

'My Dearest Emma'

William and Emma Morris

Dorothy Coles

William Morris's favourite companion during his childhood, and his most regular correspondent in his first terms at Marlborough College was his sister Emma. The earliest surviving letters are three he wrote to her from there; they all begin with the words 'My dearest Emma', and all show the confidence with which he relied on her for support, and an awareness that he knew she would be interested in everything that interested him.

They were the children of William Morris (1797 to 1847) and Emma Shelton (1805 to 1894). Both parents were born in Worcester and grew up in comfortable, middle-class households. In 1820 William moved to London and began working for Harris, Sanderson and Harris, a firm of bill-brokers in the city. In 1826 when a senior partner retired, William was appointed to a partnership and married Emma shortly afterwards. The Marriage Register shows that he was a widower, but so far it has not been possible to find any information about his first marriage.

In those days it was a custom of many businesses to house a member of staff on the firm's premises, and William and Emma spent the first years of their married life living 'above the shop' in Lombard Street. Although the Baptismal Register shows no entry for him, the Burial Register of Saint Edmund the King in Lombard Street shows that their son Charles Stanley was buried in the churchyard on 7 September 1828, after living only 5 days. They then had to wait until Emma was born on 28 October 1830 before they could be confident that they could produce healthy children; she was followed by Henrietta on 8 November 1832.¹ The firm prospered and early in 1833

the family moved to Elm House in Walthamstow, a house with a large garden and a much healthier environment than the City for bringing up children. William was born there on 24 March 1834, Hugh Stanley in 1837 and Thomas Rendall in 1839.

At Elm House William's education began, for after a governess was engaged to teach the two girls he joined their classes whenever he felt like it. However, when he sent Andreas Scheu 'rather a long-winded sketch of my very uneventful life' in 1883, he said: 'Ever since I can remember I was a great devourer of books. I don't remember being taught to read and by the time I was seven years old I had read a very great many books, good, bad and indifferent.'² Indeed, he claimed to have read all Walter Scott's *Waverley* novels by that age. This love of books must have done much towards bridging the three-and-a-half years gap in age between Emma and William, and after the family moved to Woodford Hall in 1840 they became even closer. 50 years later Emma recalled for J. W. Mackail – Morris's biographer – 'how they used to read *The Old English Baron* together in the rabbit warren at Woodford, pouring over the enthralling pages till both were wrought up to a state of mind that made them afraid to cross the park to reach home'.³

Mrs. Morris liked to live in large, impressive-looking houses, and Woodford Hall was probably the largest she occupied; certainly, at an annual rental of £600 it is likely to have been the most expensive. A three-storey Georgian building, it stood in 50 acres of parkland with a further 100 acres of farmland. The grounds stretched down to the River Roding and in places adjoined Epping Forest, from which it was separated by only a hedge, so the estate seemed of unlimited extent. Living at the Hall meant being part of quite a large community – with the Morris family as lords of the domain. The census taken in the Spring of 1841 shows the following people living there: William Morris, 40, his wife Emma Morris, 30, Elizabeth Morris, 75, Anne Morris, 30, (his mother and sister, all four being shown as of 'independent means'), and the six Morris children from Emma aged ten down to Arthur aged nine months. In addition there were eight resident maidservants and one resident manservant; while in cottages in the grounds lived the gardener, the coachman and a farm labourer, together with a wife and family each. Two of the children were already employed by the Morrises, one working with his father as a gardener

and the other as a non-resident manservant. There were also six younger children living at the cottages, making 33 people in all. A further three children were born to the Morrises while they lived at the Hall, Isabella (1842), Edgar Llewellyn (1844), and Alice Mary (1846).

With 14 staff to look after the ten Morrises and the estate, Emma must have had little or no opportunity to gain practical experience in housekeeping, and it is likely that she regretted this after her marriage. It is not possible to ascertain whether she and Henrietta were sent away to school, but on the whole it seems more likely that they attended a local day school. The area had a good reputation for its clean, healthy air, and there were many schools in the neighbourhood. William was six years old when the family moved to the Hall, and until he was nine he did not go to school and was allowed an unusual amount of freedom; either afoot or on his pony he explored the length and breadth of Epping Forest and got to know all its byways, its villages and churches, its open spaces, woodlands and thickets. There is no suggestion that Emma ever accompanied him on these explorations but he was already developing the ability to notice and remember details of a scene, and he must have come home bursting to talk about all he had seen and done. Such enthusiasm can be both attractive and stimulating, and, as his confidante, Emma would have found her horizons broadened by his observations of buildings and architecture, of wildlife and plants, of weather and soil and crops.

