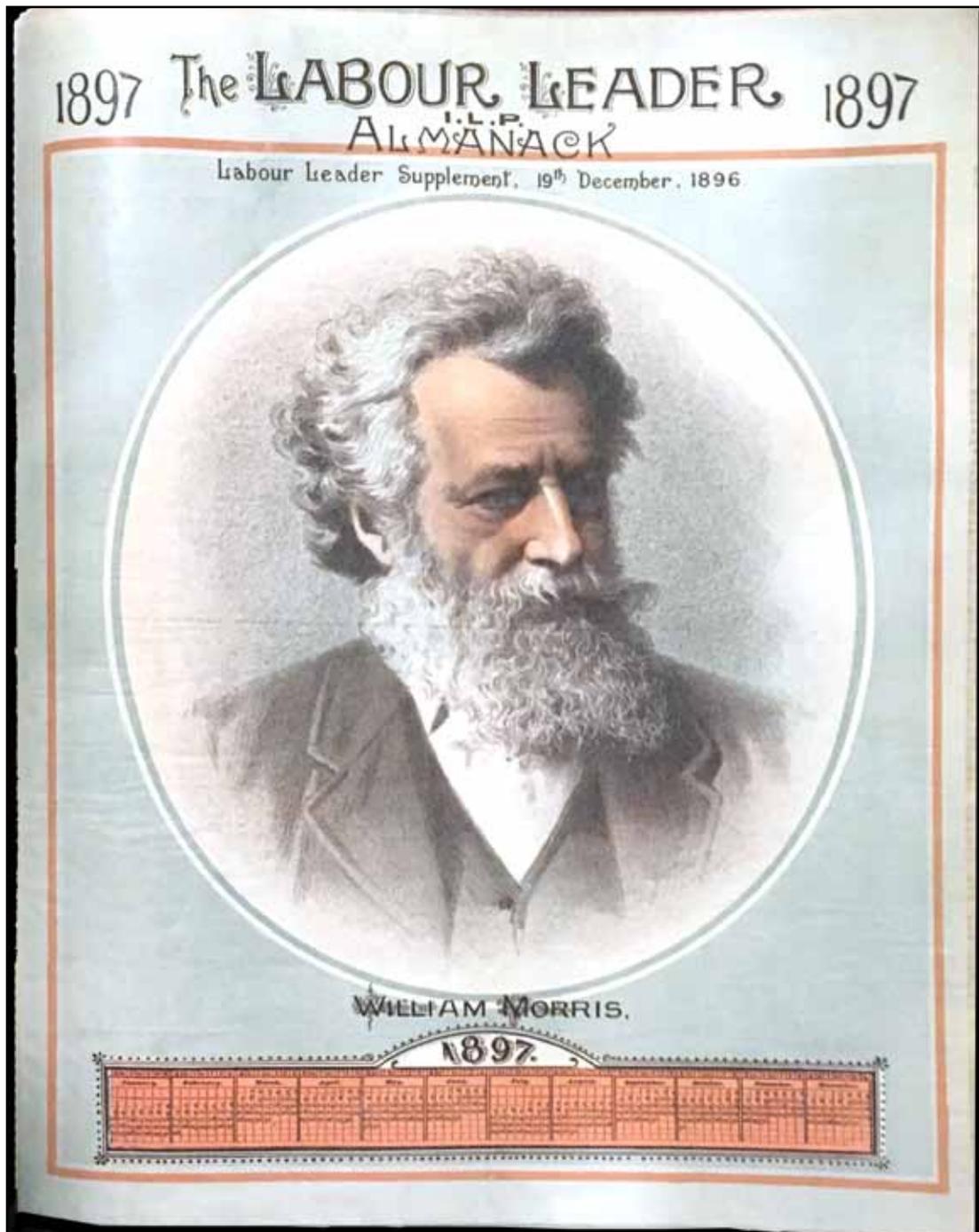


Useful and Beautiful:

Published by the
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Summer 2018 ♦ 1



Cover drawing by George "Jordie" Christie

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Paul Acker

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Dear Members:

Let me, as your new President, welcome you to another season in the U.S. William Morris Society. By way of introduction, I have been a member myself for about ten years, during which time I gave two papers at our annual MLA session, and I have published three pieces in *Useful and Beautiful*, our society magazine (formerly the *WMS Newsletter*). My particular interest is in Morris and medievalism, including his work on Old Icelandic translation and his collaborations with Edward Burne-Jones.



Speaking of *Useful and Beautiful*, Florence Boos is hoping to step down as editor after over ten years and we have sent out calls for a new editor (or possibly co-editor). We are also seeking a new editor for the Morris blog, since Michael Robertson will be on sabbatical this next academic year. Recent installments of the blog have featured the society’s winter visit to the Pierpont Morgan Library; arsenic in Victorian wallpapers; and Morris and spring gardening: <http://morrissociety.blogspot.com/>

At this year’s Modern Language Association Convention, the Society sponsored a session entitled “Objectifying Morris,” with papers on the Kelmescott *History of Reynard the Foxe*; Corinna Illingworth on mythology in Morris’s designs; and Florence Boos on the international dispersal of Morris manuscripts. I organized a special session on Morris and the Pierpont Morgan Library, with papers by Meghan Freeman on *News from Nowhere*; Heather Witcher on platinotypes for the Kelmescott Chaucer; and my own paper surveying the Morgan’s Morris manuscripts. We followed that up with a private exhibition at the Pierpont Morgan and our annual dinner, at John’s of 12th St. The next Modern Language Association Convention will take place in Chicago 3-6 January, 2019. Our MLA session will look like this:

William Morris: Reflections on Art and Labor,

Presider: KellyAnn Fitzpatrick, Georgia Institute of Technology

- The Handcrafted Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction: Walter Benjamin and the Revolutionary Potential of William Morris’s Decorated Books, Brandiann Molby, Loyola University Chicago
- Aestheticism and the Birth of the Consultant: Wilde versus Morris on Art, Work, and the Self, Patrick Fessenbecker, Bilkent University
- William Morris and *The Dawn*: Ideas for “The Society of the Future,” Rebekah Greene, Georgia Institute of Technology

We are looking into possible excursions in Chicago. Further afield, we are hoping to increase communications with the William Morris Society in England. Jane Carlin has sent a copy of our Morris broadside to their president, Lord Sawyer. Michael Robertson, Jane Carlin and Paul Acker all hope to meet with their members this summer in London.

Cordially, Paul



MAY MORRIS EXHIBITION

Anna Wager

There is a 1908 photograph of May Morris that is immediately striking, a portrait that draws you in, and makes you curious about the person who has been captured. It was taken by G. C. Beresford, and used on the cover of the pamphlet for Morris's American lecture tour, conducted 1909-10. Morris sits in a medievalized, throne-like chair, her left arm draped over the armrest, holding a string of beads, while her right hand grips the opposite armrest. Her upright posture and her direct gaze amplify her commanding presence, and her clothing is a mix of loose-fitting aesthetic dress, favored by her mother Jane, with medieval elements, like the embroidered borders. The image highlights both the medieval, pre-industrial stylistic references of William Morris's Arts and Crafts movement, while placing May visibly as the expert on this field. She is arresting here, but there is a sense that she is not *real*—she is a cipher, onto which we can graft motivations for her work. This balancing act, as arresting cipher, is one that can be applied to career retrospectives of an artist's output, exhibitions which have to grapple with artistic output, public opinion, and how to tell a large story in a manageable way.

Career retrospectives are difficult to manage, but the William Morris Gallery's "May Morris: Art & Life" succeeds. The exhibition, which ran from 7 October

2017 to 28 January 2018, is arranged relatively chronologically, starting on the ground floor and continuing to a balcony and small room on the first floor. It is hard to shake the spectre of May's famous father, especially since the exhibition was held at the William Morris Gallery in Walthamstow, and his legacy is imprinted on the building, the park, and the other exhibits in the Gallery. Yet it is a perfectly fitting location, especially considering May's close work within Morris & Co. This, then, is the paradox of her career: contingent in many ways upon her early training and involvement at the Firm, inextricably tied to William's work, his friends, and his techniques. As the opening label for the exhibition states, "May worked tirelessly to protect and promote her father's legacy yet ultimately his popularity led to her own achievements being eclipsed. This exhibition seeks to address this imbalance, re-establishing May as one of this country's most important designer craftswomen." The curators have struck an admirable balance, and this exhibition is an important corrective to the unfortunate erasure of Morris's work.

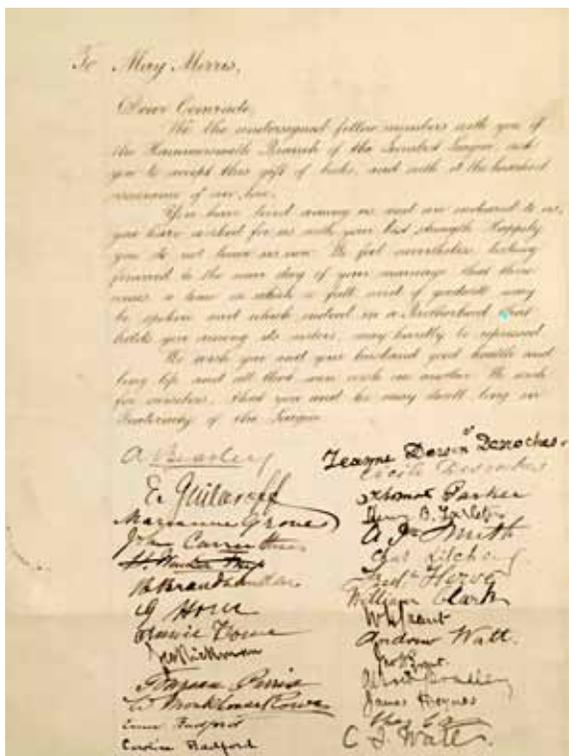
The exhibition is roughly divided into work that May produced during William's life, and then post-William after 1896, until her death in 1938. May left the Firm in 1896, moving exclusively to writing, instruction, and the creation of art embroidery. She had studied textile arts at the South Kensington School of Design, directed the embroidery department of Morris and Co., taught at the Central School of Art and Design, and founded the Women's Guild of Arts, remaining president for nearly 30 years. In her 1893 book, *Decorative Needlework*, and

in her practice generally, Morris focused on education as a central aspect of embroidery production. She lamented the lack of apprenticeships for embroidery, in the way there would have been for the mechanical trades. Her book starts with a history of embroidery—stressing that the medieval examples are the best, because “in medieval ornament, whether in an illuminated manuscript... or embroidered cloth, one is always sure though the interest of detail and beauty of form may vary very much, the work is not lacking in the essential qualities of good design” (*Decorative Needlework*, 1905).

She clearly took these ideas to heart in her own work, and the examples in the exhibition are stunning and wide-ranging. Seeing the embroidery up close is tremendously exciting—you get a stronger sense of intricacy and texture in person. The inclusion of Morris’s drawings and designs for both her textile work and embroidered bookcovers is illuminating. The exhibition design allows us to get a sense of Morris’s artistic progress through different media, and the genesis of her works from design to completed work. Her extensive collaborations with other artists and designers are also notable, and are acknowledged in the exhibition text, which is crucial. Morris has been so defined by her community, and seeing their creative and intellectual intersections helps illuminate her life,

while centering the narrative on her. In one example, when Morris married Henry Halliday Sparling in 1890, the Hammersmith Branch of the Socialist League gave her books with a letter containing 64 signatures from the members. In this letter, they wrote “You have lived among us, and are endeared to us; you have worked for us with your best strength.” This accompanied a woodcut bookplate by Walter Crane and made by W.H. Hooper, where a trellis supports a rose, with Morris’s face in the center. The inscription on it reads “From the Branch to the Flower,” a present from the Hammersmith Branch to a member that they clearly treasured. Seeing these personal notes is a powerful acknowledgment of Morris as a person, who loved, and who was loved. Where the exhibition shies away from this is in a discussion of her relationship with Mary Lobb, her companion at Kelm-scott Manor for over 20 years. Lobb is often mentioned dismissively or critically by Morris’s contemporaries, and in current reviews, and while the exhibition treats her with greater respect, a more straightforward discussion would have joined Lobb to content on George Bernard Shaw and Henry Halliday Sparling.

Scale is an interesting consideration here as well. Morris’s embroideries range in size from tapestries, wall hangings, and altar cloths to cushions, pillows, and books. These were exhibited alongside truly excellent



Letter from the Hammersmith Socialist League on the occasion of May Morris’s wedding to Henry Halliday Sparling, signed by the members



“From the Branch to its Flower,” Woodcut Bookplate by Walter Crane and engraved by W.H. Hooper for May Morris, 1890

watercolors, and jewelry and metalwork. The Gallery integrated the larger pieces with mounted drawings, and several cases of letters, sketches, and photographs. This combination of pieces encourages close looking, and an active viewership, having to stoop over cases, or move closer to works hung on walls. The density of materials could feel a little cluttered, especially given how heavily trafficked the exhibition was, but the flow was generally successful. The number of visitors there when I attended was heartening, as was overhearing excited conversations and exclamations about the beauty of the pieces. They really are astounding, composed of such tiny, precise stitches. I was also impressed by Morris's watercolors, which have received relatively little scholarship. Bringing the pieces in one place with a significant number of photographs was especially impressive—I am accustomed to seeing less of Morris after her father's death, and seeing images of her later years, and then her funeral, really helped complete her story.

May Morris was a prolific teacher and writer, particularly dedicated to demystifying the study and production of embroidery. Her commitment to teaching and promoting the artform was longstanding. Her *Decorative Needlework* subverts the division between designer and worker, or “head and hands,” that persisted in the reworked guild system of Arts and Crafts, and her in-



Embroidery Practice Hoops with text from *Decorative Needlework*



Olive and Rose Embroidery Kit, started, designed by William Morris c. 1880, retailed c. 1900



structive tone in the book is very similar to her 1905 reviews for the *Burlington Magazine* on *Opus Anglicanum*, medieval ecclesiastical embroidery. In *Decorative Needlework*, she urged women who were producing ornamental needlework to command a fair price, and not put their work “into competition with work done by machinery;” she saw this support of women’s work—and their ability to secure just payment—to be her “serious duty” (*Decorative Needlework*, 194). The Art Workers Guild did not admit women, and by forming the Women’s Guild of Arts in 1907, Morris campaigned for the professionalization of handicraft that moved traditionally female artforms from amateur status to a more codified movement, one in which community was central. In her 1905 review of *Opus Anglicanum* she stated, “It is obviously impossible in a few pages to say all one would wish to note about the exhibition. I gather it has come as a surprise to many people that work so distinguished, so highly developed and so varied, should have been produced in our midst at this early date. The surprise surprises me, for they accept without exclamation the front of Wells Cathedral, illuminated books from Winchester, and so forth, and this is but part of the same story.” (Morris, “*Opus Anglicanum*,” 309). This statement is emblematic of her approach to embroidery as an artform, and one that I think applies to her works as well. Their time in the spotlight is very welcome.

My favorite part of the exhibition actually stood apart from the works, which is a sacrilegious thing for a May Morris-devoted art historian to admit—or perhaps I am just unwilling to pick a favorite from such a wealth of objects! The upstairs balcony at the WMG is an open area, warm with natural light, and it was dedicated to *Decorative Needlework*. The walls were covered with blown-up pages from the book, showing specific stitches and techniques. Throughout the space were embroidery hoops hanging from adjustable cords. Cloth held in the hoop was labeled with different stitches: chain stitch, stem stitch, darning, and satin stitch. Visitors could go down to the desk in the gift shop, pick up a needle, and try their hand at embroidery, by following the directions on the reverse of the cloth, or looking at the panels on the walls. I sat on a bench near the window to watch, and four boys, probably about 12 years old, raced down their stairs to get a needle, and raced back up, grabbing an embroidery hoop and excitedly trying out the designs. It was interactive, a smart way to let visitors try out some of the artistic techniques on display in the galleries, and a great way to think about the difficulty of working small. This pedagogical model was one that Morris would have supported and understood. Often

with career retrospectives, I start to think about how the person whose career it was would feel about the situation. Bemused? Content? Smug? Delighted? Thinking about Morris’s impact on new generations of devotees, through this exhibition, made me very happy. I think it would have made her very happy, too.

Anna Wager is a Ph.D. candidate in art history at the University of Washington.



