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## ‘The Greatest Man I Ever Knew’: William Morris and Henry Arthur Jones<sup>1</sup>

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In his biography, J.W. Mackail wrote of Morris and the theatre:

In the contemporary theatre and in the modern actor’s art Morris had not, and never affected to have, the slightest interest [...]. Since the days of his early enthusiasm for Robson and Kean he hardly ever had gone to a play, unless on some rare occasion when he took his children or was dragged off by a friend.<sup>2</sup>

This view has been generally accepted, with Morris’s *The Tables Turned; or, Nupkins Awakened* (1887) being described by Mackail as ‘the most singular’ – and, by implication, most uncharacteristic – ‘of all Morris’s literary adventures’.<sup>3</sup> But in an article in the *Journal* in the Spring of 1998, that fine scholar Nicholas Salmon suggested that Morris’s attitude to the theatre was not as negative as it had been thought to have been. In addition to *The Tables Turned*, Salmon drew attention to Morris’s relationship with Henry Arthur Jones, for whose play *The Crusaders* Morris was employed to design the scenery during 1891.<sup>4</sup> In this article I shall provide further information about Morris and Jones, which was not then available to Salmon.

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The entry for Henry Arthur Jones (1851-1929) in Sir Paul Harvey's *The Oxford Companion to English Literature* draws attention to his productiveness, stating that he 'wrote in all some sixty plays, and also *The Renascence of the English Drama*, 1895, *Foundations of a National Drama*, 1913, and *The Theatre of Ideas, a Burlesque Allegory*, 1914'.<sup>5</sup> The information about him on which the present article is based is largely derived from *Taking the Curtain Call: The Life and Letters of Henry Arthur Jones*, written by his daughter Doris Thorne and published in 1930, in which she makes use of Jones's own autobiographical article 'The Days of My Youth'.<sup>6</sup> I have also consulted some scholarly works that are quoted later. As space is limited, and my focus here is on the relationship between the two men, specific plays are discussed only when they throw light on the relationship.

Henry Arthur Jones was born in a village in rural Buckinghamshire during 1851. His father was a farm labourer, usually working fifteen hours a day (p. 4), and his mother a rigorous Baptist. Henry was the eldest of five sons; he started school at the age of five and did well, but he had to leave at twelve to work for his uncle in a draper's shop in Ramsgate, which he hated. Next he worked in a draper's in Gravesend, where he 'began his constant and life-long reading of Milton, his favourite poet' (p. 9). He moved to London at the age of eighteen, where he worked in a warehouse but spent as much time as he could afford in reading and going to the theatre. Soon he was to meet a fellow worker of his own age with whom he had 'a discussion about logarithms'. This was a remarkable man well known to Morrisians, Emery Walker:

This discussion [about logarithms] was the beginning of a remarkable lifelong friendship, which, starting in early manhood, grew stronger with the passing years and definitely enriched and influenced for good all my father's life. He had 'a genius for friendship' and was deeply attached to a good many people throughout his long life; but the hold Sir Emery Walker had on his affections was unique. It was through him that H.A.J. knew William Morris and his friends; and Morris and Walker guided and influenced him in his love for, and his purchase of, many beautiful things.

(p. 13)

Doris records that she once asked George Bernard Shaw whether he remembered when he had first met her father. Shaw replied: "I never remember the time when we weren't the best of friends"; and he went on to say he supposed they first met at Emery Walker's' (p. 187). A tight group of friends was forming, and would endure.

In London Jones met and fell in love with Jane Eliza Seely. They became engaged, but had too little money to marry. Henry therefore applied for a better-paid job, and

obtained it despite his youth. It was as a commercial traveller for the West of England branch of Rennie Tetley, textile manufacturers. He worked hard and did well at his demanding job, while keeping up his reading and developing an enthusiasm for the theatre. Evidently a serious young man, he sought to understand Herbert Spencer's system of philosophy – 'a hard nut to crack', allowing himself to read Wordsworth, Shelley and Keats in 'my lighter hours' (p. 16). And he asked Walker to look out for him the Elizabethan and Jacobean playwrights, from Marlowe to Beaumont and Fletcher (p. 17). By 1875 Jones was making enough money to marry; Emery Walker was best man at the wedding in Holborn (p. 21). As Jones's commercial territory was still the West of England, the couple took as their first home The Hermitage, in Exwick, a suburb of Exeter. So it was at the Theatre Royal in Exeter that Jones saw the first performances of his work, which he subsidised: the one-act *It's Only Round the Corner* was produced on 11 December 1878, and *Hearts of Oak*, a domestic drama in two acts, during June 1879.

