertising will continue in 1993, along with a concerted effort at the distribution of flyers and forms and the use of mailing lists. The funds for these endeavors will come in part from the increase in membership dues approved last year--\$20.00 per year in 1993 (the form will come from London). Finally, the present governing board was re-elected. The members are: Mark Samuels Lasner, Florence Boos, Hartley Spatt (secretary-treasurer), Pamela Bracken Wiens, Frank Sharp, and Mark Burger.

On the next day, 29 December, the Society's cash bar at the New York Hilton, headquarters of the MLA convention, attracted a smaller but talkative and congenial crowd.

This year's single panel of papers, on "William Morris and North America," chaired by Pamela Bracken Wiens (Catholic University of America), was held on the afternoon of Wednesday, 30 December. Though this was at the virtual conclusion of the convention we had a surprisingly good attendance (about 25) which included quite a number of local members. There were three speakers.

Charlotte Oberg (University of Richmond) spoke first, on "Elbert Hubbard and William Morris." In her talk, subtitled "Socialism Made Profitable," she explored the ways in which the "Fra" of East Aurora integrated aspects of Morris's--and the Arts and Crafts movement's--ideas, practices, and designs into his own highly successful venture in which he managed to sound Socialist and advocate hand-craftsmanship while at the same time extolling the virtues of capitalism and kowtowing to business leaders such as Henry Ford and John D. Rockefeller. Professor Oberg provided a biographical account of Hubbard's rags-to-riches, love-affair ridden life and showed slides of the wares produced--many of them imitative of Morris--at the still-surviving Roycroft "campus" of craftsmen-built buildings. She has sent the following abstract:

Colorful, contentious, controversial, Elbert Hubbard, the "Sage of East Aurora," was the most famous American follower of the Arts and Crafts movement. Hubbard regarded himself as a disciple of William Morris, whom he claimed to have met in the early 1890s, and today, Hubbard's turn-of-the-century artists' community, the Roycrofters of East Aurora, is routinely described as an important American manifestation of Morris's influence in the areas of book-making and furniture design. Further, during Hubbard's lifetime, the Roycroft shops were thought, erroneously, to constitute a Morris-inspired socialist experiment and, in fact, the Roycrofters are still sometimes described as having been a commune or semi-commune. This misconception is the result of Hubbard's prolonged and rather confusing flirtation with the socialist movement at a time when he was one of the most effective spokesmen big business ever had. Hubbard's ability to keep both American capitalists and socialists convinced that he was one of them is not the least amazing accomplishment of this audacious journalist, entrepreneur, and showman.

In "Scattered Leaves: Morris's Men in America and the Polemical Magazines" John P. Roche (Michigan State University) dealt with a whole group of disparate Americans who were influenced by Morris--the writers and editors of several Arts and Crafts periodicals:

William Morris's stature as both a leader of the Arts and Crafts movement and the socialist camp made him an appealing figure to forward-thinking Americans of various stripes. In addition, Morris's experiments in self-publishing encouraged the creation of small presses in America which published books, pamphlets, and magazines to spread the gospel of liberated work. Enthusiasts like Gustav Stickley, Leonard Abbott, Herbert S. Stone, and Elbert Hubbard printed and/or edited numerous publications, many of them hand-sewn and embellished, which quoted and invoked Morris for enterprises that tended to wander further and further from Morris's original beliefs. Their discourse was largely dependent on small magazines which combined literary offerings and crafts features with coverage of radical issues and quasi-radical "freethinking." In the pages of such magazines can be traced a contentious group that might be called, oxymoronically, a polemical community. Yet social occasions, joint subscriptions or "clubbing," shared advertisements, and the migration of editors and writers from one publication to another helped bind them as a community, even while their disputes over dogma grew.

Several figures can illustrate the divergent forks taken by Morris's admirers: Horace Traubel, friend of Whitman and editor of "Artsman" from the Rose Valley crafts community; Parker Secombe, acerbic editor of Chicago magazines "For People Who Think"; and Frank Lloyd Wright, frequent contributor to Arts and Crafts magazines at the turn of the century, and later editor of several magazines produced by his Taliesin Fellowship.