When he was nine William was sent to a school in Walthamstow run by the Misses Arundale; it was only two miles from Woodford Hall and he used to ride there on his pony. Probably this was quite a gentle introduction to the discipline of school life, but to the boy it must have been a shock. Over the years he had taken into his own hands the organisation of each day's activities and the thought of a set timetable must have seemed to him madness – what was the point of breaking off any study in which he was still interested, or of persisting with some subject with which he was already bored? It is not surprising that in later life he used to call schools 'boy farms'.⁴ The teachers found that in some subjects he was well read but in others he was behind his fellows; an immediate problem was that he had not yet learned to write, since so far he had not seen any need for writing; but he mastered it quickly when once convinced that he had to. At first school was bearable because he had evenings, weekends and school holidays free to follow

his own pursuits. But about two years later he was sent to another local school as a boarder; there he was able to see his family in church on Sundays, but not allowed to speak to them, and there was no returning home during term-time. This seemed to him cruel, but in spite of anyone's protests his younger brothers were sent to follow him there as they grew older.

William was beginning to differ from his parents' views in some ways. He told Scheu in the letter already referred to that 'since we belonged to the evangelical section of the English Church I was brought up in what I should call rich establishmentarian puritanism; a religion that even as a boy I never took to'.⁵ Nevertheless at some stage William decided that he wished to become an Anglican priest and Emma supported him in this.⁶

In 1845 Joseph Oldham began working in the parish of Walthamstow, at first as Deacon, and after a year as Curate. He was aged 25, and had just completed his studies in Divinity at King's College, Cambridge. He had been born at Clerkenwell in London, and the family was a middle-class one similar to the Morrisises; they claimed descent from Bishop Oldham of Exeter who had held that see during the reign of King Henry VIII. Emma Morris did not reach the age of fifteen until October of 1845 so she was a schoolgirl when she first met Joseph, but they found that they shared the same High-Church views, and they became better acquainted when he undertook to coach her in German. He must then have visited Woodford Hall regularly for the classes, and come to know all the family there.

On 8th September 1847 William Morris senior died. Perhaps because he died intestate, and because that year was one of instability in financial circles, it has come to be accepted that his death was sudden and caused by the strain of business worries about the bill-broking firm, of which he was by this time the sole partner, earlier ones having either retired or withdrawn. His death certificate, however, gives the information that he died at Woodford Hall, he was aged 50, his occupation was 'Esquire' and the cause of death was 'Cancer or ulceration of the stomach. 2 years certified'. This implies that he must have had a long period of painful indigestion or even of bleeding from the stomach, which might have warned him that he ought to make a will. A week after his death the firm announced that it had been forced into liquidation with debts amounting to more than £2? million. This

coincided with a general crisis in the stock market, but after a time trade recovered and it was found that the firm had assets lodged with creditors which covered its debts, so after a time it began trading again under the name of Sanderson and Sandeman with a new partner named Sandeman in charge.⁷ Fortunately for Mrs. Morris she did not have to rely on the bill-broking house for her income, because in 1844 her husband had bought shares in a firm which had been established to exploit the copper and other metals which could be mined in the Tamar Valley. The spread of industry was creating an enormous demand for ores and the seams proved to be unusually rich, so that, with judicious reinvestment from time to time, her shares in Devon Great Consols served to keep her in comfort for the rest of her long life. However, she did find herself a widow at the age of 42, with nine children, from Emma aged nearly 17 to little Alice who was only a year old. Her husband's brothers, Thomas and Francis Morris, were on hand to advise and support her.