Jones took the risk of leaving his job as a commercial traveller early during 1879 to devote himself to writing for the stage, and the family moved from Exwick to Hampton Wick. His London career began during October 1879, but progress was slow until the autumn of 1882, when things changed dramatically. Doris proudly puts it as follows: 'with the production of *The Silver King*, on 16th November, he leapt into the front rank of British dramatists, a position he was to hold unchallenged for the rest of his life' (p. 37). In this context we find the first cross reference to Morris, in a letter Morris sent to Jenny from Merton Abbey on 5 November 1883:

All well here: the place quite busy: another order for a carpet. I am reckoning on doing a good evening's work as Mother & May are going out on the spree: Silver King with the De. M[organ]s.<sup>7</sup>

No spree for the workaholic Morris.

The success of *The Silver King*, a melodrama about a man wrongly accused of murder, placed Jones on a firm financial basis for the rest of his life. He began to publish articles and to give lectures on the importance of drama, arguing that it ought to be valued as the equal of painting, music and literature; he disliked the theatre being regarded as merely a place of entertainment. We might see this argument as comparable to that of Ruskin, followed by Morris, to the effect that craft should be seen as of equal value to fine art. Jones attempted to give his plays more realism and depth by introducing social issues and employing satire, in a lengthy career that included among other plays *Saints and Sinners* (1884), *Wealth* (1890), *The Middleman* (1889), *Judah* (1890), *The Dancing Girl* (1891), *The Crusaders* (1891), *The Case of Rebellious*

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*Susan* (1894), *Michael and his Lost Angel* (1896), *The Liars* (1897), *Mrs. Dane's Defence* (1900) and *The Lie* (1914). The mixture of elements in Jones's plays is often uneasy. The critic Kerry Powell remarks that 'Jones's later work was less obviously melodramatic than *The Silver King*, but never eradicated its influence'. His later plays were 'fashionable society dramas that dealt with controversial subjects in a tentative manner'.<sup>8</sup> Because of this, Jones has been little considered or performed during the last hundred years.

Jones moved to Hill House, Chalfont St. Peter, in 1884, and then to Townshend House, Regent's Park, in 1887, where he spent fourteen happy and largely successful years. Townshend House had been the home of the painter Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema (1836-1912) who, Doris tells us, 'had painted several parts of the house', including '[the] inscription "Where friends meet hearts warm"' in her mother's boudoir, and 'a magnificent painted ceiling in [her] father's study' (p. 77). It was around this time that Jones came to know Morris. Doris writes (unfortunately without giving a date):

My father introduced himself to Morris at Earl's Court station, soon after Emery Walker had pointed him out to H.A.J; they travelled together in the same carriage as far as Hammersmith, discussing Socialism vigorously the whole way.

(p. 92)

As we do not know what Jones's political views were at the time, we can only speculate as to the form the conversation took. Doris only tells us that her father once said to her that 'Morris was a fourteenth-century workman who fell into the nineteenth century by mistake', and that he often quoted Morris's well-known – unpolitical – dictum: '[h]ave nothing in your house you do not know to be useful or believe to be beautiful' (p. 93).