Another such figure, notable for the discrepancy between his importance then and obscurity now, was Oscar Lovell Triggs, founder of the Saugatuck Press and editor of the "Bulletin of the Morris Society of Chicago" (later "To-Morrow," then, significantly, "Triggs Magazine"). Triggs was an instructor at the University of Chicago who wrote on Browning and Whitman, and edited the 1892 deathbed edition of *Leaves of Grass*. He was deprived of his post after gaining national notoriety for questioning conventional pieties and advocating free love, free verse, and socialism. Triggs at first only split with Morris over the question of the machine's role in artistic production, but he would eventually lead the American Arts and Crafts movement into a full embrace of capitalism.

The session concluded with Sandi Wisenberg's portrayal, "Miss Emma Lazarus Reports on her Visit to William Morris." Suitably attired in an ankle-hiding Victorian dress, Wisenberg began with an autobiographical account of her (Lazarus's) family background and literary connections before recounting, through extracts from a diary and a published article, her 1883 visit to Morris at Merton Abbey. The following abstract only hints at what was an original, charming, and entertaining performance:

Remembered today for the lines gracing the Statue of Liberty, Emma Lazarus was one of the pre-eminent poets and essayists of her day. Encouraged early by Ralph Waldo Emerson, she was widely published and met and corresponded with other leading lights of the day--from Robert Browning to Henry George. In 1883 she visited William Morris at Merton Abbey in Surrey and was impressed by the humaneness of his model factory. Morris explained profit-sharing, his use of natural fabrics and dyes, and his philosophy: "I do not want art for a few, any more than education for a few or freedom for a few. The two writers had much in common; her work on behalf of immigrant Eastern European Jews had

made her an agitator for their betterment, which included integration into society through labor. She had written in a long essay in the *American Hebrew*, 1882&endash;3: "Antipathy to manual labor is one of the great social diseases of our age and country." She also had a lively interest in exploring just what democracy was about, and the art that sprang from it.

In this presentation I will *BE* Miss Lazarus, reporting on her visit to Surrey, her impressions of Morris and his philosophy and his works, and reading some excerpts of her article, "A Day in Surrey with William Morris," published in the *Century Magazine* in July 1886. The audience will get a sense of how Morris appeared to a United States contemporary, and how he was presented to American readers a few months after the Haymarket Riot, which served to tarnish the image of socialism in this country.

THE TABLES TURNED

Ohio State University Press has tentatively agreed to publish the Society's edition of "The Tables Turned." Morris's play, which has been unavailable since the issue of May Morris's "William Morris: Artist, Writer, Socialist" in the 1930s, will be introduced and annotated by Pamela Bracken Wiens of Catholic University. We expect the publication process to take about a year; full details will follow in future issues of the "Newsletter."

MORRIS GOES "ON-LINE"

As many readers know, this "Newsletter" is printed in ITC Golden, a commercial digitization of the first typeface Morris designed for the Kelmscott Press. Now two additional computer versions of Kelmscott typography are available, an adaptation of the Troy typeface and a set of decorated initial letters. Both are "shareware" which can be "downloaded" from the file "libraries" of Compuserve, the international bulletin board system. (If you're not following this, go on to the next paragraph.) Though "Kelmscott," described by its maker, Ragnarok, as an "elegant medieval style used by William Morris in his Kelmscott edition of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*," has its merits it bears, sadly, all too little connection to Troy. The numbers are wrong, for one thing, and--as usual with computer versions--the spacing is much too loose. But having even a mixed-up version of Morris has its appeal. The font is provided in several versions, all in the Desktop Publishing Forum: Macintosh True Type file KELMTT.SIT and Macintosh Postscript Type 1 file KELMPS.SIT, both in Library 8 ("Mac Fonts"); Windows True Type file KELMTT.ZIP and IBM/Windows Postscript Type 1 file KELMPS.ZIP, both in Library 9 ("PC Fonts"). More interesting than these--and better executed by the well-known digital typographer David Rakowski--are a set of initial letters ("drop caps" in printers' parlance) from Kelmscott printing, taken probably from a years-old Dover book of ornamental alphabets. Because Rakowski has used the TIFF graphics format these initials can be scaled to virtually any size on any computer platform. The file has the entertaining name of MORRIS.ZIP and is found in Library 3 ("TIFF Clip Art") also in the Desktop Publishing Forum. (Just for information, Mark Samuels Lasner can receive "E-mail" from members: his Compuserve address is 71021,3341, which can also be reached via the Internet as 71021.3341@compuserve.com.)