William was 13 when his father died, but plans for his future had already been made and provided for by the purchase of a place for him at Marlborough College, and he began there in February 1848. It was further from home than the school he had been attending and he could no longer catch a glimpse of the family and exchange smiles with them in church on Sundays, but his separation from them was not much increased. Emma remained his lifeline, and was a most faithful correspondent throughout his first terms. He had the Christmas holiday of 1847–48 at Woodford Hall, and then the summer one of July to August 1848, although by that time he knew that their tenancy of the Hall was about to end. In fact it was during the autumn of that year that the family moved to Water House, now the William Morris Gallery. His earliest surviving letter is dated 1st November 1848, and is addressed to Emma. In it he asks her for information as to the whereabouts of their new home on Clay Hill [now Forest Road]. It isn't the one where Mrs. Clarke used to live, is it? Or the one next-door where a lot of greyhounds were kept? Clearly he was distressed at feeling so much out of touch with his home. Then comes some chat about school: three new prefects are to be made; the gates are closed at 5 p.m. now it is November; and he asks for seven stamps to enable him to write home during the remaining seven weeks of term. This leads to the thought that it is still seven more weeks to the holidays, and an

expression of homesickness: 'for there are such a lot of things I want to do and say, and see.' It ends with 'best love to all'.⁸

The next letter is dated 19th March 1849 and includes an account of his Confirmation and first Holy Communion on the previous Saturday and Sunday. Then follows discussion of the new school surgeon, and of some acquaintances who are also known to another pupil. He ends with the hope that he will soon 'get a tremendous long letter from you, dear Emma'. This may be read as confidence that she will have written him a special letter for his birthday in five days' time. A postscript dated March 20th shows that she had not disappointed him, for he thanks her for her letter and ten shillings enclosed with it. Then he continues:

I want just to ask you something. James before I went gave me a rabbit and I asked him to sell the young ones for me which he said that he would do for me. Do you think there was anything wrong in it will you write and tell me if you think it so; (you need not tell anyone of it) the reason I did it was to get a nice fishing rod I did not like to ask Mamma to give me one and what with other things I did not think I should have enough to buy one otherwise; will you let this part of my letter be private and confidential dear Emma and again

Believe me

Your affectionate brother

W Morris

This appeal to Emma for advice has received little attention; most of Morris's biographers have dismissed it as a simple transaction between two schoolboys. Had it been only that William would have been quite capable of handling it himself, and then it would have been forgotten. But there he was, seven weeks after the start of term, still worrying about something that had happened at home during January. It might help with understanding what his problem was if 'James' could be identified, and there is a man who may have been he. The 1841 census shows a James Housden (30) living at Woodford Hall Cottage and working as labourer on the estate farm. When William was roaming about the estate he must often have met Housden working in the fields to supply the Hall with produce for the kitchens, dairy and brewery,¹⁰ which was work the boy admired and with which he could identify. Mrs. Morris may or may not have been kind to her

employees, but it is unlikely that she would have approved of a friendship between her oldest son and one of their own workers; he knew of her views and had not spoken at home of the gift James had made to him, not even to Emma. He did not accept his mother's views, and his concerns were quite different from hers. The man was paid only the low agricultural wage, and although he lived rent-free, and would have grown much of his family's food, William knew that his own spending money in presents, tips from relations and pocket-money was equal to quite a large percentage of James's annual income in cash. He understood that rabbit-breeding gave James a useful supplement, so in accepting a doe rabbit as a present he was taking something of real value to the giver, and was further indebted because James had to feed and care for the animals and then market them. Perhaps that was unfair. Had he taken advantage of a poor man's generosity? Could that be justified?

One might question whether William could have been in touch with James Housden during the Christmas vacation of 1848–49 since the Morris family had left the Hall a few months earlier, but the 1851 census shows Housden and his wife still living at the cottage and working for the new tenants. He was the only one of the Morris employees still in post there, so such a contact is not impossible. James Housden must have been capable of managing all aspects of work on the farm, as it is most unlikely that Morris senior or his wife had the knowledge or experience to take any decisions about it. Yet they had undervalued him and classified him as only 'agricultural labourer'; it is pleasing to note that his new employers recognised his worth and had promoted him to 'Bailiff'. It is possible that James Housden was not the James referred to in William's letter, but if this is not exactly what happened, yet something very like it did take place. It would be interesting to know what advice Emma gave in her reply. The importance of this postscript is that it is the first evidence of Morris showing that sense of social justice which spurred him to give his time, his organising ability, his creativity and even his health to the cause of Socialism in later years.