There is no reference to Morris's venture into drama, *The Tables Turned*, first performed on 15 October 1887, but a relationship between Jones and Morris was maintained. On 17 October 1888 Morris wrote to Jenny in a lively fashion: 'I suppose May told you how we went to hear Mr. H.A. Jones read his play? I really got rather interested in it before it was over.'<sup>9</sup> Jones was evidently a powerful reader; Doris recalls that her father often said that Sir George Alexander, the actor-manager, 'would never allow him [Jones] to read a play, because he said he would then be certain to think the play a good one, as H.A.J. read all his plays magnificently' (p. 124). In this context, it is notable that Morris admits that even he 'got rather interested' in the reading. Norman Kelvin suggests that the play Jones might have invited Morris and May to attend his reading of was *The Middleman*, which was produced during 1889. It

concerned a skilled pottery-maker seeking to discover ‘the secret of the old method of glazing’ and succeeding at the last minute (p. 81). The critic Guy Willoughby considers it ‘arguably the first indigenous “problem play” on the British stage’, quoting Jones’s own description of it as showing a ‘fight between grasping commercialism and creative genius’.<sup>10</sup> Perhaps Kelvin thought that this related to the contemporary Arts and Crafts movement. Morris’s view of the decoration of Townshend House was markedly different from that of the Joneses; he remarked in his letter cited above, that Jones ‘lives in Tadema’s old house, & there are scraps of the Tadamesque decoration left about the place: I don’t admire them: they appear to me too much made up of goose giblets and umbrellas’. Kelvin does not comment on this odd but surely dismissive phrase.

In April 1889 Jones’s *Wealth* was produced at the Haymarket. *The Athenaeum* for 4 May recorded, surprisingly:

Among those present was Mr. William Morris, an unusual guest on such occasions, but lured, possibly, by the knowledge that one of the characters was a representative of a mild form of Socialism. With him was his daughter, bearing a striking resemblance to her mother, and recalling numerous pictures of Rossetti.<sup>11</sup>

*Wealth* concerns an iron-master, Matthew Ruddock, who wants his daughter Edith to marry his favourite (and ruthless) nephew John, who will inherit the business. But Edith loves Paul Davoren, described by Doris as ‘a rival iron-master’, who is a political radical. When Edith refuses to marry John, Matthew dismisses her from his home, and he is eventually driven to madness by the unscrupulous John. Harmony is restored when the determined Edith marries Paul and is reconciled to her father on his deathbed, and he leaves the business to Edith and Paul. The emphasis is on love rather than politics, as can be seen from Doris’s summary of the ending: ‘Edith, happily married, returns to her dying father, who in a last short lucid interval blesses her and her husband, leaving them his property’ (p. 78). This is Doris’s account. The play is described very differently, in the same year, by Harley Granville-Barker, in an article on ‘The Coming of Ibsen’.<sup>12</sup> Granville-Barker recalls that *Wealth* had received a poor review in *The Saturday Review* in 1889, which said that it lacked a plot. But Granville-Barker, a more political person than Doris, saw ‘the real trouble’ with the play as having been in the subject matter: ‘Capital and Labour, and Labour demanding its rights’.<sup>13</sup> The hostile reviewer had argued that political discussions ‘are very much out of place on the stage, for audiences are not composed of Conybeares, Cunninghame Grahams and William Morris’, all men of the left. Granville-Barker

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adds: '[n]o indeed, audiences were not, and are not; one wishes to heaven they were!'.<sup>14</sup> In his view the politics of the play amounted only to 'a little mild advocacy of profit-sharing', but we should remember that 'the Trafalgar Square riots were not three years old', and therefore give Jones credit for his courage in tackling the issue of Capital and Labour. Here we find ideas that might well have been discussed with Morris making a prominent appearance in a play by Jones. But although the play was produced successfully in New York and in several European cities, it did not do well in London and was not published.

In *Commonweal* for 13 July 1889, Henry Halliday Sparling's 'Notes on News' contained the observation:

Two announcements which were made last week are among the cheering 'straws' that show which way the social 'wind' is blowing. Ibsen's 'Pillars of Society', literally translated by Mr. Wm. Archer, is to be performed at the Gaiety Theatre on Tuesday, July 16, and the promoters of the undertaking are most anxious to make it known that there will be no tampering with the text. A new play by Mr. Henry Arthur Jones, called 'The Middleman', will be put on the stage in the autumn by Mr. E.S. Willard at the Shaftesbury. It is said to be a study of contemporary life on similar lines to those of the same writer's striking production 'Wealth', now running at the Haymarket. Not world-shaking events in themselves, but how much they mean!<sup>15</sup>

Sparling is happy to place Jones with Ibsen in the encouraging development of a progressive strain in contemporary drama.