NEWS FROM NOWHERE, 1890

CHAPTER I: DISCUSSION AND BED

Up at the League, says a friend, there had been one night a brisk conversational discussion, as to what would happen on the Morrow of the Revolution, finally shading off into a vigorous statement by various friends of the views on the future of the full-developed new society.

CONFERENCES

The Armstrong Browning Library (which, incidentally, has quite extensive Morris holdings) has inaugurated a series of biannual conferences. The first, marking the centenary of Tennyson's death, took place last Fall. "Matthew Arnold and Victorian Culture" is the topic for the next conference, on 15&endash;17 April, to be followed in early October by another with an as-yet unannounced theme. "The Pre-Raphaelites," which will incorporate an exhibition of books, manuscripts, letters, and art works, is planned for the Spring of 1994. These events are the brainchild of the Library's director, Roger Brooks. Inquiries can be addressed to him at Armstrong Browning Library, Baylor University, Box 97152, Waco, TX 76799, Tel: (817) 755&endash;3566.

Oscar Wilde is the subject of two unconnected conferences which are to take place in two European countries this Spring. The "Oscar Wilde Conference" will be held at the University of Birmingham, 16-18 April 1993. Speakers will include Richard Dellamora, Joseph Donohue, Regina Gagner, Kerry Powell, and John Stokes. An additional series of seminars (each limited to 25 participants) will be led by four experts: Isobel Murray ("Wilde's Fiction"), Joel Kaplan ("Editing Wilde's Plays"), Peter Raby ("Wilde and the Theatre of the 1990s"), and Phil Smith ("Wilde's Intellectual Development"). The conference fee--including accommodation at Lucas House, registration, and all meals--is £160. Students and the "unwaged" can attend without paying for registration. For details contact: Wilde Conference (Registration), School of English, University of Birmingham, Birmingham B15 2TT, England, Tel: 021-414-3749, Fax: 021-414-5668.

Then, on 28-31 May, the marvelously-named Princess Grace Irish Library in Monaco is sponsoring "Rediscovering Wilde," in Monaco. The guest of honor will be Merlin Holland, Wilde's grandson, who will give a major address. (The press release notes that his father, Vyvyn Holland, attended school in Monaco before the turn of the century.) Anthony Burgess, the novelist, will be another speaker and a number of American and British academics are scheduled to attend. While no exhibition is planned, there will be a display of new publications on Wilde and his time. For further information contact: The Director, The Princess Grace Irish Library, 9 rue Principesse Marie de Lorraine, MC9800 Monaco, Tel: 93 50 12 25, Fax: 93 50 66 65. Information is available regarding hotels and some grants to participants are offered.

ARTS AND CRAFTS WEEKEND AT GROVE PARK INN

Each February, upwards of one thousand Arts and Crafts collectors, architects, scholars, and enthusiasts gather at the Grove Park Inn, located in Asheville, North Carolina. This year the "weekend", as it is known, will be held on 19-21 February. Though the emphasis is decidedly on the American side of the Arts and Crafts movement, one assumes that the influence of Morris and his British colleagues and followers will not be forgotten. The brochure lists lectures on such subjects as "Women in Art Pottery," "Greene and Greene," and "Elbert Hubbard"; there are also exhibitions and sales of original and modern Arts and Crafts products, also tours and social events. Perhaps even more interesting is the unusual experience of staying in a total turn-of-the-century environment, for the Grove Park Inn, built in 1913, has been restored and expanded along its original lines. Work by the Roycrofters, Tiffany, and the Stickleys is found throughout, and the 142 rooms in the main structure are furnished with their original Arts and Crafts furniture and lighting fixtures. For further information on the conference contact: Bruce Johnson, Tel.: (754) 254-1912 [what a nice telephone number], P. O. Box 8773, Asheville, NC 28801. The Inn, which is open all year and calls itself a "resort," can be reached at (704) 252-2711. You might ask about their book, "Built for the Ages: A History of the Grove Park Inn" by Bruce E. Johnson, which contains illustrations depicting the Arts and Crafts interiors.