May Morris, Bed Pelmet and Hangings for William Morris’s bed, c. 1893 (embroidered by May Morris, Maude Deacon, Ellen Wright, and Lily Yeats)

WILLIAM MORRIS: DESIGNING AN EARTHLY PARADISE

This exhibition of Morris’s textiles, poems and book designs is on view at the Cleveland Museum of Art until November 11th, 2018. Anderson Turner, the correspondent for the Akron Beacon Journal, comments: “The museum has done an excellent job showing Morris not only as a designer and maker, but also as a person and visionary. This show offers a momentary respite from our own time and gives a glimpse into a world created by an artist who lived long ago but who continues to influence thought to this day.” A description of the items on display appears at www.ohio.com/akron/entertainment/arts/review-exhibit-shows-relevance-of-artist-william-morris-more-than-100-years-later

ROMANCING THE FOLK MOTE: WILLIAM MORRIS, THE SOCIALIST LEAGUE, AND LOCAL DIRECT DEMOCRACY

Michael Martel

Going to bed wishing to “see a day” of “the fully-developed new society,” *New from Nowhere’s* debate-wearied narrator wakes to find his “western suburb” transformed (52-53). The nearby Thames runs pellucid underneath stone bridges bearing “no marks of the grimy sordidness” of the late-nineteenth century. Amidst such a purified environment, Guest discovers his one-time home—Morris’s Kelmscott Manor—no less transmuted into a so-called Guest House, a multi-purpose space for collective dining, dwelling, and, especially, conversing. *New from Nowhere’s* opening chapters move from a fractious meeting, wherein six members of the Socialist League break into six factions, to a setting of utopian solidarity. In this movement from late-Victorian dissensus to twentieth-century consensus, Morris highlights the institution whereby collective self-governance can build a utopian world. The Hammersmith Guest House is, we later discover, a mote house, the primary site of collective deliberation grounding *Nowhere’s* political life.

The revived folk mote, so central to Morris’ prose romances, represents a communistic iteration of late-Victorian “local socialism.” Such localism extends beyond the well-known “gas and waterworks socialism” associated with the Fabian Society, the Social Democratic Federation, and Independent Labour Party to include most major British Socialist groups—the Clarion Movement, the English Land Restoration League and, this article’s focus, the Socialist League. In differing ways, these socialist organizations turned to local governance, broadly conceived, in large part because local authorities had, by 1895, the potential to control essential infrastructures such as sewers, highways, public transit, and, in rural England, land allotments. As John Morrison Davidson, an anarchist-leaning socialist, urged working-class readers, local government was a crucial tool for working class autonomy: “by means of the Parish Meeting, Parish Council, District Council, County Council you,” the “sons of the soil,” “ought to make [Britain] ‘Merrie England’ once more” (*Villager’s* 16).

This article describes some of the ways Morris and the Socialist League imagined and promoted locally-sit-

uated, collective modes of direct democracy, what Morris called the “folk-mote” and what would be codified as the Parish Meeting in the 1894 Local Government Act. In these inclusive deliberative bodies, Morris and others saw the means whereby working-class Britons could fashion their material environments after their own needs and desires. Such local direct democracy, however, presented anarchistic strands of socialism with much the same problem facing Victorian local government reform, namely how to balance local autonomy (the foundation of direct democracy) with standardization across localities, a balance needed to transform local self-governance into a viable alternative to capitalism. For both the Socialist League and most early British socialist organizations, this entailed balancing branch autonomy with league-wide cohesion.

In what follows, I first examine documents from the Socialist League’s Council records about the often-fraught relations between local branches and the League’s executive council. Turning to Morris’s romances, I then suggest that for Morris the archaic folk mote offered a model for communistic self-governance, both locally and trans-locally. This article then concludes with an account of the English Land Restoration League’s attempts to train agricultural laborers in Morris-like modes of direct democracy.

LOCAL SOCIALISM AND THE SOCIALIST LEAGUE

Socialist groups from across the ideological spectrum wrote constitutions mimicking the local state’s characteristic balance of central control and local prerogative. George Bernard Shaw’s description of the local state as involving a governmental division of labor wherein the “work being mainly local, the machinery mainly central” (187) also matches the typical constitution of British socialist groups. The local state’s dialectic of work and machinery, local self-determination and central oversight characterizes the constitutions of most national socialist groups, especially those involved in local socialism. The Fabian Society, the Social Democratic Federation, the Independent Labour Party, even the National Clarion Cycling Club, all drafted organizational structures reiterating the form of the local state. Such organization allowed flexibility of local propaganda and national coordination of resources and message, a particularly critical balance for socialist groups advocating for the working classes’ takeover of local government. For instance, the ILP’s Committee on County Council Elections was structured around a balance of local activism and central oversight. According to the centralized

MANIFESTO
—OF THE—
GLASGOW BRANCH OF THE SOCIALIST LEAGUE
TO THE PEOPLE OF SCOTLAND.

TO THE WORKING PEOPLE.

DURING the past few weeks the struggle between Labour and Capital, in one branch of industry, has been passing through an acute phase. The Miners of Lanarkshire have been fighting for a fractional advance upon wages that barely permit them to live, and afford not the smallest margin for contingencies. This is the battle that from time to time almost all of you have to wage.

In the mining troubles we have but one among many indications of the utter rottenness of our industrial system. Workmen are forced to compete with workmen, capitalists with capitalists; and these two classes are pitted in ceaseless warfare against each other. Open disturbances are but the warning symptoms of the disease under which the community labours. But consider the enormous waste of energy, and the ever-increasing physical and moral deterioration, that our present system entails. Consider how insecure our vaunted civilization is when it is founded on such a basis.

What assistance can you afford your fellow-workmen in their extremity? The power of Capital is as it is mainly because capitalists are united. They form a more or less compact body, in spite of market competition; and they have at their disposal, through laws made by themselves in their own interests, the forces of uniformed proletarians (soldiers and policemen). These forces they use to guard the spoil which they have secured from the product of your labour. Hence the workers in no single industry can wage wholly successful war against the enemy, who hold the land in which they dig and the machinery which they employ. What is necessary, then, is **UNION** among all workers. Your interests are identical—let your action be unanimous. There is weakness in isolation. In combination there is irresistible strength. What you must incessantly aim at, then, is **common action among all workers.**

When you sink mutual jealousies and unite in a general movement, victory is yours. When the Miners resolve to demand an advance, let it be understood that, should it not be conceded, every riveter would lay down his hammer, every joiner his plane, every mason his trowel. Let it be known that every railway guard, porter, signalman, and driver folded his arms; that every baker refused to make his dough, every cook refused to make dinner, and every maid refused to wait at table; that every warehouse hand, shopman, clerk, teacher, and worker with head or hand held holiday until the Miners received what they demanded. One day, or at most two days, of this paralysis would bring the holders of capital and spoilers of labour to their senses and their knees. One general strike would be sufficient. The mere prospect of paralysis of production and distribution would be enough. This perfectly fair, impartial, and non-confiscatory policy should commend itself to all reasonable people. It could even be tried in a limited area. If, for example, in Glasgow and neighbourhood the arm of labour were universally suspended for a week, there could be nothing for capital but to surrender at discretion. Nor is this only a wild dream. If the men in each trade can and do unite, why not in all trades at the same moment? The owners of Machinery and Land cannot eat them. Let the workers stop supplying these social parasites with food, let them stop working for them, and the monstrous superstition, which, under the name of Capital, is trampling the best blood of the nation under foot, is among the things that were. "That high rents (and high profits) might be paid, it has been decreed that multitudes should hunger." While the existing system continues this decree is in force. Socialize Capital and it falls to the ground.

TO THE MINERS.

You and your Wives and Children are passing just now through a fearful crisis. What you need is not advice but food, and that we have not to give you. Yet even in the throes of this crisis, we would urge upon you not to lose either heart or head. Let your action be firm and dignified. Little is gained by deeds of aimless violence. They secure no permanent benefit and they alienate sympathy. Only by acting along with other workers, only by perfecting organisation among yourselves, only by setting before yourselves the definite idea of all Land, Mines, Factories, and other means of production being held and worked by the people for the people, can any worthy result be achieved. Let your rallying cry be "No Masters! No Slaves!" Your present struggle is but a prelude to that in which all workers must soon engage. The great Revolution for which all Socialists strive is coming on apace. Surely it cannot come too soon. The idea of the brotherhood of man has too long been merely a sentiment. Let us make it a reality.

SOCIALIZED LEAGUE, 54 JOHN STREET.

LIBERTY! EQUALITY! FRATERNITY!

that fit its anarchistic values and, ultimately, reiterated bureaucratic forms of national coordination that had held parts of the local state together since the 1830s. Much as any locality wishing to form a government council had to apply to Parliament, Socialist League members desirous of establishing a local branch had to petition the central council. Once created, these branches were urged to submit monthly reports to the central office, much as local authorities had to report to the Local Government Board. On the one hand, the League's constitution granted local branches the powers of self-determination: they could "elect their own Officers and Committee of Management, draw up their own Rules ... and issue manifestoes and leaflets for local purposes" (2-3). On the other hand, the Central Council retained final say in such local matters: "All such publications and rules require the endorsement of the Executive Council" (3).

The League's constitution set the parameters whereby the challenge of balancing branch autonomy with league-wide cohesion could be solved. Outside of its annual conferences, the League attempted to integrate individual branches into a unified movement through the circulation of reports. In an 1887 circular to the local branches, then secretary of Ways and Means, John Lincoln Mahon, asked local branches to submit "Monthly Report of Branches" forms (figure 1). In return for "fill[ing] in the particulars of the condition of your Branch," the League's central office will "send you a tabulated statement of similar information from all the Branches of the League" ("Circular from Mahon to Local

Figure 2: "Manifesto of the Glasgow Branch of the Socialist League," 1886

Branches”). Branches were to report on membership and meeting participation and to provide copies of all branch publications and excerpts from local newspapers “referring to the movement.” The report form promised a simplified method for producing “a regular statement of the progress of each Branch and of the League as a whole.” Circulating information from individual local branches to the central office and then back to all participating branches, this network of reportage strove to balance local autonomy with League-wide coordination, albeit a circuit obliged to pass through a central node. In this regard, the League followed the pattern established by the nineteenth-century provincial press, which increasingly followed local-central-national circuits of information exchange (Hobbs 36). For the League and its contemporary periodical networks, such networks strove to balance local particularity with trans-local cohesion.

Just as the report’s format sought a balance between local particularity and League-wide generalities, the report system overall hoped to decentralize the organization of the League without, on the one hand, devolving into discrete factions or, on the other, congealing into a centralized network dominated by the League’s central office. To circumvent the central office’s potential accrual of power, local reporting was designed to be a voluntary process. The central office “simply invites the Branches to give particulars if they choose.” However, while not compelled to participate, branches would only receive general reports if they submitted a report. Crucial to this solution to the challenge of League cohesion was the cultivation of “mutual interest.” Mahon hoped that the report system—whereby individual branches share information and, in turn, “increase their knowledge of each other’s progress”—would “stimulate a feeling of mutual interest among the Branches,” thereby urging all branches “to spur forward the exertions of all workers in the cause.” Like the League’s constitution, the report system attempted to channel local branch autonomy into a collective, league-wide struggle against capitalism.

We likewise see an attempt to imagine how branches could coalesce into a collective league in the illustration “Chorus of League Branches” (figure 3). Along the left-hand side, a group of branches from Stamford Hill, North London, Hammersmith and elsewhere line up behind a Morris-like figure carrying a sandwich board bearing the League’s manifesto. Here individual branches form a loose cluster of individual factions, a representation, arguably, of the tension between branch

autonomy and league cohesion characterizing the Socialist League during the late-1880s. Confederated by mere proximity, this cluster of branches watches the unfolding parade of socialists forming the illustration’s central image, a utopian image of how branches might merge into a universal struggle against capitalism. Two infinitely receding streams of socialists parade towards the viewer. A column headed by a Bloomsbury Branch banner merges in the foreground with another column that follows a Hoxton Labour Emancipation League banner reading, “Labour is the Source of all Wealth,” a slogan here representing British Socialism overall. The merging of these columns visually stages the coalescence of branch and league foreclosed by the figures at the left-hand side of the illustration. Branches coalesce into an infinitely receding league, a collective that then merges with an equally mass movement of non-league radicalism. Branch, league, and movement stride together, their separate yet infinite streams of members amalgamating behind two, side-by-side banners. At once independent and unified, these parades together both illustrate the Socialist League’s hoped for combination of branch autonomy and League cohesion and suggest how that unity could propel the League into a truly mass movement.

Such balance between branches and the league was, however, difficult to achieve, as evidenced in the 1888 fight between the Bloomsbury branch and the central council. “Chorus of League Branches” can be read, from another perspective, as representing this intra-league conflict. Advocating for Socialist League participation in parliamentary and municipal elections (Thompson 504-505), branches like Bloomsbury’s also fought for greater freedom from the central office’s control. According to the 1888 Hackney circular, “To the Members of the Socialist League,” the Bloomsbury branch was too radically insistent on local autonomy. Attempting to revise the League’s constitution “in a democratic direction,” the Bloomsbury branch threatened to reshape the “whole League into” an organization “entirely against the manifesto and the constitution of the League.” Proposing a representative system composed of delegates “elected by all the branches who possessed more than twenty members,” the Bloomsbury group hoped to prevent the accrual of centralized authority within the League while also ensuring League-wide coordination. The Hackney group disagreed, pointing out that the Social Democratic Federation had already attempted such a scheme, which proved “quite unworkable and a complete failure.” Echoing Shaw’s definition of the local state as “work being mainly local, the machinery mainly central,” the Hackney branch offered a scheme

for an increasingly centralized division of labor between branches and central office. On the one hand, “the mere routine business part of our work should be minimised as much as possible in each branch” by foisting it onto the central council. On the other hand, so freed from day-to-day administrative tasks each branch would “be able to devote the largest possible amount of time to the infinitely more important work of propaganda.”

The satirical “Report of a Meeting, June 25, 1888” caricatures such centralizing plans. Faced with a self-assertive local branch, a “Chorus” of the “Self-Elected Council” connives to disband a rebellious branch because it displays “no proper reverence for constituted authority.” After deciding unanimously to collude with the capitalist press to pressure the branch into dissolving itself, the Chorus of the Self-Elected Council gives “three cheers for parliamentarianism in the working of the S.L.” before collectively proclaiming, “Down with Freedom and Local Autonomy.”

ROMANCING THE FOLK MOTE

Frustrated with such infighting, Morris increasingly turned to other activities – the Kelmscott Press, the Anti-Scrape movement, and the writing of prose romances. While in 1888 Morris responded to calls for confederation as “nonsense” symptomatic of mere factionalism, by the 1890s Morris had, according to E.P. Thompson, changed his mind (505). Morris’s romances evidence his changed attitude towards the by-then failed efforts

to formulate a democratic balance of branch autonomy with league-wide unity. In these works, Morris models an alternative mode of local management by recuperating the folk mote, an archaic mode of local, direct democracy. Believed to be the primary mode of British governance before the Norman invasion, the mote represented to Victorian advocates of local self-governance an institution rich with associations of Anglo-Saxon self-determination and anti-centralism. Until the eleventh century, the mote served as an assembly wherein a locality’s citizens would collectively deliberate upon courses of action affecting the entire community. According to George Laurence Gomme, the ancient folk mote served as the “primary assembly composed of all the thanes of the shire, and not a representative assembly composed of elected members” (*Primitive Folk-Moots* 51). At once designating an assembly of the people for legislative purposes and the site of such an assembly, the folk mote formed for Victorian-era historians like Joshua Toulmin Smith and Morris’s contemporary, Gomme, both the common-law origin of local government and, accordingly, a model for local self-governance in the present. Gomme’s 1880 *Primitive Folk-Moots*, for instance, served as an “enthusiastic” recuperation of the moot for present-day government reforms (49). It did so largely because, as constitutional historian Williams Stubbs put it, “in the shire-moot, we have a monument of the original independence of the population” (qtd. in *Lectures on the Principles of Local Government* 48).