On an unpolitical level, Jones had a great success in 1891 with *The Dancing Girl*, a melodrama in which a lascivious aristocrat seduces a Quaker girl, Drusilla, who becomes a dancer in America, and dies after appearing in public on a Sunday. Kerry Powell argues in his *Oscar Wilde and the Theatre of the 1890s* (1990) that the play had a significant influence on Wilde's *A Woman of No Importance*. He argues that in plays of this kind, which deal with 'fallen women', the woman always pays in the end, though the men usually pay too. He shows that these themes were popular at the time, as shown also in Pinero's *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray* in 1893. According to Powell, both Wilde and Pinero 'create women with a past who command more strength, and engage more sympathy, than was ordinarily the case, but neither successfully disentangles his heroine from the melodramatic web spun by the likes of Jones'.<sup>16</sup>

In 1891 Jones came closer to Morris when he took the bold decision to rent a London theatre in which he could manage and produce one of his own plays. Perhaps surprisingly, he chose *The Crusaders: An Original Comedy of Modern London Life*, a satire

on reformers. One wonders what Morris might have made of it, if he did indeed read the play. In it, the London Reformation League aims to make London pure and sweet and clean. The fiery idealists of the group are Philo Ingarfield and Una Dell. Ingarfield is described as a ‘new variety of inspired idiot. Something between an angel, a fool, and a poet. And atrociously in earnest. A sort of Shelley from Peckham Rye!’.<sup>17</sup> One thing that the League does is to take ‘five hundred poor seamstresses out of the worst sweating shops in the East End’, and set them to growing roses on a rose-farm near Wimbledon Common. Meanwhile, Ingarfield conducts a party of men described as ‘ne’er-do-wells’ to Costa Rica to give them a new start in life. But all these idealistic schemes come to nothing. The aristocratic people of Wimbledon do not like the presence of so many vulgar girls from the slums, and the ne’er-do-wells start rioting and plundering in Costa Rica. The government of that country demands big damages from England. The cynical Lord Burnham sums the situation up by saying: ‘[s]o the net result of our reforming London is a revolution in South America and two pence on the income tax’.<sup>18</sup> The play ends, all too characteristically of Jones, with Una reiterating the ideals of the Society and appealing to Philo to act to implement them. He seems about to do so when the glamorous Cynthia Greenslade, in whose Mayfair drawing room the play had begun, kisses him on the forehead. He asks ‘[c]an’t you love me?’, to which she replies: ‘[y]ou saved me! Do with me as you please!’, while dropping at his feet. The final stage direction reads: ‘*UNA looks at them, then goes off hopelessly at door at back*’.<sup>19</sup> The curtain falls. The play was published with an interesting Preface by William Archer, who related the play to other recent publications, remarking: ‘Mr. Jones, like the authors of *Looking Backward* and *News from Nowhere* [published respectively in 1887 and 1890], fantasticates on the future, though his future may be conceived as somewhat nearer than Mr. Bellamy’s or Mr. Morris’s millennium’.<sup>20</sup>

Doris tells us that her father had spent a year writing the play and had faith in it, and ‘he determined to spare no expense over the production and mounting’. She then reveals that ‘[h]e gave William Morris *carte blanche* to design and make the furniture’ (p. 92). In the preface to *The Theatre of Ideas* (1915), Jones made an even stronger claim: ‘I gave William Morris *carte blanche* for the scenery and furniture, and he advised me on the whole production’.<sup>21</sup> We can only wonder what that advice might have been. We see an indication of this cooperation in a letter to Morris on 8 July 1891 which runs:

Dear Mr. Morris

Can I see you for a few minutes on Monday afternoon or Tuesday morning?

I’ll call on you at Oxford Street or Hammersmith?

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I want to consult you about the decoration of a stage scene.

I hope you have quite recovered from your gout.

Very faithfully yours  
Henry Arthur Jones<sup>22</sup>

The letter is businesslike but friendly; it seems likely that there were more letters of the kind at the time, but they have not been found.