"COLONIAL HOMES"

The August 1992 issue of *Colonial Homes*, a mass-circulation decorating magazine generally devoted to the 18th century, contained "The Magic of William Morris." Though mainly an excuse to depict Morris designs and interiors (at Wightwick Manor, Standen, Red House, Kelmscott Manor) in very good color photographs, the article paid some attention to Morris's ideas and to the current "revival of interest" in his work. Tucked away after a continuation of the text in the back of the magazine was an appendix listing sources of information, exhibitions, and books. Both the London and U. S. branches of the Society were mentioned, with addresses given; this has led to numerous inquiries.

MUSEUM NOTES

A number of Pre-Raphaelite drawings will be included in an upcoming show (February-April) at the National Gallery in Washington. Collected by William P. O'Neal, a now-retired professor of architecture at the University of Virginia and the cataloger of Thomas Jefferson's library, these include "St. Barbara" by Burne-Jones and Simeon Solomon's "High Priest" among a large group of works on paper which span all the European schools over the last five centuries. There will be a catalogue.

British Art is the subject of the most recent issue (Vol. 18, No. 2, 1992) of *Museum Studies*, a scholarly journal devoted to and published by the Art Institute of Chicago. Two of the articles highlight recent acquisitions of special interest. In "Elizabeth Siddal: Drawn into the Pre-Raphaelite Circle," Laurel

Bradley retells the story of Siddal's discovery and role as model and artist, all occasioned by the Institute's purchase of an exquisite Rossetti drawing (1854) of her. Debra Mancoff's *As Others Saw Him: A Self-Portrait by Simeon Solomon* presents reproductions of Solomon's self-images (some of them never before published or studied) in an exploration of the Jewish aspects of the artist's life and works.

Our member Gail S. Weinberg led a seminar on "Pre-Raphaelite Treasures" last Spring at Harvard's Fogg Art Museum. Her three talks explored the origins and ideas of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, the movement's followers and connections (Burne-Jones and Ruskin), and their work in the book arts. (The last meeting took place at the Houghton Library.) Given the remarkable array of original art works available at Harvard--Rossetti's "Beata Beatrix," Burne-Jones's "The Days of Creation," the Kelmscott "Chaucer," to name just the tip of the iceberg--there is no doubt that such a series of gallery talks would be almost a once-in-a-lifetime experience. That it was even more, a "total success," is reported by Gary Aho, who writes: "My only complaint was that we did not have enough time to feast our eyes and imaginations on the treasures that were set before us. That Gail and her able associates were able to do so much, introducing and explaining and analyzing--with great learning and kindness and wit--so much of the murky PRite agenda and so many of the artists and their works, that in itself is a marvel. I was very pleased that I was a part of it, and I thank them all. The Fogg and the Houghton are fortunate to have around to explain the masterpieces inside their walls."

Two minor notes: In honor of the Society's MLA meetings the Pierpont Morgan Library incorporated a cache of Morris-related items in their Winter "treasures" show. The autograph manuscript of "A Tale of the House of the Wolfings" was accompanied by a copy of the published book bound in Morris-designed brocade, together with a similarly bound 15th century edition of Cicero. Copies of "The English 'Nineties," the exhibition catalogue for a show of books, manuscripts, and drawings from the collection of Mark Samuels Lasner, is still for sale from the Grolier Club, 47 East 60th Street, New York, NY 10022. Several Pre-Raphaelite books are described and the price is \$5.00.