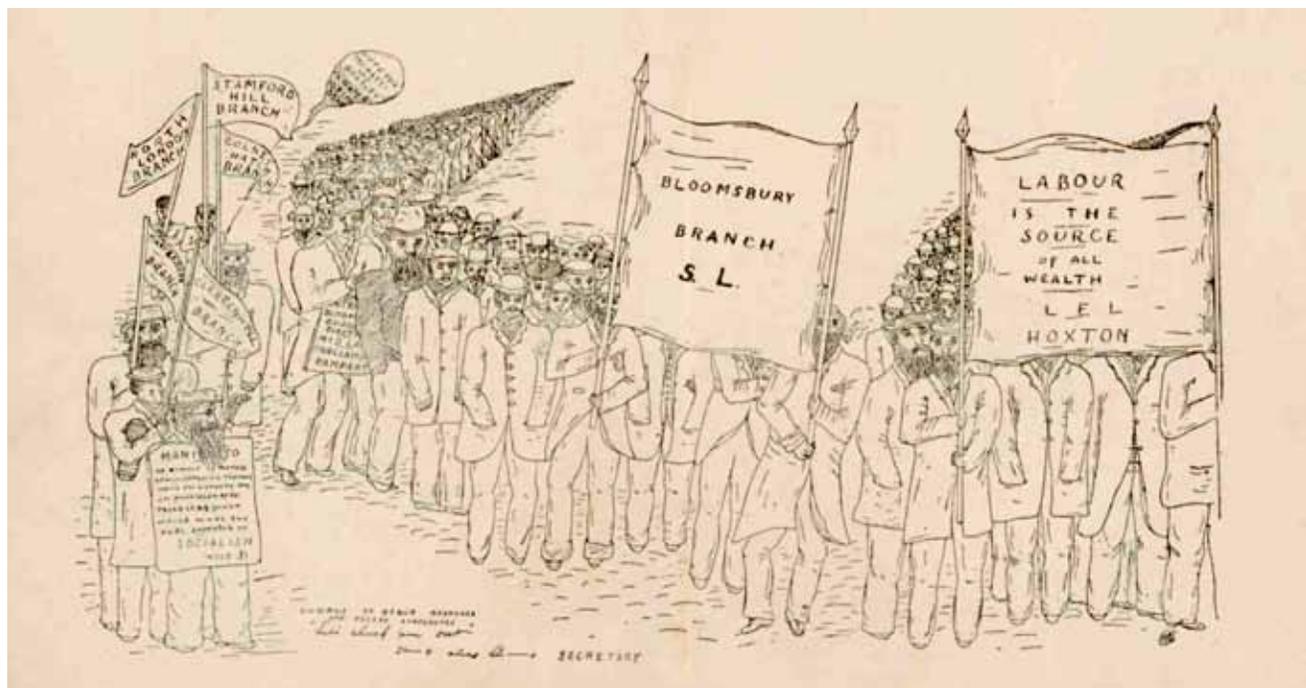


Figure 3: “A Chorus of League Branches,” 1887

Similarly, Morris grounds *News from Nowhere's* future, utopian “pure Communism” in the village-mote. As Hammond explains, “Matters Are Managed” in Nowhere through motes localized in “units of management, a commune, or a ward, or a parish” (133). They work like this: “some neighbors” want “a new town-hall built; a clearance of inconvenient houses; or say a stone bridge substituted for some ugly old iron one.” The whole community debates if the parish will pursue such a project at an “ordinary meeting of the neighbors, or Mote, as we call it, according to the ancient tongue of the times before bureaucracy.” In utopian Nowhere, that is, Britain’s archaic governing institution, once flourishing before the rise of representative government, offers “pure Communism” what Guest calls something “very like democracy” (134), namely the means whereby the community decides which joint projects to pursue. It is through the mote, in other words, that “the whole people is our parliament” (122). While here Hammond develops a communist theory of the folk mote, Morris’s two previous romances explore the mote as a possible vehicle for collective self-determination and, ultimately, revolution.

Morris’s other romances dramatize Hammond’s theorization of the mote. As Morris claimed, *House of the Wolfings* (1888) was “meant to illustrate the melting of the individual into the society of the tribes” (*Letters* Vol. II 835-36). From that 1888 romance onward, the folk-mote would serve Morris as the institution whereby such melting took political shape. *The Well at the World’s End’s* (1896) culminating battle only commences after a shepherds’ folk-mote collectively decides to band together and join Ralph in overthrowing the tyrants who have captured Upmeads in Ralph’s absence. Morris’s earlier romance, *The House of the Wolfings*, similarly makes the folk-mote into the vehicle whereby “the whole Folk ... must determine[] what to do and what to forbear doing” (15). Accordingly, two pivotal chapters—“They Gather to the Folk-Mote” and “The Folk-Mote of the Markmen”—detail the collective deliberation by the men of the Mark over who will lead them into war.

Likewise, the sequel to *The House of the Wolfings*, 1889’s *The Roots of the Mountains*, pivots on a folk mote. *The*

Roots of the Mountains, however, explores how the folk mote can serve as an institution through which various once-autonomous communities can merge into a confederation. At the “Great Folk-mote,” the romance’s various “folk”—the Woodlanders, Shepherd-folk, Dalesmen, and, by mote’s end, the Sons of the Wolf—band together to defend themselves against the “Dusky Men,” a prototype for modern capitalism (Grennan 120). Accordingly, the Great Folk-mote completes the romance’s main story—the establishment of a new fellowship between the severed kindreds, a league that will “make the bitter sweet and purify the earth” (235). Coded as the struggle of a communist confederation against capitalist depredation, *The Roots of the Mountain* thereby stages the Socialist League’s ongoing dilemma over how to balance the autonomy of individual branches with the cohesion of the league, a balance crucial to both battling capitalism and forging a communist alternative.

The Great Folk-mote serves as a trans-local parliament, a representative institution for collective deliberation over the management of shared matters. Accordingly, the three chapters Morris devotes to it imagine how the Socialist League could adapt the folk mote—once an institution for village-wide deliberation—to the task of balancing branch and league interests. This mote sequence commences with a parade of individual folks merging into an at-first heterogeneous crowd, a scene reiterating in narrative form “Chorus of League Branches”’s visual representation of branch and league

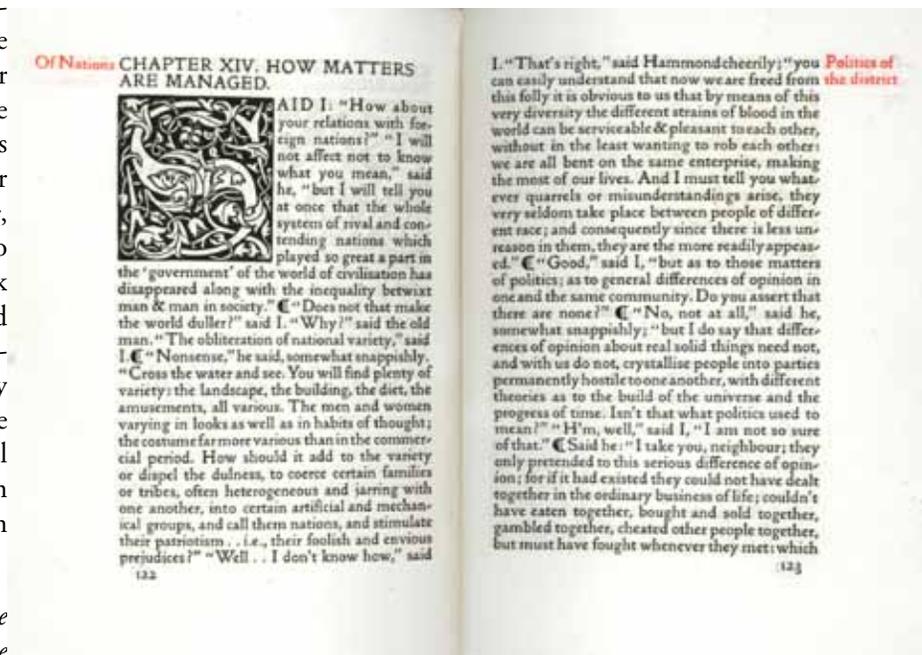


Figure 4: *News from Nowhere*, Kelmscott Edition, 1890

unification. Like that earlier image, the scene opens with a “stream of folk” who “throng[] from everywhere to the Mote-stead” (282). Each kindred, “gathered about the banners” (282), comes “pouring into the space allotted them, like the waters pouring over a river-dam” (286). So gathered together, the Great Folk-mote commences with a collective roar: “Then from all over the Mote-stead arose an exceedingly great shout, and all the men waved aloft their weapons” (287).

The various houses first debate about internal conflicts and then the external threat that occasioned the Great Folk-mote, the Dusky Men’s invasion. These proceedings, narrated across two chapters, follow a template owing more to late-Victorian parliamentary procedure than to the archaic folk mote. The Great Folk-mote commences with the paying of fines, a prerequisite for participation in the subsequent mote echoing the Socialist League’s stipulation that branches must pay dues to participate in League governance. What follows—the resolution of a conflict between the Shepherds and Folk-might—performs an idealized version of self-organization imperfectly attempted by late-Victorian socialist organizations’ council meetings, conferences, and bureaucratic circuits. In restitution for robbing the miser Penny-thumb and murdering Rusty, a police-like figure defending Penny-thumb’s material property, Folk-might offers to repay the former and to sacrifice his freedom in atonement for the latter’s death. The Great Folk-mote then deliberates. “Man spoke to man” in a collective voice that grows into collective judgment: “they said for the more part it was a fair and manly offer” (290). Echoing this mote-wide voice, the majority of the Shepherds agree, an accord Morris depicts as a collective “they” pitted against Penny-thumb’s singular “shrill squeak” (291). Opposing collective unity against selfish individualism, the opening Great Folk-mote scene narrates how the mote can channel dissensus into collective consensus. Defeated, the individualistic Penny-thumb retreats to his home very much as *News from Nowhere’s* hypothetical “man of the minority” resigns himself to isolation by “refusing to help” in the commune’s labors (*News from Nowhere* 135).



Figure 5: *The Well at the World’s End*, Kelmscott Edition, 1896

Unified, the Great Folk-mote then deliberates over how to conduct the war against the capitalistic Dusky Men. To the three points of debate—where to battle, whether to ally with the Wolfings, and whom to elect War-leader—all of the eight houses agree unanimously – preemptively attack the Dusky Men, ally with the Wolfings, and elect Face-of-god War-leader. Morris reinforces this unanimity through the scene’s form. Each house articulates the same opinion in idiosyncratic terms. For instance, the House of Bridge directs, constructing its view through a single three-clause declarative sentence: “The House of the Bridge would have Face-of-god for War-leader, these tall men for fellows, and the shortest way to meet the foe” (293). In contrast, the House of the Wine’s response meanders through a series of convoluted sentences whose

sinuous syntax repeatedly folds back onto itself:

They will not stay at home to have their houses burned over their heads, themselves slain on their own hearths, and their wives haled off to thralldom. They will take any man for their fellow in arms who will smite stark strokes on their side. They know Face-of-god, and were liefer of him for War-leader than any other, and they will follow him wheresoever he leadeth. (293).

This tension between the homogeneity of content and the individuality of style plays out the tension between local autonomy and trans-local unity the Great Folk-mote seeks to resolve. Thus, through stylistic distinctions, Morris’s prose strikes a balance also sought by the Socialist League, a balance between branch autonomy and league-wide cohesion.

As a balance of unanimity and difference, the Great folk-mote is, in fact, a second-order mote, one whose very cohesion depends upon previous deliberation within individual houses. Each house speaks through a lone representative, but only after that house deliberates amongst itself. Fork-bread of Lea can speak for the House of the Vine only because his “kindred biddeth [him] say” (293). In part, the Great folk-mote re-imagines the Socialist League’s conference structure – where-

in branches gather to discuss how the league, overall, ought to conduct its work for the upcoming year. While such a structure sought to merge branch and league, *The Roots of the Mountains* displaces the infighting characterizing its actual practice onto the struggle between Folk-might and the Shepherds. In the face of a collective existential threat, the once-disparate houses band together and voice the same opinion repeatedly albeit in different terms. The second-order nature of the Great Folk-mote serves as the mechanism whereby such unanimity can coalesce. By bracketing off the local debates whereby the House of the Vine and other houses came to their collective decisions, Morris imagines a trans-local mote free from dissensus. Within the novel, the Great Folk-mote's opening debate amongst the Shepherds – “man spake to man,” a cacophonous murmur that builds into a collective judgment, “they said” (290) – stands in for these unrepresented collective debates. This sleight of hand creates the impression of spontaneous comradery across previously squabbling folk.

Read as a sequence, *The House of the Wolfings* and *The Roots of the Mountains* narrate how the folk mote can channel disparate political energies to collective, revolutionary ends. *The House of Wolfings* explores this process's local dimensions – one folk collectively deliberating shared responsibilities in ways similar to Morris's later theorization of the folk mote in *New from Nowhere*. *The Roots of the Mountains* scales the mote up, reimagining it as the medium whereby once-severed folk can combine together not merely to defeat a common enemy, but, in the process, to “make the bitter sweet and

purify the earth.” From the singular folk mote to the Great Folk-mote: these two novels stage, through the genre of romance, a communist revolution enabled by collective self-governance.

Things look different from the other side of the revolution. *News from Nowhere* retains the localized folk mote as the institutional basis for utopian collective management. Gone, however, is the conference-like Great Folk-mote, its lone parallel, the House of Parliament, turned into a dung heap. But that doesn't preclude the folk mote from lending cohesion to utopian Nowhere.

In *News from Nowhere*, Morris develops a peripatetic narrative form that attempts to balance local self-governance with trans-local standardization without recourse to modes of centralized organization like those lampooned in “Report of a Meeting.” John Plotz argues that in Morris's romances, “[t]here is nowhere to run, because everywhere a character goes, the same fundamental conditions apply” (147). While Plotz uses this premise to explore Morris's socialist critique of the realist novel's dependence upon difference, it usefully locates the basis for Morris's communistic local state. If utopian Nowhere's pure communism is grounded in the local mote, that holds true because each of those “units of management,” as Hammond calls them, are at once locally autonomous and universally the same. Hence *New from Nowhere's* typification of localities. For instance, in sketching the “gradual recovery... of those arts of life” town and country people “had each lost,” Guest recounts his perusal of the records of “a certain village

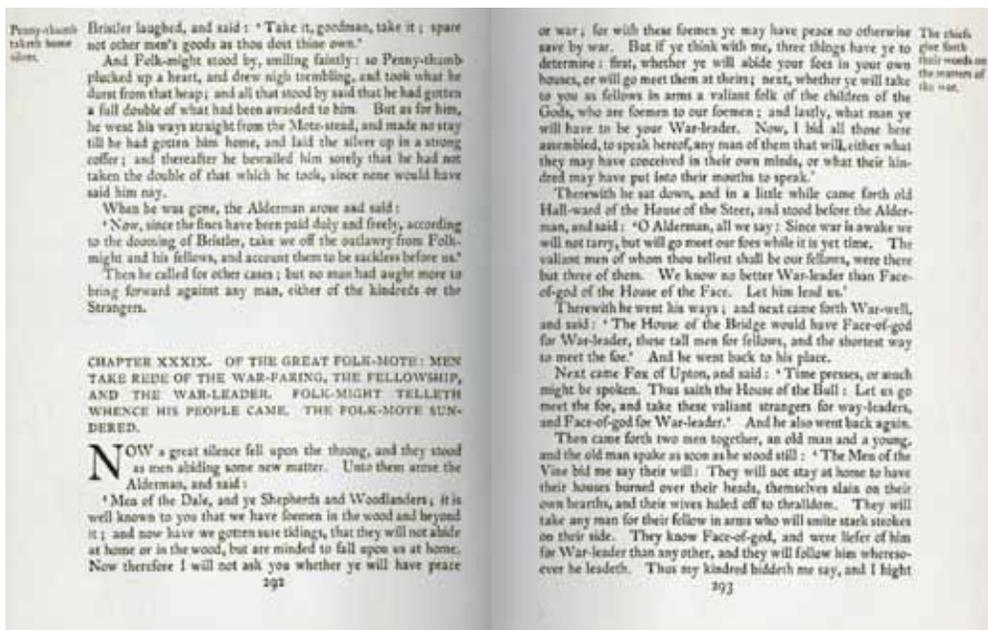


Figure 6: *The Roots of the Mountains*, Reeves and Turner, 1896

**ARTS AND CRAFTS TOURS:
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This tour will spend a week following in the footsteps of the Bloomsbury Group, visiting the places in London where they lived, exhibited and held their meetings. It will also visit Cambridge, and then head south to Sussex and Surrey to visit those homes where, escaping city life, they continued to explore their innovative ways of thinking, working and living. For more information or to register, please contact Arts and Crafts Tours, www.artsandcraftstours.com.

council” (217). These records are at once intensely local – they recount the mote’s deliberation over quotidian matters of self-governance such as “the due proportions of alkali and oil for soap-making for the village wash” – and radically de-particularized – these records stand in for nearly all such units of management in Nowhere. This is precisely the tension captured by the phrase “a certain village council” – local yet universal, or, in my terms, an Anytown.

Nowhere is comprised by such Anytowns, which, like the late-Victorian local state, form a scalar network of territorial types ranging from “large towns” like London to smaller towns (Oxford), villages (Wallingford), and country houses. These units of management are localized through the mote, which, as both a deliberative assembly and the place of that assembly, forms the political and geographical center of each self-governing locality: the “mote house of the neighbors” serves as the “chief building” of Nowhere’s villages. And because each locality is local and universal, Morris comes to reject one of the primary modes for representing locality in the late-Victorian period, namely loco-descriptive regional fiction. Morris informs readers up front that *News from Nowhere* will eschew such a narrative register through his jesting description of the Dickensian-named Boffin, an author of “reactionary novels . . . very proud of getting the local colour right” (72). Instead, as it journeys across Nowhere, Guest’s narrative will iterate the typification exemplified in the phrase “a certain village.”

Waking up in a mote house and traveling from mote to mote, Guest does more than just tour a network of utopian Anytowns. *News from Nowhere* enacts a sort of mobile mote, its very form mimicking the utopian order it describes through typification. After leaving London, Guest’s tour forms a series of collective debates over the boating party’s every action – whether to stop at Hampton, who will ride in which boat, whether the group should watch the “Obstinate Refusers” build a country house, and, most importantly, where to end the boating trip and start haying. A mote-like tour of self-governing motes: Guest’s journey upriver explores “how,” in Dick’s words, “our friends live” in Nowhere by mobilizing the very basis of utopian communism – direct, local democracy.