The *Pall Mall Gazette* for 5 October 1891 gave an interesting account of what it termed ‘MR H.A. JONES’S NEW PLAY’:

The title Mr. Henry Arthur Jones has chosen for his new play now in rehearsal at the Avenue is ‘The Crusaders’. It deals with modern social London life, and is less melodramatic in character than any of the author’s previous productions. ‘The Crusaders’ will be in three acts. The first takes place in a drawing room in Mayfair, the second, outdoors, at Wimbledon; the third, indoors, at Wimbledon. The furniture has been designed by William Morris, and will (of course) be a poem in itself. So will the wall-paper. The *Referee* reports that Mr. Jones’s preliminary outlay thereby meaning all expenses incurred prior to the first night – will exceed £3,000.<sup>23</sup>

On 9 February 1890 (the year is unconfirmed – could it not be 1891?), Morris wrote to George Jack, who had taken over from Webb as Morris and Co.’s chief furniture designer: ‘I looked at your design for the sideboard & liked it very much’.<sup>24</sup> Kelvin suggests that this sideboard was probably the one made for *The Crusaders*. This is confirmed by Amy Gaimster in her book on Jack, in which she illustrates what she terms an ‘inlaid mahogany cabinet’ designed 1890-91, which ‘formed part of the furniture made especially for Henry Arthur Jones’s play *The Crusaders*’.<sup>25</sup> She quotes from the programme: ‘[t]he furniture and draperies have been made by Messrs. William Morris and Company, 449, Oxford Street’, which was followed by a request: ‘[t]he indulgence of the audience is asked on the first night between the acts as the stage is small and the scenery rather elaborate’. Gaimster notes that ‘[t]he inlaid floral patterns are particularly bold, perhaps so that the striking contrasts would be easily seen by the play’s audience’.<sup>26</sup> Unfortunately for Jones, *The Crusaders* was not a success, being booed on its first night, 2 November 1891, and Jones lost some £4,000 in the venture. Morrisians may be pleased to learn that ‘[a]ll the papers praised the scenery and the mounting, but their criticisms of the play were in most cases severe’ (p. 95). There is no evidence as to why Morris took on the commission, but, apart from knowing Jones personally, he seldom rejected potential work for the Company.

In her remarks on the furniture for the play, Doris wrote, 'I think he was prouder of his William Morris room than of any other of his beautiful possessions: it was exhibited at the Ideal Home Exhibition at Olympia in 1929' (p. 92). She also remarks that 'the tapestry and inlaid screen' designed for *The Crusaders* were exhibited at the Louvre in 1914 (p. 92). From this it sounds as if Jones bought many or all of the furnishings from one part of the play, probably the first act, and took them into his own home to create a Morris room, items from which were later shown in important exhibitions. In her *William Morris Textiles*, Linda Parry states that 'Persian Brocatel', designed by John Henry Dearle around 1890 and first used at Stanmore Hall, the home of the wealthy William Knox D'Arcy, during that year, was used in the production.<sup>27</sup> Gaimster tells us that the cabinet was donated to the Victoria and Albert Museum by Doris, in memory of her father, in June 1929; it can still be seen there. Gaimster confirms that it was exhibited at the exhibition of British and Irish Decorative Arts at the Louvre in 1914, and at Olympia in 1929.<sup>28</sup> She tells us that Jones kept in the cabinet his manuscripts and Kelmscott Press books; the latter must have been bought later in the nineties, as the Press only began publishing during April 1891.<sup>29</sup> Jones was clearly a great admirer of Morris's work in various forms.