The last of the three letters is dated 13th April 1849, and is the longest. In it William eagerly tells Emma about the ways in which he had spent the Easter holidays. At that time the school year consisted of two 'halves', from the beginning of February until the end of June, and

from early August until just before Christmas; pupils were not allowed home during the short Easter break. So William wrote first about the choir's singing and music in school chapel during the previous two or three days, which he had enjoyed and thought very beautiful. Then he went on to tell Emma about his visit to Avebury and Silbury Hill on Monday; but he went back to Avebury on the following day because he had not understood the arrangement of the prehistoric stones the first time he saw them. 'On Tuesday I was told of this so I thought I would go there again'. He had also looked at the outside of an old church (of which he gave architectural details) and a pretty parsonage. Then 'we went through a mud lane', and the rest of the excursion is described as happening to 'us', although he did not name his companion. They went through a water meadow that had just been flooded to encourage the growth of grass immediately before mowing – he gave details of the procedure – then they climbed Silbury Hill. The total distance was about 14 miles and they were out for about 3½ hours. He went on to ask her 'As you are going to send me the cheese', perhaps she will also have a large cake made for him, and some biscuits, and he wants paper and postage stamps, and his silkworm eggs and a new pen box. All this he entrusted to her care, exactly as most boys expect their mother to assemble and send off their next tuck box. Lastly he was sorry that he had not been able to be with them at Easter, 'but of course that was not to be'.¹¹

This was probably the last letter he sent to Emma as part of their old relationship, for she and Joseph Oldham were married on 14th May 1850, and if this was preceded by the customary year's engagement, she must soon have written to tell him of this new commitment. During the three years of Joseph's curacy at Walthamstow he and William must have met; and in later years they seem to have been on cordial terms on the rather rare occasions when they did meet, but at first William felt very deeply the loosening of his early tie with his sister.¹²

It is unlikely that William was present at Emma's wedding; the authorities at Marlborough School would not have accepted a sister's marriage as good grounds for giving leave of absence. The ceremony took place at the parish church at Walthamstow, by special licence, and the bridegroom's younger brother, Richard Samuel, conducted the service; witnesses were Emma's uncle Thomas Morris and her sister Henrietta.

Joseph had left Walthamstow in 1848 and gone as curate to the rural parish of Downe in Kent. Later it became famous as the home of Charles Darwin, but although he was already living there the publication of *The Origin of Species* was still some ten years in the future. The census taken in spring 1851 shows that the Oldham household consisted of Joseph and Emma, with a housemaid aged 22 and a footman aged 16; Joseph's mother was also staying with them, no doubt to support Emma during the last weeks of her pregnancy; but she must have returned to her own mother's house almost immediately, for her daughter Emma was born at Walthamstow on April 25th. Joseph and Emma must have decided that he should not try to make a profitable career in the church, as his brother did, but to devote his life to the service of the poor and needy, and to this end he had applied for a post in one of the rapidly-expanding new industrial towns. Probably neither Emma nor Joseph returned to Downe, as he took up the position of Perpetual Curate (later Vicar) at Clay Cross in Derbyshire and is recorded as officiating there for the first time at a funeral on 29th May. Meanwhile the two Emmas remained at Water House, and the young mother is recorded as notifying her daughter's birth to the Registrar at Walthamstow on 5 June 1851.

For centuries Clay Lane, later known as Clay Cross, had been a windswept hilltop village in the parish of North Wingfield. In 1831 it consisted of 111 houses with a population of 564. Most of the men were employed in farming, but some operated handlooms or frame knitting-machines as pieceworkers in their own homes; there was no paid work for women. But in 1836 plans were made to extend to Leeds the recently-completed railway line from London to Derby, and George Stephenson and his son Robert were appointed Resident Engineers. Clay Lane lay across the proposed route and they decided to tunnel through the hill on which it stands rather than take the line up such a steep incline. When preliminary borings ran through several seams of coal George seems to have remained inactive for a short time during which no doubt he was looking into the technicalities of the new industries he wished to establish; then he invited four friends to join him and his son in forming a new company to exploit the possibilities. In addition to completing the railway line he had, within a very few years, sunk a mine shaft and was obtaining coal, established a quarry and lime kilns for making cement, and also a brickworks and brick