THE MOTE AMONGST THE AGRICULTURAL LABORERS

News from Nowhere’s peripatetic form – a mobile mote exploring a utopian world of localized motes – took flesh in the socialist van tours of the 1890s. While in 1891 the mote’s localized direct democracy remained

either in Britain’s ancient past or utopian future, the 1894 Local Government Act offered agricultural laborers an institution capable of revitalizing the moot: the Parish Meeting mode of rule whereby smaller communities could govern themselves without elected representatives. In *The Villager’s Magna Charta* (1894), a pamphlet-length guide to the 1894 Local Government Act addressed to agricultural laborers, John Morrison Davidson claims that “your first duty, under the Act, will be to hold a PARISH MEETING or Open Assembly, in every Parish in the Country” (9). Reprising the Socialist League’s anti-representation, pro-direct democracy stance, Davidson argues that because representative government “tends to develop the worse elements in human nature . . . it, therefore behooves you to have as little of it and as much of *democratic or self-government* as you can possibly get.” Because “the *Parish Meeting* signifies *self-government*” and “*The Parish Council, self-seekers’s* government,” Davidson urges agricultural laborers to “let your motto . . . be ‘Politics without Politicians,’ and your aim to make every adult, male and female, a Parish Councillor, in his own and her own right, as the first great step towards escape from landlord and parsonic bondage, towards the recovery of your long lost Right to the Soil” (23).

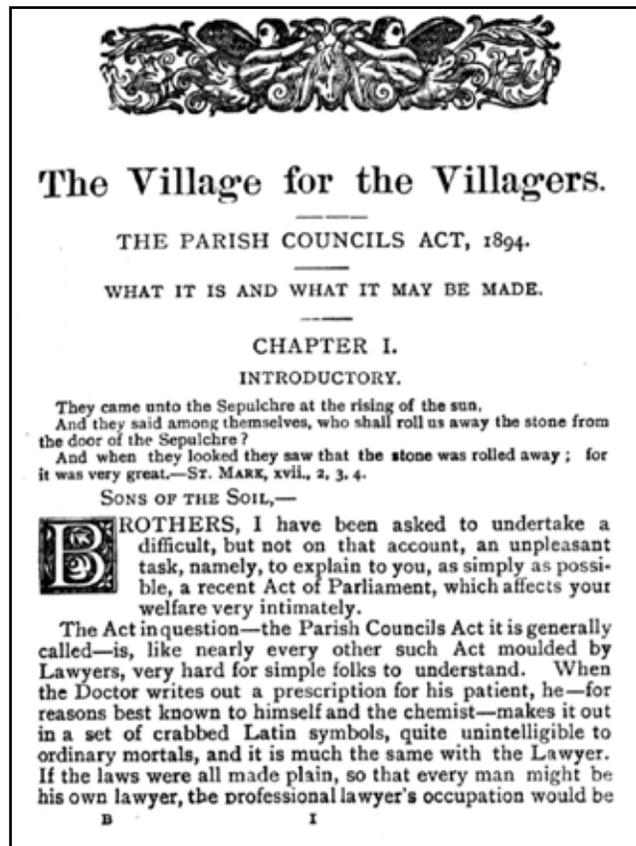


Figure 7: John Morrison Davidson, *The Villager’s Magna Charta*, 1894

Davidson developed a model of anarchism akin to that of Morris's prose romances, one that imagined the local commune as the ideal scale for collective self-determination free from the state. While arguing that "the little Commune is more conducive to progress than the big State" (*Anarchist Socialism v. State Socialism* 23), Davidson, like *The Roots of the Mountain's* Great Folk-mote, sees that progress as dependent upon the development of "one vast Commonwealth of federated Communes, with Authority banished to Saturn, and Liberty with Plenty enthroned o'er all the earth" (9).

Davidson's system of communes finds practical articulation in the English Land Restoration League's outreach to agricultural laborers. The ELRL turned to mote-like local meetings as a way to build a national working-class political network parallel to the local state. Founded in 1884 as a land nationalization group, the ELRL began, in 1891, to advocate for working-class involvement in local government. The League's 1892 annual report justified this project by claiming: "But now that the agricultural laborer had a vote, and could assist himself in his own emancipation, the time had plainly come for a much more systematic appeal" (4). The ELRL's systemic approach consisted of annual Red Van tours. Retrofitting postal vans into omnibus libraries, lecture platforms, and lecturer accommodations, the ELRL toured Britain's countryside promoting local self-government to agricultural laborers. Through its Red Vans, the ELRL hoped "to educate the electorate and to capture the administrative and legislative machinery of the county, with a view to the permanent improvement of social conditions" (*Among the Agricultural Labourers 1892*, 9). From 1891 until 1897, the ELRL sent out upwards of five vans to tour rural England, distribute local socialist literature, and to lecture on local government activity.

These were never mere propaganda tours, however. As the 1892 report warned, "Unless the labourers could be put into the way of themselves doing something, it was certain that our meetings would be a mere ripple on the surface of village life, without lasting results" (4-5). Accordingly, the Red Van's tour centered on the village meeting. According to the 1891 Red Van report, each tour proceeded by "select[ing] a comparatively small area, and [] work[ing] a county ... thoroughly by means of village meetings" (4). The following year's report further specifies that

It has been the aim of the Executive to promote, in each county, the establishment of a strong, solid,

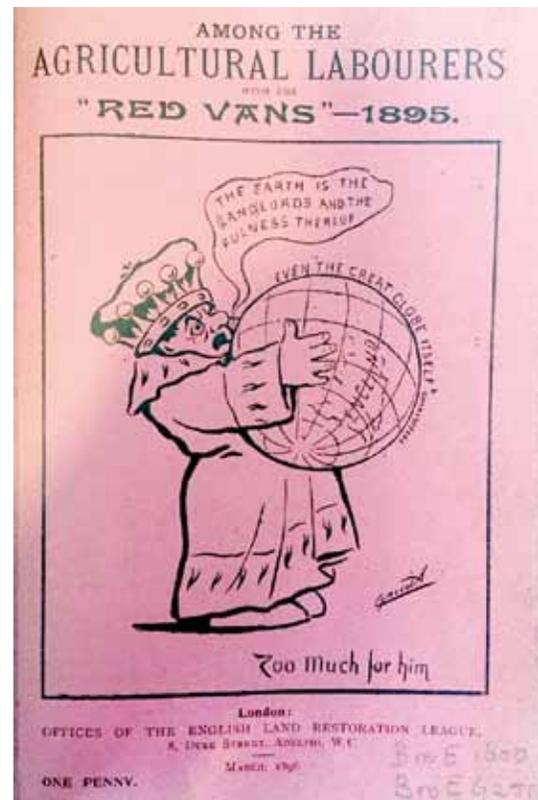
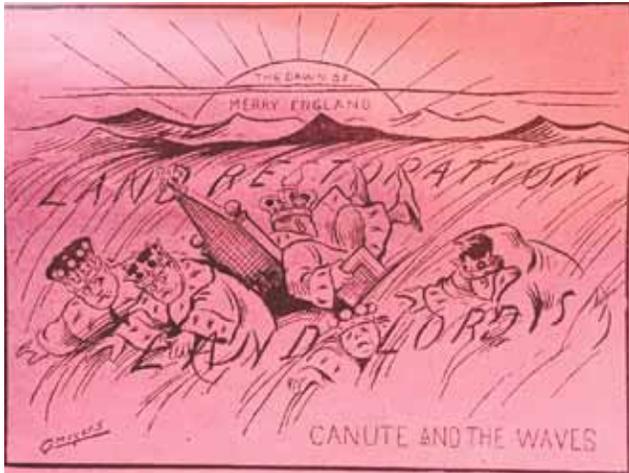


Figure 8: *Among the Agricultural Labourers with the Red Vans, 1895*

self-governing union of labourers ... No opportunity has been lost upon urging the labourers ... that their first duty is ... to take into their own hands the management of their own affairs. (8)

The nearly 500 village meetings in 1892 alone offered occasions for agricultural laborers' deliberation on their collective needs and desires. The ELRL saw the village meeting as modeling the localized public sphere it hoped would remain in effect after the Van left town. Participants in these meetings would thereby practice the type of self-organization and management needed "to produce anything more than a mere ripple on the surface of village life." Meetings modeled the practices of "County Unions," which were to be "democratically constituted, managed by the labourers themselves." Understandably, after the 1894 Local Government Act, the Red Vans promoted the Parish Meeting as the ideal institution for local self-governance. The *Villager's Magna Charta's* detailed outline of the 1894 Act largely reprints an ELRL leaflet and, in turn, the Vans distributed Davidson's pamphlet beginning in 1894. In large part, these shadow parish meetings helped create permanent League branches, which would continue local government agitation throughout the rest of the year. In 1892 alone, the five Red Vans convinced local laborers to form 303 branches.



“Canute and the Waves,”
Among the Agricultural Labourers with the Red Vans, 1893

Disdainful of representative government, the Socialist League and William Morris nevertheless promoted locally-scaled self-management as a means for bringing about the end of capitalism. In his late romances, Morris expressed this commitment through his resuscitation of the folk mote. While developing decentralized modes of trans-local organization, Morris and the ELRL promoted shadow local states that, nevertheless, mimicked the local state’s administrative structure both because such modularity allowed greater local tailoring of propaganda and because it offered the working classes direct training in the governing activities characterizing the local state. Such hands-on tutelage was to develop the working classes’ ability to operate the machinery of governance once they swept to power in local elections. Self-organizing according to the form of the local state, socialist groups formed shadow states. Participation in local branches educated individuals in how to govern the local state because state and socialist groups were organized according to the same dialectic of local prerogative and central control. The ELRL’s efforts “to promote, in each county, the establishment of a strong, solid, self-governing union of labourers” (1892, 8) could promise effective working-class local governance because those local branches were imbricated within a system of local and central authorities formally analogous to the local state itself. Accordingly, the ideological range of such local socialist shadow states is quite broad – from the anarchistic Socialist League to the state-centric English Land Restoration League.

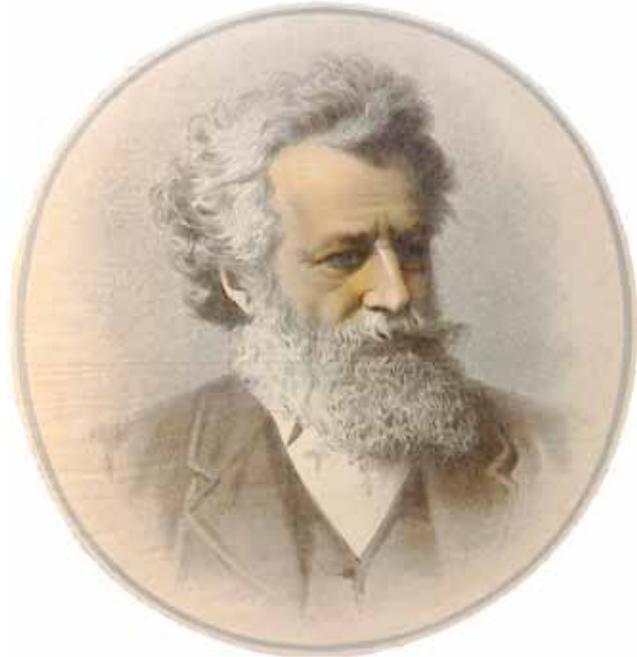
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“JORDIE” – A PIONEER CARTOONIST IN THE SOCIALIST PRESS

Stephen Williams

George Christie’s chromolithographed print of William Morris appeared with the Christmas number of the socialist weekly *Labour Leader*, December 1896, two months after Morris’s death. Copies of the print — measuring 20” x 25” — mounted in a walnut frame were subsequently offered for sale at a cost of 3s 6d. The print was described as “in every respect a high-class specimen of the printer’s craft. It will find a place on the walls of the mansions of the rich as well as the cottages of the poor.” We have no way of knowing how many of these framed prints were sold, but it is likely to have adorned the walls of many socialist homes, such was the respect in which Morris was held.



William Morris drawn by “Jordie” Christie
for the *Labour Leader*, 1896

Christie’s artistic work was well known to readers of the *Labour Leader* because he had published more than sixty large scale cartoons and many smaller illustrations between March 1894 and August 1896. Styling himself “Jordie,” Christie deployed his considerable artistic ability to lampoon liberal and conservative politicians, expose the cruelty of life for the poor, and inspire hope in the future of socialism. A pioneer cartoonist in the socialist press, Christie at his best was very good, making the assessment of one contemporary contributor to the *Labour Prophet* that his work was ‘welcomed, feared and reviled’, an accurate one.¹

George Smith Christie was born in Newton-on-Ayr, Scotland on April 5, 1853. George’s father was a warehouse porter and money for the household was short. Soon after George’s birth the family moved to Glasgow where his artistic talents found expression as an apprentice lithographic draughtsman in the late 1860s. The craft of lithography involved the artist drawing an image with a wax crayon on a limestone surface and then applying chemicals to prepare the surface for printing. Chromolithography, the production of coloured images in which Christie specialised, necessitated a more complex process using multiple stones, registration and overprinting. Within a decade of completing his apprenticeship Christie had set up in business initially with a partner and then on his own account, operating as ‘lithographers, engravers, colour printers by hand press and steam’, with a print shop in Ropewalk Lane and an office in St. Enoch Square, Glasgow. The firm’s principal business was the drawing and printing of advertising posters for theatrical events, a burgeoning trade in which Christie was able to specialise and become well known.

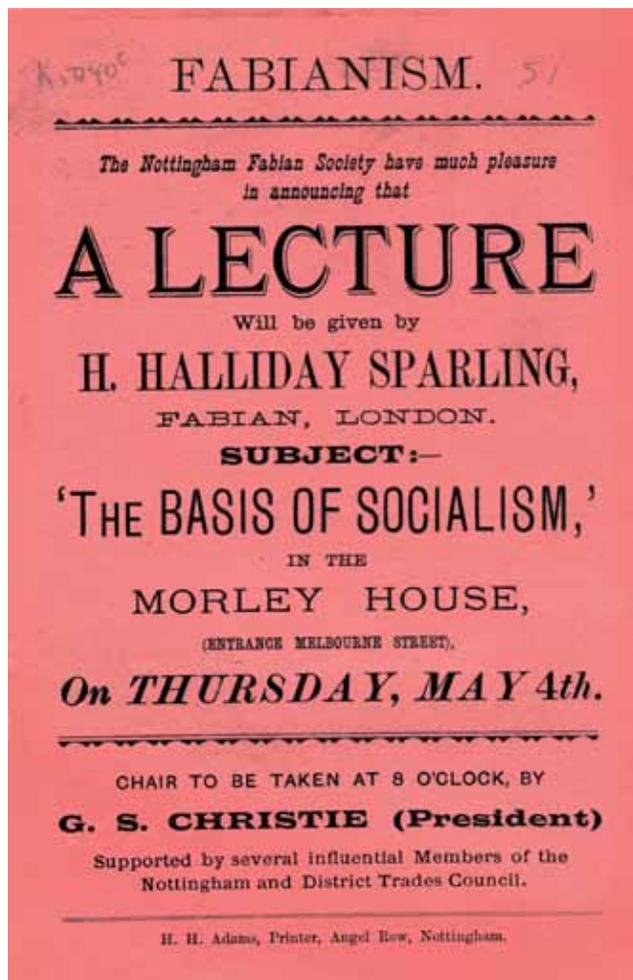
Failure of the business in 1882 forced George and his wife, Agnes, whom he had married in 1879, to move away from Glasgow, and it is likely that for a while he operated a lithography printshop in the City of London. Despite his removal from Scotland, Christie retained a good deal of work from north of the border including posters featured here, for the production of “Saints and Sinners” of May 1885 and “The Magistrate” of March 1886, both staged at the Royal Lyceum Theatre, Edinburgh.