After Morris and Co.'s work on *The Crusaders* in 1891, the next recorded contact between Jones and Morris occurred on 19 March 1894, when Morris wrote from Kelmscott House to Jones at the Garrick Club:

Dear Mr. Jones

I am going to the country tomorrow, and shall be away until the 1st April. So I shall not be able to come, for which I am sorry. Thank you for asking me.<sup>30</sup>

I have so far been unable to identify the occasion to which this invitation refers. A month later, 23 April 1894, Morris wrote to Jones from Kelmscott House to decline an invitation to attend the first night of *The Masqueraders* at the St. James's Theatre. The reason Morris gave for turning down Jones's invitation was that 'I cannot come out on a Saturday; though I am not an Israelite it is a kind of sacred day to me. I wish you all manner of success for your new play.'<sup>31</sup> Kelvin remarks in his editorial note:

Morris's reply may reflect his apathy towards the theater in general or may mean simply that he customarily was at work on designs on a Saturday evening. Whatever the reason, the implied indifference to a new play by Jones contrasts with the latter's enthusiasm for Morris and his work.<sup>32</sup>

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This is certainly true. Doris refers to the letter quoted above (p. 93), observing that it was '[a]mong many letters to my father [from Morris]', although no others are quoted. It would be good to think that such letters might yet be discovered. *The Masqueraders*, whose hero is, in Doris's words, 'a high-minded, hopelessly unworldly astronomer' (p. 129), struck Shaw as unreasonably negative in its view of human nature, as he told Jones:

how frightfully pessimistic your play is! Hang it all, Regent's Park, with all its drawbacks, is better than *Andromeda*. Why don't you chuck up these idiotic moral systems according to which human nature comes out base and filthy? It's the systems that are wrong and not we. I believe in the good old Molière-Labiche-Sheridan line; they would have been very well contented with myself and Walker and Morris and the rest of us, and not have sighed for any *Andromeda*.

(p. 127)

Shaw sees Socialists like Morris and Walker and himself as optimists about the future of society, who do not need to resort to astronomical fantasy.

In connection with the theatre, both Salmon and Kelvin mention that, in addition to their work for *The Crusaders*, Morris and Co. also provided stage sets for *The Case of Rebellious Susan*, which opened during October 1894. I have found no evidence for this. While the title of this play might make one think of radical politics, the play itself could not be further away from radicalism. Susan is the neglected wife of an adulterous husband, a strong-minded young woman who contemplates taking revenge by having an affair herself. Willoughby observes something typical of Jones in the conclusion: 'she is deterred from this unusually bold move by a fear of social rather than moral consequence, as outlined for her by a typically prudent Jonesian *raisonneur*, Sir Richard Kato'.<sup>33</sup>

In cultural politics, Jones could be liberal: in 1892 he participated in the movement for the Sunday opening of museums (p. 96), and in 1898 he advocated the creation of a National Theatre (p. 168). Doris quotes his 1893 article 'Middleman and Parasites', in the June number of the *New Review*, which 'made a vigorous attack on the middleman system, whereby thousands of men made a living through the ignorance, carelessness and folly of their fellow-creatures', its tone expressing sympathy with 'the lower classes' (p. 99). Jones applauded the call of John Burns for the establishment of a Department of Labour and the Fine Arts, even arguing that Labour should come first, 'because it is more necessary for us to have wholesome bread and well-built houses and good clothes than good pictures and plays. Yes, put

Labour first' (p. 100). In fact, however, the Ministry of Labour was not established until 1916. But in national politics Jones's views became increasingly conservative. His daughter gives the following account:

As a young man, under the influence of Emery Walker and William Morris, my father flirted with Socialism, but from the Great War onwards he became an uncompromising Die-Hard. He often quoted Swinburne, who said to him, 'When Topsy (Morris's nickname) was at Oxford, he was the bluest of blue Tories. You always know when a man talks one sort of nonsense when he's twenty, he'll be talking the other kind when he's forty.' In his Notes he says, 'He could work but he could not think. What a splendid worker was Morris! But he thought that he could think. That is the great evil of democracy. It teaches men to think that they can think. And upon this quite unproven hypothesis it entrusts them with votes.'

(p. 100)

It is not clear whether Swinburne ever made the remark attributed to him, or when, or whether the words quoted from Jones's Notes are those of Swinburne or Jones, but at all events that are surprisingly hostile to Morris.<sup>34</sup> Jones could be remarkably inconsistent.