kilns using local clay. His railway contract stipulated that he must have the tunnel lined with a double layer of bricks set in Roman cement, and when the tunnel was completed he continued with the lime- and brickmaking for building stations and signal boxes, then houses for the firm's employees, and later for sale to the building industry. Also there were coking ovens and gasometers, and a foundry using local iron ore to manufacture pipes. George Stephenson died in 1848 and his son withdrew from the firm shortly afterwards, but the remaining directors reorganised, renamed the firm The Clay Cross Company Limited (abbreviated to CXC), and continued in production with all the enterprises.¹³ The 1851 census shows that the town had by then more than quadrupled to 487 houses with 2278 inhabitants.

The Rector of North Wingfield obtained permission to build a new church at Clay Cross to serve this burgeoning population. Building was begun in August 1849 on land given by the colliery, and it was completed and dedicated to Saint Bartholomew in January 1851, a curate from North Wingfield carrying out the duties there until a permanent minister was in post. Joseph found a building that was little more than a shell apart from having seating for 450; worse still, no house was provided for the incumbent. He quickly set about remedying this, obtaining a grant of land from an estate owner and money from the colliery company, also from Church of England funds and wealthier parishioners; no doubt he and Emma also made contributions from their own money. The Vicarage still stands, a substantial stone building with an inscription engraved near the front door:

AD
MDCCCLII
LAUS DEO
JO

A son, Joseph William, was born to them there on 22 September 1854 and a second son, Arthur Hugh, on 8 May 1858. Sadly, both boys died in childhood.

William and Emma continued their correspondence, and he sent her some of his early poems, which were found in her bureau after she died.¹⁴ On 10 September 1855 William travelled by train to Clay Cross to visit Emma and her family. The relief of Sebastopol had been announced on the previous day and the whole country was rejoicing,

but he found that Russian tricolours were being flown there instead of French ones, and he complained to his friend Cormell Price in a letter dated 29th September from Walthamstow, that the solitary church bell, which was 'of a singularly mild and chapelly nature' was rung 'ALL day long, the effect of which I leave you to imagine.'¹⁵ His visit was shortly after the holiday he had spent in northern France with William Fulford and Edward Burne-Jones, when Burne-Jones and he had decided not to make their careers in the church. Since then he had tried to persuade his mother to accept that he would become an architect and not a priest, but he felt that she had hardly taken him seriously. He could not bear the thought that a similar misunderstanding should arise between himself and Emma, so he decided to go and tell her in order that they could talk things over together as they used to do. No doubt she was disappointed at his change of mind, but by now her own mind was filled with the duties of a busy wife and mother, running the vicarage with the help of only two young maids. Also she had had experience of life at the head of a parish and knew that the demands of that life could be met only by a man who was convinced that he had been called to it.

There is much detail about Joseph's years at Saint Bartholomew's in a booklet, *Parish of Clay Cross* which was published in 1951 to mark the centenary of the church. F. E. Dwelly, the author, wrote that he had been informed that the first decoration of the chancel was carried out by William Morris '(who seems to have been a close relative of Mrs. Oldham)' and also that the window in the south aisle had been designed by him; but he had been unable to verify this from any records.¹⁶ He was certainly near the truth about the window for it was produced and installed in 1879 by the Morris firm. Sewter describes it: L. St John in blue; C. St Peter in gold and white; R. St James in green and white; all designed by Burne-Jones and all previously used elsewhere.¹⁷ The question of the decoration of the chancel is less easily answered; there might have been time for Morris to do the work during 1858, a year in which not all his time seems to have been accounted for. Also he had by then had experience during the previous year of working on the murals at the Oxford Union, where, although his panel had been marred by clumsy figure-drawing, he had gone on to paint the ceiling with trailing stems and flowers which had been generally admired. This would have given him confidence for tackling

another scheme. And yet, if he had done it why did neither Jane Morris nor Edward or Georgiana Burne-Jones tell Mackail about it so that he might include it in his biography? By now it is probably too late to find any answer.