In search of secure employment Christie found work as an artist in or around 1887 with Stafford and Co, a successful lithographic printer in Netherfield, Nottinghamshire. Stafford’s specialised in theatrical work making Christie’s induction an easy one. He would have enjoyed the privileged position of artists in the firm, each with their cubicle to work in and with a guaranteed weekly wage better than the average. George and Agnes settled down in their Colwick home, a few miles east of Nottingham.²

A newspaper report on the political scene in Nottingham from 1893 described Christie as “an earnest worker in the cause of labour, and has been for years. He was a member of the old International,” a claim that is difficult to substantiate.³ If Christie had been a member of the “old International,” the International Working Men’s Association that folded in 1872, it would have

been in his Glasgow years when he was still a young man. No record can be found for this. And although socialist politics in Nottingham did make an appearance with the Social Democratic Federation in the early 1880s, Christie's name does not receive a mention.⁴ It is possible that he was connected to the Nottingham Socialist Club in Bridlesmith gate, but no records of the Club have survived. Nor is Christie mentioned in the two outstanding autobiographical accounts of Nottingham socialist pioneers.⁵

In fact, the first record of Christie's connection with socialism in Nottingham dates from 1892 when he was busy establishing a local branch of the Fabian Society, having joined the London-based organisation in November of the previous year.⁶ Christie took on the role of president of the local Fabian group from which he received credentials to attend the founding conference of the Independent Labour Party at Bradford in January 1893. Opposed to the attempt to replace the words "Independent" with "Socialist" in the title of the new party, Christie told delegates that although "he was a good socialist...the great majority of workers in this country were not socialists, and the new party wanted to win over all the workers of the country."⁷ Christie was elected from the Midland district to serve on the party's National Administrative Council, which meant he appeared in the group photograph of the Council taken in April 1893; he stands on the far left. This is the only known extant photograph of Christie and can be compared to the physical description of him by J. Louis Garvin of 1895: "A highly skilled artisan...a dark, heavy silent person, with a projecting exposed forehead of that



A Meeting of The Nottingham Fabian Society Chaired by Christie, May 1893. Note the reference to legitimacy deriving from the support of "Several Influential Members of the Nottingham and District Trades Council." Courtesy LSE Library

noticeable shape, that it seems to sit over his eyes like a small beehive."⁸

Christie became president of the Nottingham ILP when it was established in March 1893 and across the Midland towns he gave support in setting up new branches and turning the party out into local politics. In Nottingham itself Christie took his part as a representative of the Lithographic Artists Union, pushing forward the perspective of a militant new unionism and independent labour politics. A speaker at the first May Day demonstration in Nottingham in 1894, he told the large gathering to be aware that "they had newspapers who pretended to be friendly and they had others who were not friendly, and the newspapers who pretended to be friendly were sometimes the most dangerous." Here reference was being made to those liberal leaning Nottingham newspapers that purported to support the genuine grievances of labour but opposed the develop-

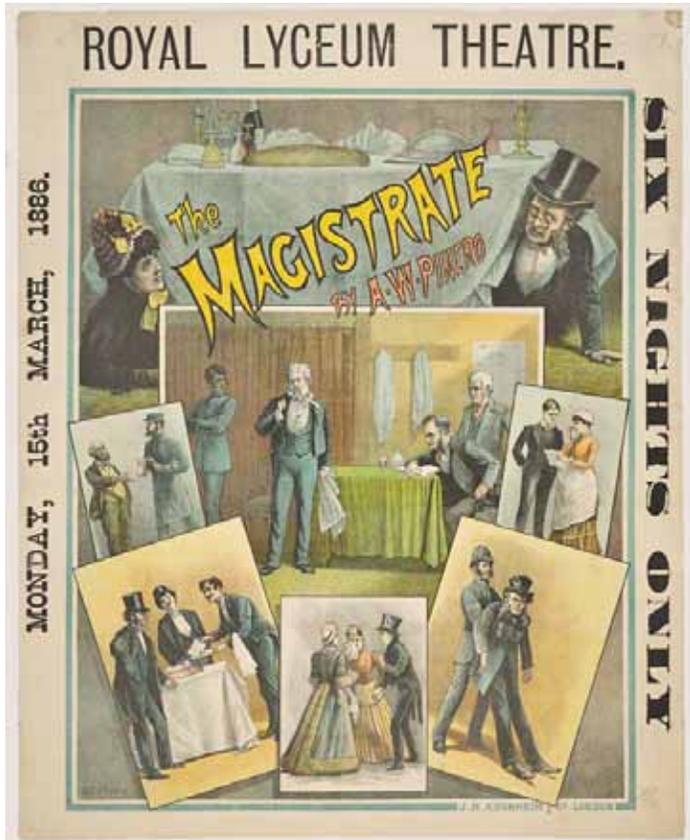
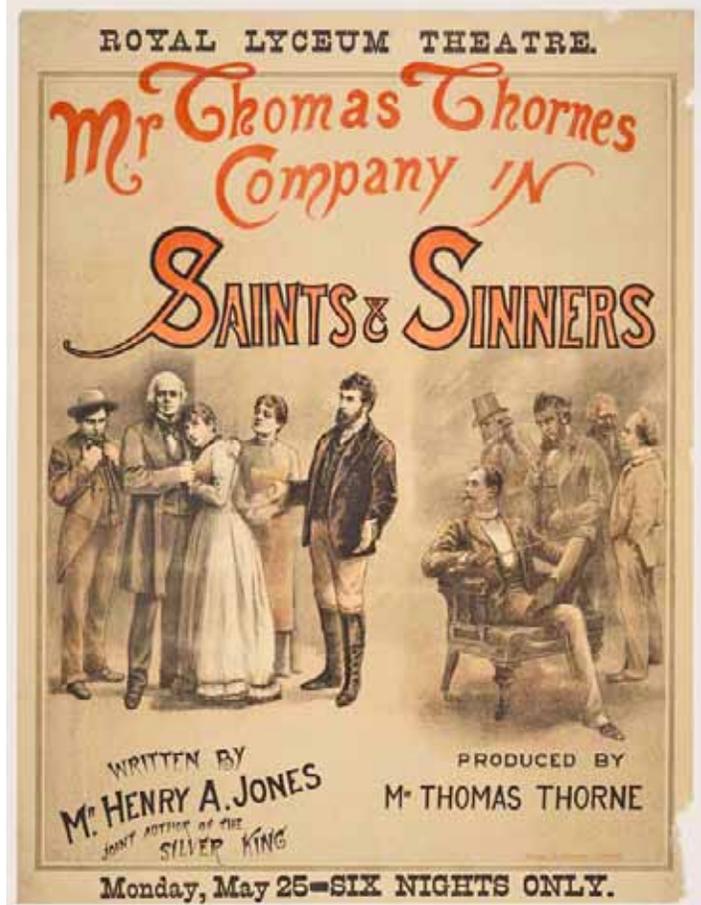


George Christie's ILP Membership Certificate for 1895, Designed by Walter Crane and Signed by Tom Mann. Courtesy LSE Library



The ILP National Administrative Council, April, 1893.
George Christie is standing far left. Courtesy National Archives

Right Top: Christie's design for t
Right Bottom: Design by Christie fo



the production of "Saints and Sinners," Royal Lyceum Theatre, Edinburgh, 1885
 for the Production of "The Magistrate," Royal Lyceum Theatre, Edinburgh, 1886
 Courtesy National Library of Scotland

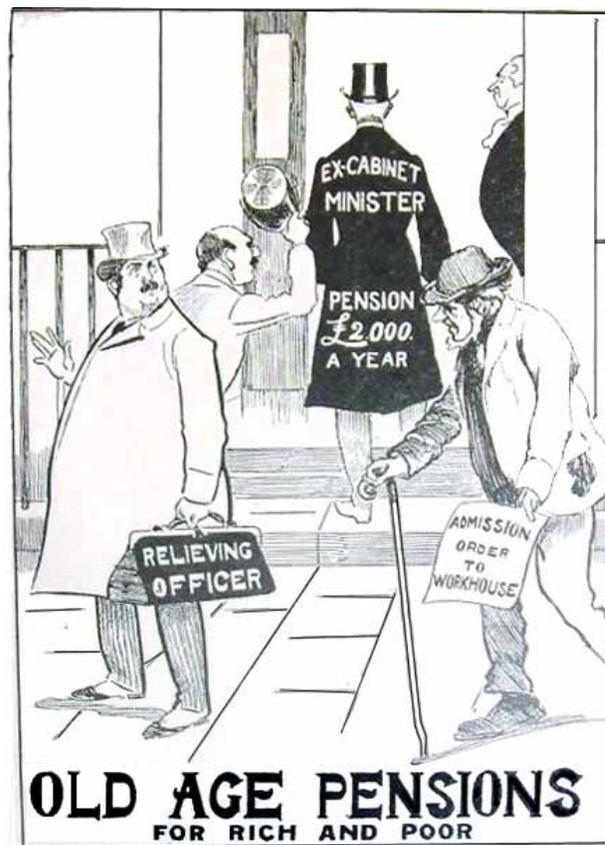
ment of independent labour politics on socialist lines. In a similar vein, the leadership of the Nottingham Trades Council were fearful of those who threatened to break labour's dependency on the local Liberal Association, making repeated attacks on the ILP and other socialist organisations. Christie and others kept up the challenge and on one occasion in 1895 at a meeting of the Labour Electoral Association, a body committed to working with the Liberal Association, the two sides clashed over the attempt to censure the ILP.¹⁰ These differences surfaced again and again in Nottingham during the nineties with Christie a leading protagonist denouncing official Liberalism with as much ferocity in oratory as he would with pen and ink.

During 1893 and 1894 Christie chaired public meetings in Nottingham featuring MP James Keir Hardie, the party chairman, and Tom Mann, the secretary, attracting large audiences and winning the ILP a good deal of positive publicity.¹¹ In the first eighteen months party membership in the city grew to more than 700, two ILP clubs were opened, socialist influence on the Trades Council increased and a number of good votes in municipal elections showed promise. Christie himself had been elected to the Colwick Parish Council in December 1894 and from there only just missed out on winning a seat on the district council. Evidence of Christie's city-wide prominence, re-election to the ILP's National Administrative Council at the second (1894) and third (1895) conferences, and a continuing presidential role through the 1890s at ILP east Midland regional conferences seem to somewhat belie John Bruce Glasier's diary note of June 1895 that: "As I expected – he is not popular among the Nottingham members. They say he is overbearing or rather was, for now he seldom comes near them."¹²

If Christie's activity in Nottingham was less evident in the summer of 1895 it was with good reason, as he had been selected by ILP members in Hyde, Cheshire to fight the seat in the forthcoming general election. Initially reticent about putting his name forward for a parliamentary contest, Christie eventually accepted the Hyde invitation in the autumn of 1894 followed by National Administrative Council ratification in December.¹³ Christie's election address was directed to the "industrious classes" appealing to them to reject the Liberal party which was "fighting Labour everywhere". Giving priority to action to create work for the unemployed and make provision of state pensions, Christie's programme also included the full range of ILP policies which he said accorded with his own general beliefs summarised

as, "In politics I am a democrat, in economics a collectivist."¹⁴ During the two-week campaign Christie relentlessly attacked the record of the outgoing Liberal government for its failure to tackle unemployment and poverty. In industrial matters he condemned Lord Rosebery's government for failing to legislate on the miners working hours and its willingness to use state force on the side of employers in industrial disputes, citing the case of Hull where gunboats had been used against the striking dockers.¹⁵

The final days of the Hyde campaign saw the ILP draft in Hardie, whose own defeat in the West Ham south constituency had already been declared, Tom Mann and Dr. Richard Pankhurst, a leading Manchester based party member who had also stood for election.¹⁶ The large public meeting concluded the concerted local effort to ensure that the ILP message was conveyed to all Hyde's voters. An impressive fundraising campaign succeeded in covering the hefty fee to register Christie's candidature and most importantly, a socialist perspective was given an airing for the first time in a Hyde parliamentary election. However, in a three-cornered contest Christie won only 433 votes, a result that



Christie Design for the Labour Representation Committee Poster on Pensions for the Old. Courtesy Labour History and Archive Study Centre

was probably affected by the decision of many potential voters to support the Liberal, George W. Rhodes, who had the best chance of defeating the Unionist, J.W. Sidebotham, the successful candidate with a majority of close on one thousand.

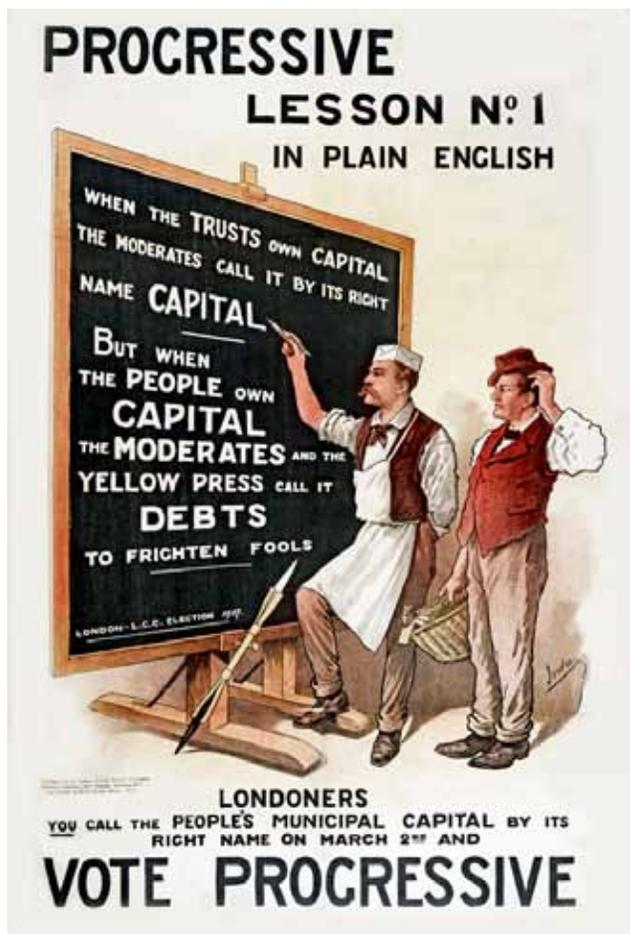
Christie's disappointing result in Hyde was mirrored in a number of constituencies where the ILP stood candidates, confirming the verdict that the party had been too ambitious and overstretched its resources. Naturally, party leaders pointed to the 44,000 aggregated vote for ILP candidates, and there was some truth in the claim that the campaign reached many thousands who would come over to socialism. Nevertheless, there was disappointment that a breakthrough had not been made and a good deal of the party's enthusiasm was seen to have been unrealistic.

Christie did not stand for parliament again, confining his efforts at the municipal level where, following a house move to the Carlton area of Nottinghamshire, he served as School Board member and Basford Poor Law Guardian, both offices providing some scope for

socialist visioning as well as practical improvements. On education, he told a Derby audience in 1902 to keep in mind that above all the school experience should be about cultivating "wisdom, justice and freedom."¹⁷ And on poor law matters, Christie often stressed the stunting effects of poverty on human potential and intelligence, a subject he illustrated with the use of lantern slides portraying slum life.¹⁸ A new set of lantern images were made by the technologically advanced and naturally pictorially conscious Christie to accompany his talks during the Boer War, designed to demonstrate to "those working men who shouted for empire how little of the empire belonged to them or their class."¹⁹ Clearly downbeat at the jingoism current during the war, Christie told Hardie that he believed "the mass is so ground down and demoralised that it has neither the inclination nor the ability to tackle serious matters."²⁰

In the intervening years Christie had left his employment at Stafford & Co. to set up business on his own with the support and capital of a number of Nottingham small businessmen.²¹ A plot of land was bought at Gedling, close to Christie's home in Carlton, and by the end of 1903 "G.S. Christie, Pictorial and General Printers" was looking for business from its newly built premises. Theatrical bills and posters continued to be the staple work, added to which Christie was able to use his contacts to work up a line in political posters — then becoming an urgent requirement for all political parties — for the Labour Representation Committee (LRC) formed in 1900 to improve parliamentary and municipal representation for labour.²² The Nottingham ILP was quick to follow this lead in September 1900 in setting up a Workers' Electoral Federation which for the first time reconciled differences between the Trades Council and socialist organisations in the city. Once again, Christie was asked to be president of the new body, confirming the esteem in which he was held in the city's labour circles.

Christie's dealings with the LRC, conducted with general secretary James Ramsey Macdonald, got off to a good start in January 1904 with an agreement to produce designs for seven posters/handbills for the forthcoming general election. However, during the seceding months Macdonald became increasingly unhappy with Christie's mock-ups and it was only following detailed and terse correspondence that the amended versions were accepted. A number of these designs did appear in the 1906 general election, including the one featured here relating to the LRC's policy on old age pensions.



Poster Drawn by Christie for the LCC Progressive Election Campaign, 1907. Courtesy LSE Library

Christie's business fortunes were struck a catastrophic blow on December 23, 1904 when a fire at the Gedling print works destroyed all the valuable equipment and much of the stock.²³ Christie acted quickly to set up a new business with an address in Station Rd, Carlton and appealed to Macdonald for work, reminding him how he had drawn "cartoons for the *Leader* in its struggling days for over two years and never disappointed them once and this without a penny of remuneration." This plea, with its reference to the years when there was an excellent personal and political relationship with Hardie, predictably cut no ice with the haughty Macdonald who simply closed the correspondence, thus ending the contract with Christie.

A move to Beeston in Nottinghamshire for George and Agnes followed in 1906/7 from where he ran a small-scale business pared back to the minimum. The commission to produce election posters for the London County Council Progressives in 1907 would almost certainly have jarred with him, but it was much needed business and he ensured the results were good. Of these, arguably the best was "Progressive Lesson No.1," featured here.

With work slow to come in, it is likely that the move soon after to Apperley Bridge, Bradford coincided with a retreat from business and extended periods of holiday for George and Agnes in their native Scotland. George's health began to deteriorate during 1910 and on June 30 he died, aged 57 years, while staying on the shores of the Firth of Clyde at Helensburgh.