MORE PRE-RAPHAELITES AT CHRISTIE'S

On Friday, 20 November, Christie's New York sold, as part of a larger auction of printed books and manuscripts, a considerable portion of "The Kenneth A. Lohf Collection of Nineteenth and Twentieth-Century English Literature." The owner, a scholar and poet recently retired after serving for nearly three decades as the head of Columbia University's rare book and manuscript library, concentrated on unusual items by and about the Pre-Raphaelites and Aesthetes and Decedents, with Burne-Jones being his especial favorite. (Lohf's article, "The Burne-Jonesness of Burne-Jones," appeared in the "Gazette of the Grolier Club" in 1972.) A catholic and carefully judged taste was apparent in all 157 lots which ranged as far afield as Graham Greene and William Wordsworth. The Morris&Burne-Jones connection was represented by the large paper undated edition of "The Life and Death of Jason" inscribed to Burne-Jones, a copy of *A Tale of the House of the Wolfings* embellished by a Burne-Jones drawing and inscription to Gertrude Lewis (sister of Katie, of "Letters to Katie" fame), and by Burne-Jones's copy of the Kelmscott Press *Gothic Architecture*. There were two very interesting, indeed significant books from Morris's undergraduate days, Froissart's *Chronicles* and Henry Noel Humphreys's illustrations to Froissart; both were later given by Morris to Louisa Mac Donald, the latter with a characteristic and early attempt at calligraphy. Morris was rounded out by one of his earliest extant poetical manuscripts ("Blanche") and a good 1882 autograph letter to Swinburne. Of other Pre-Raphaelites mention should be made of William Allingham's own revised copies of his *Poems* and *Irish Songs and Poems*, copies of "The Germ" and "The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine," manuscripts by Oliver Madox-Brown, Ford Madox Brown, Swinburne, Ruskin, Holman Hunt (a letter headed with a drawing of his second wife), Watts-Dunton, and the Rossettis. One unusual lot brought together letters of five of the seven original members of the Brotherhood. Later material included a group of letters by Walter Pater and books and letters by J. A. Symonds, Beardsley, Lionel Johnson, and other figures of the 1890s. The prices paid were relatively strong given the recession, the highest sum--surprisingly--was for a Walter Crane sketchbook of atypical Italian scenes.

A SHOPPING GUIDE TO WILLIAM MORRIS

These are additions to the lists of purveyors of Morris-related items which have appeared in previous "Newsletters." We hope to incorporate them all in a single "shopping guide" which may well become an adjunct of the next membership directory.

ABC CARPET & HOME
888 Broadway (19th St.)
New York, NY 10003
(800) 888-RUGS

The "Verdigris" wool rug, inspired by a Morris design, available in three sizes, is illustrated in their catalogue. Price range: \$229.00 for 4 ft. x 5 ft. 7 in. to \$799.00 for 8 ft. 2 in. x 11 ft. 6 in.

BODLEIAN LIBRARY
Oxford OX1 3BG
England
(0865) 277091

The Bodleian's "Gifts 1992/93" contains a group of "Kelmescott Press alphabet tiles" suitable for placing under dishes or cups. Hand-painted in Oxford, these measure 6 in. square and come in a variety of letter/color combinations, £10.95 each. Friends of the Bodleian and members of Bodley's American Friends receive a discount.

GARDENERS EDEN
P. O. Box 7307
San Francisco, CA 94120
(800) 822-9600

A recent mail-order catalogue included two handsome ceramic Jardinieres decorated in an adaptation of Morris's Chrysanthemum pattern. Small priced at \$95.00, large at \$145.00. Rose-wood stands are optional.

MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, BOSTON
Catalogue Sales Department, Box 1044
Boston, MA 02120
(800) 225-5592

"Bocca Baciata" earrings, in the Fall 1992 catalogue, would seem to herald a new category-- Pre-Raphaelite-inspired jewelry. Adapted from a hair ornament worn by Fanny Cornforth in Rossetti's 1859 painting, now in the Museum's collection, these are in 24K. gold-plate with glass pearls. Available in either pierced or clip styles, \$42.00 the pair. The painting itself is reproduced on the dust jacket of the MFA's publication, "Redheads," \$16.95.

SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION
Department 0006
Washington, DC 20073
(800) 322-0344

"Holiday 1992" catalogue offered the "William Morris Cup and Saucer." Tea-cup and saucer in 24K gold-rimmed bone china decorated with multi-color adaptation of Iris textile pattern (original in Smithsonian's Cooper-Hewitt Museum, New York), \$55.00.

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