During the following years it is unlikely that Emma and William saw much of each other. He married, Red House was built and occupied, two daughters were born, and he helped establish 'the Firm'. But Mrs. Morris loved to have her family gathered around her, and they probably met at her parties at Leyton House. When Jenny developed epilepsy Emma was quick to offer support and during the summer of 1877 the girl stayed with her aunt for about two months. She was taken to see local showplaces such as Hardwick Hall, leaving only when her father came to fetch her to Kelmscott Manor for a family holiday.

There was another problem to which Emma and William responded similarly; this was when their younger sister Isabella (the third sister) announced that she intended to become a nurse. Her husband had died when she was aged 40 and she wished to do something useful with her remaining years. But in spite of Florence Nightingale, nursing was not regarded as an occupation suitable for a 'lady', and her mother and most of her siblings were bitter in their opposition; however Emma and William supported her. Later, when a bishop asked her to become the leader of a new order of Deaconesses who would work in parishes among the poorest women and families, she was at first unwilling to give up nursing; but he prevailed. After they had found premises suitable for a training establishment William went there to advise her on the decoration of the small chapel, and undertook to supply all labour and materials to beautify not only that, but also Isabella's own rooms. On completion of Isabella's training Emma came down to stay with her for a few days in order to be present at the ordination ceremony.

The population of Clay Cross continued to increase and the pollution of the area became worse and worse, since all the industries introduced by George Stephenson produced either dust or noxious fumes or both. By 1888 the parish had reached more than 6,000 souls; it was a heavy load for a man aged 68, who had never spared himself when he was younger. However, during 1888 Joseph was promoted to become the Rector of the parent parish of North Wingfield, with a population of fewer than 4000 and a stipend of £682 per annum plus the Rectory. The church dated from the twelfth century, and the parsonage was for-

merly an Elizabethan manor house; they were buildings that Emma and William might have dreamed about when they shared their hopes for the future during their talks in the park at Woodford Hall. When Morris went to lecture on 'Monopoly' to the Chesterfield Discussion Society on 17 November 1889 he took the opportunity offered by being in the district to spend a few hours with Emma and Joseph at the Rectory. A few days later he reported to his mother that he had found Joseph 'only pretty well I should say, but Emma very well. Miss Emmy was away'. He added that he liked the house, and described the church as 'handsome and interesting', although both had been spoiled by restoration work carried out a number of years before. He had not liked the smell of the coke fires of Clay Cross, but it seemed that the others did not notice it much.¹⁸

On 8 December 1894 Mrs. Morris died; she was 89 years old and had been ill for four years; William went to her funeral at Much Hadham; and she had appointed him her executor. In her will, after a few bequests, she left her estate to be shared equally between her eight surviving children (although she omitted the orphaned children of her son Thomas Rendall); each received more than £2,000. This money was very welcome to Emma and Joseph, for during his years at Clay Cross his stipend had remained low and it is unlikely that it had ever been enough to cover their household expenses. Besides, Joseph had always had some appeal running for the improvement of Saint Bartholomew's, such as the provision of gas-lighting to replace candles, the building of a steeple on the tower, and later the installation of a peal of bells; and he had built chapels in the outlying villages of his large parish, these serving as schoolroom or village hall during the week, and as church on Sundays. In spite of many fundraising activities, from the holding of parish tea-parties to approaches to all the moneyed residents in the district from the Duke of Devonshire downwards, more money was always needed, and Emma and Joseph had contributed generously to all these causes, so that the money they brought to the marriage had been depleted. This inheritance enabled them to look forward to retirement with more confidence.

They had eight years at North Wingfield in slightly more comfortable circumstances, and could now afford a third maid to relieve Emma of some of her domestic duties. But towards the end of July 1896 Joseph had a stroke, and he died on 2 August. His nephew, H. S.

Oldham, who had succeeded Joseph at Clay Cross, came over from there to support his aunt and cousin during this difficult time and it was he who notified the death to the local Registrar. In times of crisis most of William Morris's brothers and sisters had become accustomed to turn to him for help and advice but this resource was denied to Emma, for when Joseph died William was not even in this country. He had gone on what was intended to be a restorative cruise along the Norwegian coast, and probably he did not hear about the death until he returned to Tilbury on 18 August. But it was soon clear that the trip had brought him no benefit, and that his strength was failing. On 9 September he signed a new will, in which, among other bequests, he left Emma an annuity of £100. He died on 3 October 3, exactly two months after Joseph. There is no evidence that Emma visited him during his last illness or that she attended his funeral; it is possible that she felt overwhelmed by this second death coming so soon after her husband's, or it may be that she simply had no time, for she and Emmy had to clear everything out of the Rectory and leave it empty for Joseph's successor. Although they had lived for so long in the Midlands they decided to move to the South Coast and took a small house on the clifftop at Lyme Regis overlooking the sea.