An obituary in the *Labour Leader* described Christie as "an artist and cartoonist of no mean capacity, and for originality of design and strength of drawing second to no other man in the profession". Mention was made of his latter years "being marked by business cares and worries," so that he died penniless. It went on: "He had all the artist's irresponsibility and largesse of hand in all that pertained to finance." The notice continued with the following words that suggest it was written by Christie's friend, Keir Hardie: "A big man of genial spirit and temperament, he was the embodiment of healthy merriment, and the life and soul of good fellowship."²⁴

We cannot be certain that Christie ever met William Morris, but it is possible that their paths crossed at some point. If Christie was in London during the mid-1880s he would have had numerous opportunities to listen to Morris speak, and later in the decade Morris addressed audiences in Nottingham on at least five occasions.²⁵ That Morris's work inspired socialists in Not-

tingham as it did elsewhere is beyond question. We only need note the *Labour Leader* report that an ILP meeting in Nottingham of June 1895 "was opened out by giving Wm. Morris's "The Day is Coming" to confirm this and appreciate the reach and powerful meaning of socialist fellowship that Morris did so much to engender in these formative years."²⁶ There can be little doubt that George Christie himself was stirred by these associations, and that they inspired him to use his talent to create an image of Morris that accurately captured his likeness and, the artist would have hoped, his spirit. ●●●

NOTES

1. *Labour Prophet*, April 1895, p. 53.
2. P.B. Waite, *A History of Stafford and Co: Lithographers, Pictorial, Letterpress, General and Commercial Printers*, Netherfield: P.B. Waite, 2012, p. 17.
3. *Workman's Times*, January 21, 1893, p. 3.
4. P. Wyncoll, *The Nottingham Labour Movement, 1880-1939*, London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1985; P. Wyncoll, *The Labour Movement in Nottingham, 1880-1918*, Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Open University, 1982.
5. Lord Snell, *Men, Movements and Myself*, London: J.M. Dent, 1936; Percy Redfern, *Journey of Understanding*, London: Allen and Unwin, 1946.
6. *Fabian Society Executive Council Minute Book*, November 3, 1891, LSE Library.
7. Independent Labour Party, Report of the First Conference held at Bradford, 13-14 January, 1893, Glasgow, p. 3.
8. J. Louis Garvin, "A Party with a Future," *Fortnightly Review*, September, 1895, p. 328.
9. *Nottingham Evening Post*, May 5, 1894, p. 3.
10. *Labour Leader*, May 4, 1895, p. 10.
11. *Nottingham Evening Post*, May 29, 1893, p. 4; *Nottinghamshire Guardian*, June 2, 1894, p. 5.
12. Quoted in Wyncoll, *The Labour Movement in Nottingham*, p. 206.
13. *Labour Leader*, September 15, 1894, p. 2; ILP Minutes of the National Administrative Council, December 4, 1894.
14. G.S. Christie Election Address, July 9, 1895. University of Bristol Special Collections.
15. *North Cheshire Herald*, July 13, 1895, p. 5.
16. *Labour Leader*, July 27, 1895, p. 8.
17. *Derby Daily Telegraph*, May 1, 1903, p. 2.
18. *Derby Daily Telegraph*, February 22, 1896, p. 1.
19. *Labour Leader*, January 11, 1902, p. 15.
20. *Labour Leader*, January 24, 1903, p. 27.
21. National Archives, BT31/10014/74841.
22. Christie's correspondence with the LRC at the Labour History and Archive Study Centre, LP/LRC/18/48-122. For the importance of political posters in these years see J. Thompson, "Pictorial Lies? Posters and Politics in Britain c. 1880-1914," *Past and Present*, November 2007, pp. 177-210.
23. *Nottingham Evening Post*, December 24, 1904, p.14.
24. *Labour Leader*, July 15, 1910, p.446.
25. N. Salmon and D. Baker, *The William Morris Chronology*, Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 1996, pp. 189, 209, 210-211.
26. *Labour Leader*, June 22, 1895, p. 5

A SELECTION OF CHRISTIE'S CARTOONS FOR *LABOUR LEADER*



"The Three Disgraces," April 28, 1894

One of Christie's earliest cartoons portraying landlord, churchman and capitalist frolicking above the downtrodden poor.

George Christie's almost continuous run of political cartoons for Keir Hardie's *Labour Leader* commenced with the first issue of the new weekly edition of March 31, 1894 and concluded on October 5, 1895. Two further large scale, specialist subject cartoons appeared on January 4, 1895 and August 1, 1896 (reproduced here), added to which his vignettes of Hardie, Ben Tillett, and other scenes continued to feature for some time as headers for regular columns.

Christie's cartoons, and those of other artists working for the late Victorian socialist press, have received little attention from scholars probably because of the ephemeral quality of the images and the ultimately disposable nature of newspapers.¹ Yet Christie's drawings frequently occupied a prominent position in the *Labour Leader*, and it is clear from contributors and reminiscences of the newspaper's journalists that he had his followers who would go straight to the cartoon before looking at other items in the newspaper.² Sometimes appearing above verse by Tom Maguire in the persona of "Bardolph," Christie's cartoons were nearly always brilliantly drawn, if occasionally spoilt by poor quality print and paper, and pertinent to current political issues. Christie's pen was at its sharpest caricaturing Pre-



"Seen Through," July 14, 1894

Keir Hardie literally seeing-through Batty Langley who had been elected as MP for the Sheffield Attercliffe constituency in a by-election of July 1894. Langley, a well-to-do Sheffield timber merchant, had been selected by the local Liberal caucus ahead of a local working-class man, Sam Hobson, an officer of Sheffield Trades Council and Labour Electoral Association. In retaliation at what it believed was Liberal treachery, the ILP stood Frank Smith, who won more than one thousand votes.

mier Lord Rosebery and his Chancellor of Exchequer, Sir William Harcourt in the final twelve months of the Liberal government (1892-5).

We cannot be sure why Christie's series of cartoons ended in October 1895. It is possible that the special relationship Christie had with Hardie was interrupted when the deputy editor, David Lowe, took on additional responsibility during and after Hardie's trip to the US commencing in August 1895. Certainly, this is when Christie's spot of resident cartoonist was taken by "Alexis" whose real identity has remained undiscovered, but we know to be another Scot and possibly a friend of Lowe. Christie did offer at least one more cartoon after his last published effort of August 1896, this in December 1897, only to be told via the "Answers to Correspondents" column of the *Labour Leader*: "Jordie, We are sorry to refuse the drawing, but you leave room for imagination, and if it reached the hands of our contemporaries endless complications would ensue. A modern drawing should be accompanied by explanatory notes."³ It seems likely that Christie, an experienced and one-time popular cartoonist, would not have taken kindly to this advice or its method of transmission, and consequently he offered the *Leader* no more drawings.



“Too much independence,” October 20, 1894

The speech of John Burns, Battersea MP and one-time potential leader of the socialist movement, on October 7, 1894 is taken by Christie as his theme for this cartoon that sparked some controversy. In his speech Burns accused the ILP of being “badly led, worse organised and wrongly inspired.” He went on: “The workers of this country did not want and would not have the narrow exclusiveness of that party”....”There was such a thing as too much independence.”²⁴ Christie drew Burns (‘Honest John’) and Chancellor of the Exchequer Sir William Harcourt being led by Premier, Lord Rosebery, a millionaire by marriage into the Rothschild family.

Edward Carpenter wrote to Hardie objecting to the cartoon: “You know I think a good many of the cartoons before this one have been unworthy of the Labour cause—spiteful & petty & coarse—but this one beats them all. I know you, dear H, are so well-fitted to hold up a higher standard of Labour policy—something generous and large—minded and calm—that I think it is a pity to condescend to the common scurrilities of the Capitalist press. Leave carrion to the carrion. The greater trouble in the Labour movement is the petty jealousies of the ‘Labor-leaders’—for God’s sake do not ferment them.”⁵ We do not have Hardie’s reply.

The cartoon was referred to again three years later when Robert Blatchford, editor of the *Clarion*, revisited another of Christie’s *Labour Leader* drawings, “The Party Juggernaut,” June 2, 1894, which featured Burns chasing Rosebery’s landau at the Epsom races, where his horse, Ladas, would days after win the Derby. Blatchford wrote that “The Leader cartoon, presenting John Burns as running after the Liberal and picking up money. Was both unfair and untrue.”²⁶ In defence of Christie and the *Labour Leader*, David Lowe reproduced three of “Jordie’s” drawings which made clear that although Rosebery is cast as dispensing cash from his overstuffed waistcoat, the illustration does not depict Burns as recipient.⁷



“The German Emperor” May 25, 1895

Kaiser Wilhelm II, the German emperor, is shown reduced in size following the rejection of his repressive Anti-Revolutionary Bill by the German parliament, the Reichstag

NOTES

1. Two of Christie’s cartoons are considered by Caroline Sumpter because of their connection to fairy tales. C. Sumpter, *The Politics of the Fairy Tale in the 1890s Socialist Press*, Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2008, pp. 96-99. See also L. Ugolini, “By all means let the ladies have a chance: The Workman’s Times, Independent Labour Representation and Women’s Suffrage, 1891-4,” in *The Men’s Share: Masculinities, Male Support and Women’s Suffrage in Britain, 1890-1920*, eds., A.V. John and C. Eustance, London: Routledge, 1977, pp.62-87; and L. Ugolini, “Independent Labour Party Men and Women’s Suffrage in Britain, 1893-1914,” Unpublished Ph.D. thesis. University of Greenwich, 1997, pp. 36-132.
2. See Marxian’s comments on “Jordie,” *Labour Leader*, January 15, 1898, p. 17 and D. Lowe, *From Pit to Parliament: the story of the early life of James Keir Hardie*, London: Labour Publishing, 1923, p. 97.
3. *Labour Leader*, December 25, 1897, p. 424.
4. *Daily News*, October 8, 1894, p.7.
5. Quoted in C. Tsuzuki, *Edward Carpenter, 1844-1929: Prophet of Human Fellowship*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980, p. 117.
6. *Clarion*, February 27 1897, p.66.
7. *Labour Leader*, March 6, 1897, p.77.

BETWEEN THE

LIBERAL & TORY PARTY

THE
WORKING MAN GETS
THOROUGHLY
WRUNG OUT



POLITICAL WASHERWOMEN

THE INDEPENDENT LABOUR PARTY
VIEW OF THE POLITICAL SITUATION.

'The ILP view of the Political Situation' July 13, 1895

Christie's view of party politics during the general election campaign of July 1895. Lord Rosebery, for the Liberals and Lord Salisbury, Conservative and Unionist leader wring out the working man. This drawing was used by the ILP during the election campaign.



"International Socialist Conference, London August, 1896," August 1, 1896

This cartoon shows a female figure representing socialism holding a bouquet bearing the words "plenty, peace, freedom," ascending out of a scene of exploitation and demoralisation. The image marked the opening of the International Socialist Workers' Congress held in London in July and August 1896. This drawing was included in the ILP's publication, "Full Report of the Proceedings of the International Workers' Congress in London July and August, 1896."

MORRIS IN NEW YORK CITY: MLA 2018

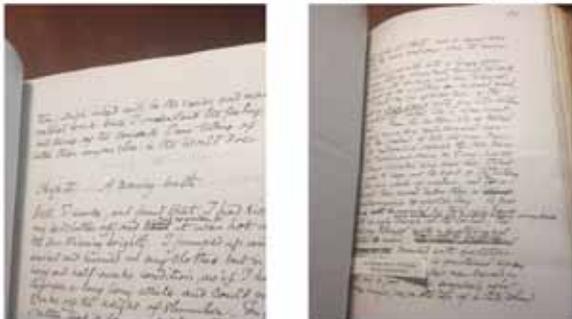
Friday January 5th was a full day for the Morris Society, with two sessions at the Modern Language Association held at the Sheraton Hotel, followed by a tour of an exhibition of Pre-Raphaelite materials at the Morgan Library and our annual dinner at John's of 12th Street restaurant.

THE FIRST SESSION, "THE PRE-RAPHAELITES AND THE MORGAN LIBRARY," organized by Professor Paul Acker, was held from 1:45-3:00 p. m. in the Sutton Place Room at the Sheraton. Abstracts of the talks are given below.

"UTOPIA UNDER CONSTRUCTION: *NEWS FROM NOWHERE* IN THE PIERPONT MORGAN LIBRARY,"

Meghan Feeman, Manhattanville College

Among its riches, the Morgan Library & Museum contains a veritable treasure trove of materials connected with Victorian author and designer William Morris. This bounty includes choice selections from Morris's collection of medieval manuscripts and incunabula, but it also is comprised of a vast amount of rare and archival material related to Morris's own writings, such as his 1890 utopian romance *News from Nowhere*. The Morgan has, among its Morris holdings, at least four early editions of *News from Nowhere* as well as manuscript drafts and printers proofs with autograph comments and corrections. For this talk, I use all of these materials to undertake a sustained reading of *News from Nowhere* as a vision of utopia under construction, one that evolves in significant ways as the story moved from copy book to manuscript to serial edition to trade book to limited-edition fine press book. Though scholars previously have discussed the impact of certain major alterations—for example, the late inclusion of a chapter on female labor—no one yet has focused specifically on the Morgan holdings and used them to compare Morris's early, more tentative characterizations of utopia in the copy books to the assured and polished representation to be found in



News From Nowhere, printer's copy

the magisterial Kelmscott Press edition. What we find, I argue, is evidence of Morris's increasingly complex awareness of his multiple, conflicting readerships as well as of his efforts to emend his text in specific ways to play to the strengths of different print materials and publication formats. More fundamentally, I see in *News from Nowhere* Morris's negotiation of competing impulses—to inspire utopian dreaming, on the one hand, and to concretize a specific socialist vision of utopia, on the other—and the Morgan materials provide an unparalleled opportunity to read the text against itself, using its multiple iterations, its author's drafts and notes, to make visible the ways in which this utopian romance contains within itself numerous potential utopian schema, some of which came to fruition in the "authoritative" version and others which were discarded along the way.

"FINDERS, EYES, AND SYMPATHY":

THE KELMSCOTT CHAUCER PLATINOTYPES,"

Heather Bozant Witcher, St. Louis University

In 1898, an anonymous contributor to the *Daily Chronicle* suggested that William Morris had dishonestly failed to acknowledge the role of Robert Catterson-Smith as collaborator of Edward Burne-Jones in the Chaucer. Such accusations brought the legacy of the Kelmscott Press under attack and prompted responses



Illustration for *The Wood Beyond the World*,
Edward Burne-Jones and Robert Catterson-Smith,
Courtesy of the Mark Samuels Lasner Collection

from both Catterson-Smith and Sydney Cockerell, private secretary of the Press and Director of the Fitzwilliam Museum. “Fingers, eyes, and sympathy I brought,” wrote Catterson-Smith, “but Sir Edward was responsible for every line and dot in the eighty ‘Chaucer’ drawings which I did under his guidance.”

What, exactly, was Catterson-Smith’s role as collaborator? Examining such a question relies upon the Pre-Raphaelite archive at the Morgan Library. The Morgan’s holdings include a number of Catterson-Smith ephemera and correspondence, including an autographed manuscript in which Catterson-Smith describes his intensive process of translation (MA 8593). Far more importantly, the Morgan holds the aforementioned Chaucer illustrations: 86 platinotype reproductions of Burne-Jones’s drawings, reworked in black and white Chinese ink by Catterson-Smith for the engravers of the woodcuts. In this presentation, I examine the Morgan’s holdings to reproduce the collaborative process between Catterson-Smith and Burne-Jones. This archive preserves the individual stages of what Morris called “sympathetic translation,” and provides significant insight into the creation of what is commonly perceived as a joint project between Burne-Jones and Morris. Probing into the complexity of the Kelmscott collaborations attests to the sociability of the Pre-Raphaelites, and the Pre-Raphaelite focus on cooperation and lived communal experience.

**“THE PIERPONT MORGAN LIBRARY AS
PRE-RAPHAELITE ARCHIVE,”**

Paul L. Acker, St. Louis University.

A longer version of this presentation will appear in the 2018.2 *Useful and Beautiful*.

“OBJECTIFYING MORRIS,” the official William Morris Society session, was held from 3:30-4:45 in the Bowery Room, Sheraton.

**“MATERIALLY RELATIONAL: WILLIAM MORRIS
AND THE HYBRID LITERARY OBJECT,”**

Rachel A. Ernst, Boston College.

The History of Reynard the Foxe was first translated and printed by William Caxton in 1492 and reprinted by William Morris at the Kelmscott Press in 1892 in a run of 300 on paper and 10 on vellum. Bound in limp vellum with cloth ties, Morris’s version of the tale participates in nineteenth-century material culture as a hybrid literary object. Neither merely an artifact, nor only a literary text, *Reynard* is paradigmatic of the output of Kelmscott in its engagement in a complicated relationship of ma-

terial and textual presence that depends on the active nature of the object itself. Over ninety libraries worldwide hold copies of the Kelmscott edition of *The History of Reynard the Foxe*; these institutions range from the Denver Public Library to the Victoria and Albert Museum. Rather than pursuing a



Rachel A. Ernst

more general, descriptive look at the entire run, however, I will focus on one copy of Caxton’s work, owned by the John J. Burns Library at Boston College. Focusing on a single book allows for a close reading not of the text or even the volume’s bibliographic points, but of the materially relational networks in which the object participates. I define materially relational networks as the connections that arise between objects through material and literary construction, provenance, and position within an archive. This particular copy of *The History of Reynard the Foxe* is implicated in a particular chain of texts and material objects, stretching from its fifteenth-century literary antecedents towards the future of private presses and beyond. By redirecting our attention from the individual—whether it is author, creator, text, or object—to the materially relational, a new vitality can be recognized in Morris’s complex combinations of art and literature. Examining the hybrid of materiality and literariness that this book exhibits provides us with a news lens through which to examine the rest of Morris’s work, privileging the vital relationships that emerge as we move beyond literary or bibliographic importance into a more universal network of materiality that shaped the physical and intellectual frameworks of the nineteenth century.

Theoretically, this discussion of materially relational networks is rooted in new materialisms, specifically the work of Diana Coole and Samantha Frost and their understanding of active matter. Coole and Frost claim that “materiality is always something more than ‘mere’ matter: an excess, force, vitality, relationality, or difference that renders matter active, self-creative, productive, unpredictable” (9). These ideas of vitality and unpredictability inform the emergence of the hybrid literary

object as this book fulfills Morris's proposed purpose of creating beautiful, readable books, while also engaging in more complicated, active relationship dictated by the object itself. The book, as a catalyst for these relationships is—to borrow a term from Bruno Latour—the primary actor. The connections exist whether the reader or researcher is aware of them or not, privileging the book as an active participant that does not depend on the presence or manipulation of the human. The materially relational networks that this book creates are rooted in its construction and position within a special collections library. This copy of the book is not limited to a static past that sprang into being at a particular moment in the nineteenth century, but is the focal point in a chain of people, objects, material, and labor—from farmer to papermaker, from slurry vat to hand-press, from fifteenth-century medieval text to late nineteenth-century fine printing—that moves beyond the bounds of the object and creates relationships in the archives and beyond.

The networks that evolve from this book range from Joseph Batchelor, the English papermaker who made the “Primrose” paper used in *The History of Reynard the Foxe*'s printing, and his printing materials such as flax, to the shared occupational materials and philosophies of other typographers and artists represented in Burns Library's collection such as the George F. Trenholm Papers or the Eric Gill Papers. The concrete connections between printing materials and the more abstract connections that exist between archival resources are mutual in the opportunities or potentialities that they contain. The possibility present in this specific copy of *The History of Reynard the Foxe* is, ultimately, what looking at materially relational networks adds to our understanding of Morris and his works. By reading the relationships that this hybrid literary object engages with, I offer a materially informed way of reading that shifts attention away from the author or the text to the object itself and the agency that informs the networks it creates. Studying the material relationality of objects bridges the gap between the literary and the material, privileging text and object equally and examining the ways in which these networks raise questions of access and representation, while offering new connections across time and the archive. In a world that grows increasingly divisive, the networks created by the hybrid literary object provide necessary links to both the past and the future, revitalizing the book as active rather than static, and offering a material model of connection through literary objects.

**“WHERE HAVE ALL THE MANUSCRIPTS GONE?
MORRIS'S AUTOGRAPHS IN DIASPORA,”**

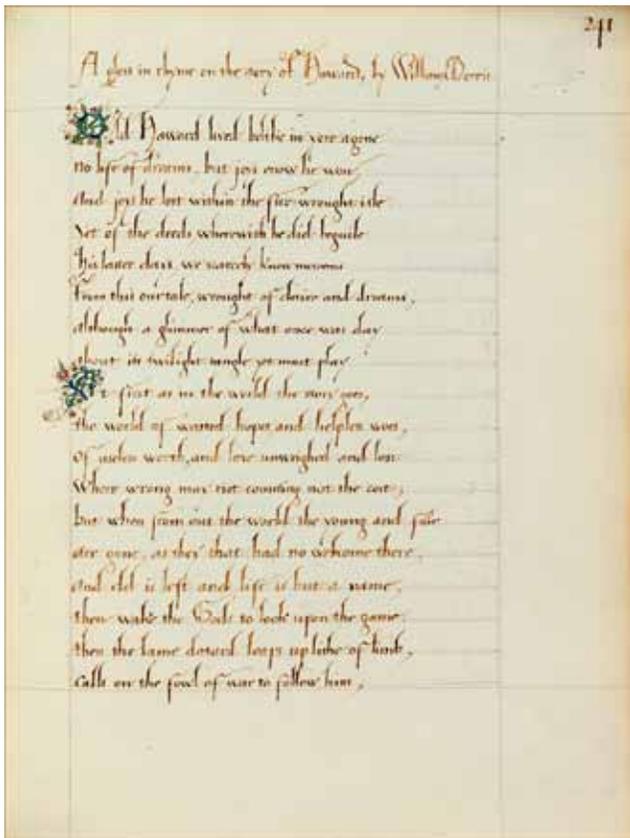
Florence S. Boos, University of Iowa

Morris spent many hours of his busy days and nights in the physical labor of composing, rewriting, and copying his extensive literary output into more legible or attractive forms (even exclusive of his voluminous correspondence, documented in five large volumes of his published letters, with a sixth forthcoming). Moreover, he apparently enjoyed these acts of inscription, as testified by the precision of his firm, bold yet attractive fair copies, often of near-calligraphic quality. In later life he could well have afforded a private secretary to copy his literary works, and there are a few rare instances of such replicas, but mostly he preferred that the pleasures and responsibilities of composing his writings, in the most literal and physical as well as imaginative senses, should be his.

Dispersal of these manuscripts began shortly after his death, however, when Morris's executors included some in the large posthumous sale of his books and incunabula. After her mother's death, moreover, May Morris apparently also began to give away or sell off many of her father's autographs. She may not have envisioned, for example, that manuscripts sold to someone in Wolverhampton in central England would end up some 5,300 miles to the west in Pasadena, California, or worse, divided—virtually shredded—among many remote repositories; or considered that sale to private collectors might make these materials unavailable for decades, even permanently. Nor was May Morris the sole owner of Morris autographs, and separate, well-intended attempts to secure their own Morris keepsakes for posterity by Emery Walker, Charles Fairfax Murray, Sidney Cockerell, and Georgiana Burne-Jones and her children have likewise contributed, somewhat ironically, to limiting their availability. As the editor of the William Morris Archive, over the past several years I have made efforts to partially remediate this diaspora insofar as is now possible—that is, by photographing Morris's manuscripts for regrouping on the Archive with other versions of the same text.

Morris autographs are located in libraries in England, in Leeds, Cheltenham, Oxford, Cambridge and several repositories in London; in the U. S., in Amherst, Massachusetts; New Haven, Connecticut; Newark, Delaware; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Austin, Texas; and Pasadena, California; in Amsterdam in the Netherlands (home of the records of the Socialist League and

some of Morris's socialist essays); and of course, in several private collections. And we do not even know how many literary drafts or illuminated manuscripts there are or were. In one egregious case, a near calligraphic-quality manuscript has simply disappeared (the second volume of a three volume translation of *Lancelot of the Lake*, once believed to be at Kelmscott Manor). Could someone simply have pitched it? As an instance of what may yet be found, however, I discuss a newly-discovered calligraphic manuscript of an original Morris poem buried in the Fitzwilliam Museum Founders Library in Cambridge, a personal gloss on his translation of "Howard the Halt."



'Howard the Halt,' Fitzwilliam Museum
 "A Gloss on the Story of Howard by William Morris," f. 241

A mixture of necessity, happenstance, and a few questionable decisions has made the task of making sense of Morris's arduous composition practices as well as the range of his stunning and exquisite calligraphy more difficult, even confounding answers to such seemingly simple questions as, "How much did Morris write?" As late as 1969 a major critic could proclaim that Morris's casual facility in writing made his long poems themselves unworthy of study. In these latter days, surrounded by piles of manuscripts (metaphorically speak-

ing), the assumption that Morris's poetry and prose were casually composed rather than the results of herculean efforts over time now seems close to ludicrous.

Moreover a revenant Morris might have said that the struggle to retrieve a lost past—in this case, the passion and craft behind the many incarnations of his writings—echoes the kind of time travel he himself had practiced in returning to the worlds of the Peasant's Revolt, the myths of ancient Greece, or the sanguinary feuds of medieval Iceland. Etched into but never fully expressible through the media of paper, vellum, pencil, pen, and brush, these physical evidences of Morris's intense creative purposes may yield yet more penned but unpublished writings for discovery, or less mundanely, may convey a trace of his spirit across intervening time.

A fuller version of this essay will appear in a later issue of the *Journal of William Morris Studies*.

After this, from 5:00-6:00 p. m. we viewed an Exhibition of Pre-Raphaelite Materials at the Morgan Library, prepared by the curators for the William Morris Society.

And finally, on Friday evening from 7-9 p. m. we enjoyed a group dinner at Johns of 12th Street.



Mark Samuels Lasner, Florence Boos, and Frank Sharp
 at the Pre-Raphaelite Materials exhibit at the Morgan Library



MORRIS IN CHICAGO:

As mentioned in the President's letter, the Modern Language Association Convention will be held in Chicago 3-6 January 2019. For information on the location and times for our session, "William Morris: Reflections on Art and Labor," please see the U. S. Morris Society website after July 1st.

DUNLAP FELLOWSHIP FOR 2019:

Applications are invited for the Morris Society's annual Joseph Dunlap Memorial Fellowship. These should include a two page description of the project, a c. v., and one letter of recommendation (which may be sent separately), and should be sent electronically to paul.acker@slu.edu and jcarlin@pugetsound.edu by December 15th. The fellowship offers funding of \$1000 or more for research and other expenses, including travel to conferences and libraries. Projects may deal with any subject relating to Morris, including translations and the creation of teaching materials. Applications are sought particularly from younger members of the Society and from those at the beginning of their careers.

JOSEPH DUNLAP MEMORIAL FELLOWSHIP WINNER:

Shyam Patel is a Ph.D. student in English Literature at the University of California at Irvine. His dissertation broadly concerns the relationships between moral perfectionism, political utopianism, and aesthetic organicism in the work of British authors and artists, including William Morris, in the second half of the nineteenth century. Shyam describes his project:



In the Morris portion of my dissertation — "Romanticism, Socialism, and Organicism: The Aesthetic of William Morris's Late-Career Politics" — I locate the ideological unity of Morris's dedication to artistic production and political activism in the Romantic tradition of organicism, whose simultaneous critique of political economy and advocacy of aesthetic autonomy Morris sought to embody over the course of his multifaceted career. Focusing on the last decade of Morris's life, I argue that the complementarity of the Romantics' organic models for artistic activity and social life helps to demonstrate both the aesthetic dimensions of Morris' work organizing for the Socialist League (from 1884 to 1890) and the political dimensions of his work managing the Kelmscott Press (from 1891 to 1896). I claim that Morris's turn from the former to the latter represents not an apolitical 'retreat' into pure aesthetics, but rather an attempt to practically realize on a smaller, private scale the Romantic union of aesthetic and political organicism that his previous cultural criticism and socialist activism sought to secure on the grander scales of public opinion and policy, respectively.

2019 AMY P. GOLDMAN FELLOWSHIP IN PRE-RAPHAELITE STUDIES

The University of Delaware Library, in Newark, Delaware, and the Delaware Art Museum are pleased to offer a joint Fellowship in Pre-Raphaelite studies, funded by the Amy P. Goldman Foundation. This one-month Fellowship, awarded annually, is intended for scholars conducting significant research in the lives and works of the Pre-Raphaelites and their friends, associates, and followers. Research of a wider scope, which considers the Pre-Raphaelite movement and related topics in relation to Victorian art and literature, and cultural or social history, will also be considered. Projects which provide new information or interpretation—dealing with unrecognized figures, women writers and artists, print culture, iconography, illustration, catalogues of artists' works, or studies of specific objects—are particularly encouraged, as are those which take into account transatlantic relations between Britain and the United States. Applicants whose research specifically utilizes holdings of the University of Delaware Library, the Mark Samuels Lasner Collection, the Delaware Art Museum, and the Helen Farr Sloan Library and Archives are preferred.

A stipend of \$3,000 is available for the one-month Fellowship. Housing will be provided. Personal transportation is recommended (but not mandatory) in order to fully utilize the resources of both institutions.

The Fellowship is intended for those who hold a Ph.D. or can demonstrate equivalent professional or academic experience. Applications from independent scholars and museum professionals are welcome. By arrangement with the Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, CT, scholars may apply to each institution for awards in the same year; every effort will be made to offer consecutive dates.

The deadline to apply for the 2017 Fellowship is November 1, 2018. Notification of the successful applicant will be announced by December 1, 2018. The chosen candidate will then be asked to provide a date for assuming the Fellowship by January 1, 2019.

If you have any questions or would like to request more information, please contact: Margaretta S. Frederick - Pre-Raphaelite Fellowship Committee - Direct line: 302.351.8518 - E-mail: fellowships@delart.org

MAY MORRIS: ART & LIFE,
 NEW PERSPECTIVES
 EDITED BY LYNN HULSE
 FRIENDS OF THE
 WILLIAM MORRIS GALLERY, 2017.

KellyAnn Fitzpatrick

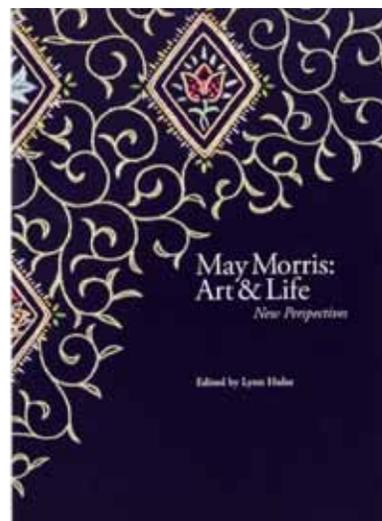
The William Morris Gallery's recent exhibition on *May Morris: Art & Life* (October 7, 2017-January 28, 2018) showcased over 80 works produced by or related to Morris's younger daughter, May (1862-1938). In preparation for the exhibition, in May 2016 the Gallery hosted a conference on May Morris, with the intention that "The conclusions of the conference will inform a major new exhibition of May Morris's work at the Gallery in 2017."¹ Talks delivered at the conference thereby helped structure the exhibit. They also became the basis for this fine collection of essays, which serves as both an effective introduction to May Morris's life and a finer-grained exploration of her contributions to the Arts and Crafts Movement, her exceptional skill in the art of embroidery, and the many ways in which she shaped and safeguarded her father's legacy.



Portrait of May Morris, c. 1879 by Elliot and Fry

The book itself is beautifully designed and made. The cover features embroidery (from a cloak; c. 1897)

designed by May and embroidered by May Morris and Maude Deacon. (Notably, throughout the collection of essays, May Morris is consistently referred to as "May"; "Morris" is a designation reserved for William Morris.) Each of the thirteen essays included in the book feature a substantial number of full-color images. While not exactly a catalog of the 2017 exhibition, it is an impressive combination of written scholarship and visual curation in which May's work in particular has been carefully selected and vividly represented.



The first three essays in the collection provide an excellent introduction to May's life and work. Jan Marsh's "A remarkable woman — though none of you seemed to think so: The overdue re-evaluation of May Morris's career" efficiently highlights useful biographical details from May's early life including some of the eccentricities of growing up in the Morris household and social circle. Marsh also reframes May's body of



Portrait of Jane and May Morris, c. 1863

work as one that deserves more critical attention than it has heretofore received. Anna Mason's chapter on "May Morris: socialist agitator" delves into a younger May's involvement with socialism, as well as her relationships with playwright George Bernard Shaw and future spouse/ex-spouse Henry Halliday Sparling. The most poignant biographical chapter, perhaps, comes in the form of Rowan Bain's "A tale of two sisters: May and Jenny Morris." Bain follows May and Jenny's relationship from Jenny's epilepsy diagnosis in 1876 to her death in 1935 and describes how the supervision of Jenny's care fell to May after the death of Jane Morris in 1914. Although May arranged for caretakers to see to Jenny's daily needs rather than take on that role herself, Bain is careful to point out how determined May was to include Jenny in the process of commemorating their parents through various building projects at Kelmscott Manor.