There was one ceremony, however, for which the two Emmas must have returned to Clay Cross. 1897 was the year of Queen Victoria's Jubilee and the parishioners of Saint Bartholomew's decided to mark the occasion by installing a stained glass window in the east end of the church, the work being carried out by Clayton and Bell of London. The small upper lights show Christ and angels, and the four upright ones depict the four Evangelists. Although the windows showing the three other Evangelists were given by local families in memory of some dead relative, Saint Matthew on the left was bought by subscriptions from local people to commemorate Joseph Oldham's 37 years of work in the parish; it is a portrait of him and, with its plentiful white hair and flowing beard, was considered to be a very good likeness. The window was dedicated on 26 May 1898.

Already, before leaving North Wingfield, Emmy had been earning by selling portraits and landscapes she had painted, and Lyme must have offered much more scope for her brush. Mother and daughter lived there together until the older Emma died on 30 June 1915. Although life had set their paths in very different places, William had

acknowledged his childhood debt to her by leaving her an annuity which doubled her income and enabled her to live amid beautiful surroundings and in modest comfort for her remaining years. During those years she must constantly have thought of him with gratitude, and remembered with love the close relationship they had shared as children.

NOTES

I am very grateful to Cliff Williams of Clay Cross for the long-term loan of two books which he had written, *Driving the Clay Cross Tunnel* and *Clay Cross and the Clay Cross Company*, as well as the centenary booklet of Saint Bartholomew's church, which gave me access to information which I should have had great difficulty in finding elsewhere. The Church of England Record Centre allowed me to consult their *Crockfords* and to read the *Isabella Gilmore Papers*. My nephew Nicholas C. S. Mason kindly searched records at Worcester for information about the Morris and Shelton families, and Peter Cormack and Amy Clark at the William Morris Gallery in Walthamstow helpfully gave me access to their records.

- 1 It is important that these dates of birth are accepted as the correct ones, since they were given by William Morris senior in his application for his coat of arms, and he is likely to have been very careful over the accuracy of that document. Some of Morris's biographers have been misled by the fact that Henrietta was already eight months old when she was baptised in July 1833 and have assumed that she had been born only a few weeks earlier; but in that case she would have been only eight months old when brother William was born, which is just possible but most unlikely.
- 2 Norman Kelvin, ed. *The Collected Letters of William Morris* (New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1987), vol. II, p. 228. Subsequently referred to as Kelvin.
- 3 J. W. Mackail, *The Life of William Morris* (London: Longmans Green & Co., 1922 [1899]), vol. I, p. 9. Subsequently referred to as Mackail.
- 4 Kelvin, II, p. 546.
- 5 Kelvin, II, p. 227.

6 Mackail, I, p. 26.

7 Charles Harvey and Jon Press, *William Morris: Design and Enterprise in Victorian Britain* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1991), p. 12.

8 Kelvin, I, p. 3.

9 Kelvin, I, p. 4.

10 Mackail, I, p. 9.

11 Kelvin, I, pp. 6–8.

12 Mackail, I, p. 26.

13 Cliff Williams, *Clay Cross and the Clay Cross Company* (Stroud, Glos.: Chalford Publishing Co., 1995), pp.16 ff.

14 Florence S. Boos, *The Juvenilia of William Morris* (New York & London: The William Morris Society, 1983) p. 2 (but note that Emma Oldham died in 1915, aged 84, not in 1921 aged 91, as stated).

15 Kelvin, I, p. 23.

16 F. E. Dwelly, *Parish of Clay Cross*. (Clay Cross: Jos Spriggs & Sons, Printers, 1951) pp.12–29.

17 See A. C. Sewter, *The Stained Glass of William Morris and his Circle* (New Haven & London: Yale UP, 1974–75), vol. II, p. 53.

18 Kelvin, III, p 127.