Hangings for William Morris's bed, designed by May Morris (c. 1893)

In 1885 May took on managerial duties of the embroidery department of Morris & Co., the family firm. Catherine White's "Decorative Needlework: May Morris and her embroiderers" follows May's hiring and training of embroiderers and apprentices, movement of the embroidery workspace from Kelmscott House (in London; not to be confused with Kelmscott Manor in West Oxfordshire) to various hired rooms to her own living space at 8 Hammersmith Terrace. White's essay is particularly interesting in its evaluation of the relationship between May and her embroiderers over the years and does not shy away from criticism of some aspects of May's managerial style. It was during this period that May designed the hangings for the 17th-century bed housed in her father's room at Kelmscott Manor and executed the design with Morris & Co. embroiderers Lily Yeats (W.B.'s sister), Maude Deacon, and Ellen Wright. The bed and its hangings are often



Photograph (from left) of Margaret Burne-Jones, May Morris, Jenny Morris, and Philip Burne-Jones, 1874 by Frederick Hollyer

included in exhibitions on May and on William Morris, and the hangings are a strong example of the intricate and complex work that May and her embroiderers could do. Hanne Faurby and Jenny Lister look more closely at this work in "Apple Tree to Vine Leaf: the Morris & Co. embroidery day book 1892-1896." Faurby and Lister use the "day book" in question to analyze the financial contributions the embroidery department made to the firm, as well as the types of products they



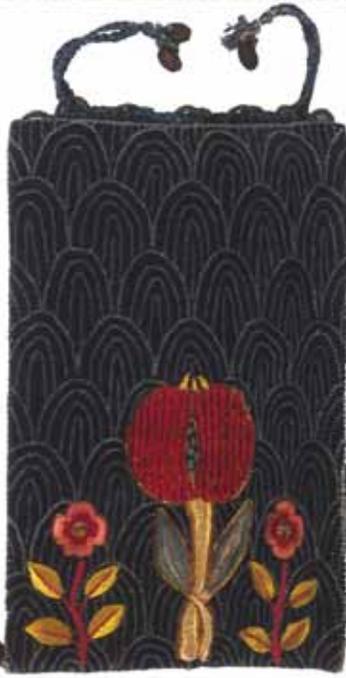
May Morris, Apple Tree design (c. 1890-2); nightdress sachet embroidered by Caroline Phillips, Lady Trevelyan

sold. It is fascinating to note that while the department produced a number of finished pieces, the majority of items sold were "kits" created to guide consumers through embroidering a pre-set design (very much like a paint-by-number). Because kits and finished work could be custom-ordered (and custom-designed), Faurby and Lister note that the book itself is an excellent opportunity to analyze the popularity of different types of designs during this period. Furthermore, it demonstrates the role May played not only in designing and producing

embroidery, but also in cultivating active participation in the embroidery arts.

The next two essays perform close readings of May's work in specific contexts. Editor Lynn Hulse's "When needlework was at its very finest": *Opus Anglicanum* and its influence on the work of May Morris" delves into May's expertise on medieval embroidery (on which May lectured) and also compares the design and stitch-work in medieval pieces with May's own embroidery. Hulse thereby also demonstrates May's direct contributions to the nineteenth-century medieval revival. Annette Carruthers reads May's work through the lens of her relationship with Theodosia and Thomas Middlemore in "Darning, dyeing and embroidery: May Morris at Melsetter," which contemplates May's forays into different artistic and geographic fields. Carruthers does well in highlighting the collaborative nature of May's relationship with Theodosia in particular, while providing an equally careful picture of the Middlemores' Melsetter House in Orkney (itself an artistic and social endeavor).

May's multifaceted talent for lecturing, organizing, and teaching are highlighted in the next three chapters. In "May Morris: Special Teacher of Needlework at Birmingham School of Art, 1899-1902," Helen Bratt-Wyton details the courses May offered at the school. While pausing to contemplate the draw that William Morris's daughter must have been at such an institution, Bratt-Wyton also manages to emphasize May's own suitability for and dedication to her role as teacher. Helen Elletson, in "May Morris, Hammersmith and the Women's Guild of Arts," likewise posits May's role in the Arts and Crafts community at Hammersmith as both a continuation of her family's earlier involvement and a means to pioneer formal avenues through which women were invited to participate, such as the Women's Guild of Arts founded in 1907. Elletson also highlights the strong relationship May had with long-time friend



Book bag, c. 1890s, designed by May Morris; embroidered by Jenny and May Morris

Emery Walker and explains how a number of May's works fell under the care of the Emery Walker Trust and the William Morris Society (UK). One such piece, May's 1897 *Orange Tree*, may be especially familiar to UK residents, as it appeared on a 2011 postage stamp that honored May's contributions to the wider Arts and Crafts movement are the subject of Margaretta S. Frederick's "May Morris in America: spreading the Arts and Crafts gospel." Frederick follows May's five-month American lecture tour that began in October 1909. Frederick recounts May's exhausting schedule and does particularly well in describing her courage in navigating solo a landscape of unfamiliar customs and audiences. Frederick also handles May's "friendship and misaligned romance with the New York lawyer John Quinn" (166) with the delicacy such a subject deserves.

The final three essays address May's active role in shaping William Morris's legacy. Mary Greensted's "May Morris and Ernest Gimson: a wartime relationship" focuses on May's determination to commemorate her parents through building projects at Kelmscott. Gimson designed the Manor Cottages, completed in 1914 in honor of Jane Morris (not to be confused with the Memorial Cottages, designed by Phillip Webb, that Jane had commissioned in 1902 in honor of William Morris). Gimson also created the initial design for the impressive Memorial Hall (completed in 1934 well after Gimson's death in 1919). Kathy Haslam's essay on "Our beloved Oxfordshire home: May Morris and Kelmscott" provides a broader view of May's relationship with Kelmscott Manor, beginning with her childhood visits upon her father's leasing of the property in 1871. Jane Morris purchased Kelmscott Manor in 1913, leaving it to her daughters upon her death in 1914. Haslam focuses on the later years that May spent at the house, as well as the thought and care that went into



May Morris, *Orange Tree*, c. 1897



Portrait of May Morris, c. 1910

May's decision to bequeath the house and a large portion of its contents to Oxford University upon her own death in 1838. As Haslam points out, because of May's efforts, Kelmscott Manor, now owned and operated by the Society of Antiquaries of London, still stands as a reminder of her father's — and May's — legacy.

This lovely collection of essays concludes with Julia Dudkiewicz's "Memorialising her father's legacy: May Morris as curator and gatekeeper of William Morris's estate and the role of Kelmscott." While she calls for a more complete view of May's memorializing efforts, Dudkiewicz wisely focuses her essay on three case studies: 1) May's role as editor of *The Collected Works of William Morris*, 2) May's will, and 3) May's participation in the 1934 Morris Centenary Exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum; all three case studies are smartly executed. Furthermore, Dudkiewicz's closing thoughts provide a very suitable conclusion for the collection (of essays and images) as a whole. Pondering two watercolors commissioned by May in 1912 from Mary Annie Sloane, Dudkiewicz closes with this observation on Sloane's portrayal of May in *William Morris's Bedroom at Kelmscott Manor*: "She is depicted standing in the doorway to Morris's bedroom, in the moment of offering a glimpse of her father's home. The iconography of her standing in the doorway serves as the perfect metaphor for May's role as curator and gatekeeper of Morris's estate" (230-1). Adding to this, I would argue that the closing image also invokes the complicated nature of the relationship between May's own art (such as the embroidered bed hangings captures in the painting) and her father's legacy: a relationship that this collection of essays tactfully explores.

1. William Morris Gallery. Events Calendar: May Morris Conference 2016. <http://www.wmgallery.org.uk/whats-on/events-calendar/may-morris-conference-2016/>



Mary Annie Sloane, *William Morris's Bedroom at Kelmscott Manor*, 1912

KellyAnn Fitzpatrick is a Britain Fellow at the Georgia Institute of Technology and currently serves as Vice President of Programming of the WMS-US. Her chapter "The Medievalism of William Morris: Teaching through Tolkien" will appear in the forthcoming volume "Teaching William Morris," edited by Elizabeth Miller and Jason Martinek.

WILLIAM MORRIS'S SOCIALIST DIARY.
EDITED BY FLORENCE S. BOOS. 2ND
ED. NOTTINGHAM: FIVE LEAVES
PUBLICATIONS, 2018.

Michael Robertson

In late January, 1887, William Morris began a diary of what he called his “propaganda”—that is, his work on behalf of the Socialist League. He thought it might “one day be published as a kind of view of the Socialist movement seen from the inside, Jonah’s view of the Whale, you know.” Morris kept up the diary for three typically frenetic months, during which he gave thirty-four speeches throughout England and Scotland, edited the weekly *Commonweal*, completed his translation of Homer’s *Odyssey* and saw it through the press, wrote some forty letters to over twenty correspondents, and managed Morris and Co., his successful design firm. At some point after that, he reviewed the diary for publication, excised all the passages that were uncomplimentary to his fellow socialists, and then must have realized that what remained was a rather drab record of train journeys taken, drafty meeting halls endured, and socialist comrades encountered. He put it away among his papers, where it remained for nearly a century.

The *Socialist Diary* was first published in a limited fine press edition in 1981. The next year Florence Boos published a heavily annotated version in the *History Workshop Journal*, and in 1985 the Journeyman Press published the *Diary* as a paperback book with a long introduction by Boos and biographical notes on fifty-six of the people Morris mentions. Now Five Leaves Publications has issued an attractive illustrated edition with a second introduction and revised and expanded notes and biographies. This second edition of the *Diary* serves as a superb resource for scholars of late nineteenth-century British radicalism, and Boos’s dual introductions offer an important interpretation of Morris’s peculiar version of socialism.

The peculiarity comes from Morris’s adamant anti-parliamentarianism, his hostility to electing socialist representatives. Boos’s original introduction squarely addresses this, “the most difficult to understand of Morris’s tactical convictions.” As she notes, most of Morris’s London comrades saw electoral politics as crucial to the advance of socialism, and all his principal allies in Scotland and northern England eventually abandoned their anti-electoralism. Boos offers two categories of explanation for Morris’s unwavering opposition. The first is

broadly political: he believed that without education in the principles of revolutionary socialism, workers would be willing to settle for half-measures; he held in contempt the “sordid compromise and dishonest temporary alliances” of elected politicians; and he subscribed to Marx’s “revolutionary determinism,” the Marxist certainty of the inevitable downfall of capitalism.

Boos’s second explanatory category is rooted in her deep knowledge of Morris’s literary work. Throughout his career, she points out, he displayed a deep sympathy for lost causes and heroic defeats. His poetic protagonists typically “hold out nobly against insuperable odds in the name of fellowship, justice, and love”; they resist giving in to what they perceive as sordid entrapment in the everyday. Boos argues that Morris’s anti-electoral absolutism can be seen as a version of this ur-plot, a Victorian socialist equivalent of the antique nobility that pervades his literary production.

Boos also addresses the idea that in the 1890s, Morris abandoned his principles and embraced parliamentary politics—a claim advanced in memoirs by H. M. Hyndman and J. Bruce Glasier and picked up by A. L. Morton and other biographers and critics. Boos believes that the claims of Morris’s late-life conversion have been exaggerated, and she traces this error to Morris’s willingness to acknowledge his opponents’ good points. During the last few years of his life, too ill for the sectarian battles that engaged him earlier, he tried to promote socialist unity. His self-deprecating concessions to comrades engaged in electoral politics were interpreted as a change of heart. Instead, Boos argues, Morris was saying some version of the following: “though I do not find these methods or goals most urgent or beneficial, the achievement of limited reforms may be useful in preparing us for the (greatly more desirable) next stage of socialism.”

In her new introduction to this edition, Boos returns to the question of Morris’s anti-electoralism. She notes that at the time of her first edition in the 1980s, as was true a century earlier, few people sympathized with, or even understood, Morris’s disdain for conventional political activism. In contrast, the early years of the twenty-first century have seen the rise of powerful movements for social change that operate independently of established political parties; she mentions Black Lives Matter, Occupy, Standing Rock and Water Protectors, Sandy Hook Promise, and 350.org. Since the book went to press, the #MeToo movement has arisen and become a massive and effective force for change. At this moment, those who conceive of politics as debates over

Brexit or the Trump administration may well despair of the future, but grassroots citizens' movements are filled with pilgrims of hope.

What of Morris's diary itself? It is a brief document, taking up some fifty pages in this new edition only because more than half of the pages are filled with Boos's detailed notes. Absent those notes, much of the diary is obscure even to well-informed readers. Take, for example, this excerpt from the first entry:

I slept at Merton, and in the morning got the Norwich paper with a full account of the trial of Mowbray and Henderson; the judge's summing up of the case was amusing and instructive, as showing a sort of survival of the old sort of bullying of the Castleburgh times mixed with a grotesque attempt at modernisation on philanthropical lines: it put me in a great rage. The Daily News printed my letter; it had also a brief paragraph asserting that, Germany would presently ask France the meaning of her war-preparations, and an alarmist article therewith.

Boos devotes five footnotes to explicating these two sentences, a typical ratio throughout the diary.

Despite its obscurities, the *Diary* is mandatory reading for scholars of socialism, and Boos's notes serve as an advanced seminar on the topic. Yet the *Diary's* greatest value, at least to this reader, lies in Morris's frank admission of his own political failures. Repeatedly, he records the miserable turnout at meetings and speeches and his listeners' incomprehension:

Sunday the annual meeting of our Hammersmith Branch came off: a dead failure, as all our meetings except the open air ones have been lately.

... had a scanty audience and a dull. It was a new lecture, and good, though I say it, and I really did my best; but they hung on my hands as heavy as lead.

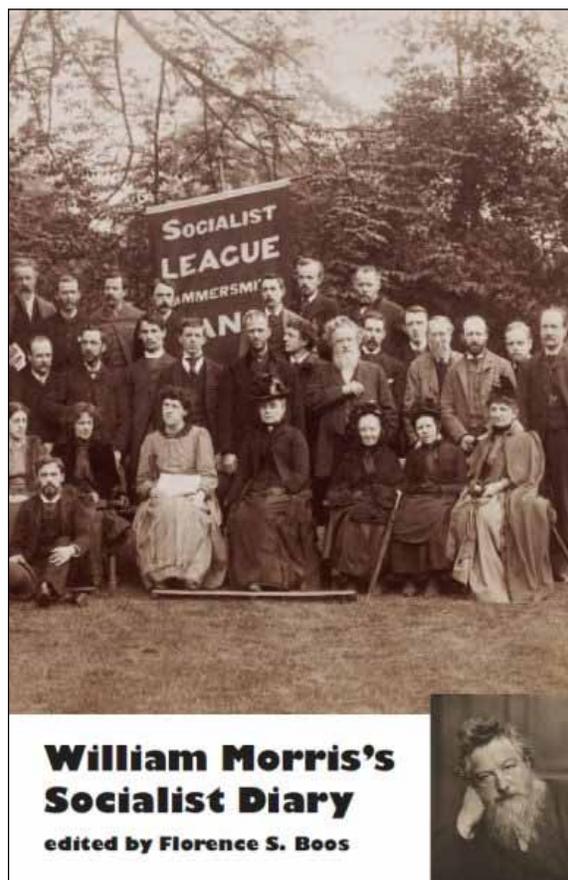
I doubt if most of them understood anything I said. ... I wonder sometimes if people will remember in times to come to what a depth of degradation the ordinary English workman has been reduced.

From 1883 on, Morris's central project was to convert members of the British working class to revolutionary socialism; his diary entries testify to his repeated failures to do so. The *Socialist Diary* serves as a record of Morris's dedication to his self-assigned task, regardless of results. It reveals that all of Morris's considerable ac-

tivities on behalf of socialism—the lectures and essays, the outdoor speeches and the innumerable, interminable meetings—were as much moral as political acts. The *Diary* serves as illustration of Morris's deeply powerful and plaintive 1885 admission to Georgiana Burne-Jones:

You see, my dear, I can't help it. The [socialist] ideas which have taken hold of me will not let me rest: nor can I see anything else worth thinking of. How can it be otherwise, when to me society, which to many seems an orderly arrangement for allowing decent people to get through their lives creditably and with some pleasure, seems mere cannibalism; nay worse, ... is grown so corrupt, so steeped in hypocrisy and lies, that one turns from one stratum of it to another with hopeless loathing. One must turn to hope.

At this moment, when so many in the United States and Great Britain are filled with loathing of the heartless right-wing populism that dominates our politics, Morris's unceasing labor and unflinching turn to hope can serve as example and inspiration.



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THE LAST WORD — CHAPTER 27: THE UPPER WATERS



[from a conversation between Henry Morsom, Dick, Guest, and Clara]:

Dick looked thoughtful, and said:

“I have often heard my old kinsman say the one aim of all people before our time was to avoid work, or at least they thought it was; so of course the work which their daily life forced them to do, seemed more

like work than that which they seemed to choose for themselves.”

“True enough,” said Morsom. “Anyhow, they soon began to find out their mistake, and that only slaves and slaveholders could live solely by setting machines going.”

Clara broke in here, flushing a little as she spoke: “Was not their mistake once more bred of the life of slavery that they had been living?—a life which was always looking upon everything, except mankind, animate and inanimate—‘nature,’ as people used to call it— as one thing, and mankind as another. It was natural to people thinking in this way, that they should try to make ‘nature’ their slave, since they thought ‘nature’ was something outside them.”...

I looked [at the handicraft of the new society], and wondered indeed at the deftness and abundance of beauty of the work of men who had at last learned to accept life itself as a pleasure, and the satisfaction of the common needs of mankind and the preparation for them, as work fit for the best of the race. I mused silently; but at last I said —

“What is to come after this?”

The old man laughed. “I don’t know,” said he; “we will meet it when it comes.”

News from Nowhere