For his admiration for Morris's craftsmanship persisted. In 1896 he bought a copy of the Morris and Co. tapestry of Botticelli's *Primavera*, which had been woven for Wilfrid Scawen Blunt earlier during the year. When Morris paid his last visit to Blunt at Newbuildings at the end of May 1896, he saw the tapestry in the drawing room. According to Blunt's Diaries, quoted by Kelvin, the tapestry was 'very decorative and brilliant in the drawing-room', and Morris said that 'it turned out better than he expected'.<sup>35</sup> Parry tells us that the second version, purchased by Jones, 'was woven with a more decorative border of fruit and flowers than the plain winding leaf design of the Blunt original'.<sup>36</sup> Aymer Vallance recorded that Blunt's tapestry was exhibited at the Arts and Crafts Exhibition in 1896, and Jones may have seen it there; I know of no evidence that Blunt and Jones were acquainted.<sup>37</sup>

*The Liars*, which Doris considered her father's 'greatest play' (p. 152), opened on 6 October 1896 at the Criterion, and ran for 291 nights; it was also performed in New York and Melbourne. The play is a comedy of high society, containing the line 'I may be an ass, but I'm not a *silly* ass' (p. 155). A rumour apparently circulated at the time that the play had been written by Oscar Wilde, and that Jones had put his name to it to avoid scandal. As we are told that Jones knew and did not like Wilde, the rumour may have been disturbing to him. But apparently he enjoyed quoting

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Wilde's three rules for writing plays: '[t]he first rule is not to write like Henry Arthur Jones, the second and third are the same!' (p. 156).<sup>38</sup> Kerry Powell notes that *The Liars* was one of several plays by Jones whose heroes 'almost wreck their careers in public life by becoming involved in illicit love-affairs, but recognize before it is too late what Jones calls the "tow-path of duty"'.<sup>39</sup> The final outcome can be relied upon to take us back to convention.

Morris died in 1896, but he was not forgotten by Jones. For Christmas 1902 he gave his daughter a copy of Morris's *Architecture, Industry and Wealth* with the inscription:

MY DEAR DORIS,

This was the greatest man I have met in my life.

Your loving

DADDY.

(p. 92)

Apparently 'he always said that the three greatest men he had ever known were William Morris, Hiram Maxim, and Veniselos, and he never altered his opinion' (p. 92). Whether Morris would have appreciated being classed with the inventor of the Maxim gun is unlikely, but he might well have liked the company of the leader of the Greek national liberation movement at the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>40</sup> *Architecture, Industry and Wealth: Collected Papers* was published in 1902 in an attractive typographical format.<sup>41</sup> It contains eleven important lectures on the topics indicated by the title, from 'The History of Pattern-Designing' in 1882 to 'The Influence of Building Materials upon Architecture' in 1892. It is hard to see how the Jones who gave this book to his daughter could have believed that Morris was a 'splendid worker' who could not think.

Jones visited America on business in 1905 and the three following years, visits that 'consolidated and strengthened many of his friendships and increased his enduring love and admiration for America and the American people' (p. 194). He knew Professor George P. Baker and admired his work in making drama a significant part of the literary curriculum at Harvard. Jones gave a lecture there on 'The Cornerstone of Modern Drama', and wrote to Baker on 26 October 1906 to congratulate him on his achievement, and to send him a very valuable gift, described by Doris as 'his greatest treasure, a vellum-bound copy of the Kelmscott *Chaucer*' (p. 199). Jones praised the book, and Morris, at considerable length:

I may, perhaps, say a word about the book itself. It is the loving handwork of the greatest man whom I have ever known. It may be claimed for William

Morris that his reputation would be a high and honourable one if it rested upon any one of his achievements; upon his poetry alone; his tales and essays alone; his dyeing alone; his weaving alone; his printing alone. In every one of these arts he accomplished the good and faithful work of an ordinary lifetime. He abides with us as a living witness to the essential unity of art; he continually affirms that, like the other two great realities, like Religion, like Love, it is something that must be bought without money and without price. For this beautiful volume brought him no profit, and left him with no payment for all his labour and all his lovely designs. The main idea of his later years was a hatred of the base commercialism which has degraded the ordinary workman from an artist into a machine, and has cheapened and demoralised and disfigured the whole fabric of modern civilisation. But his hatred was not sullen or stagnant; it accompanied an active, ceaseless search for a social lever that could again raise the workman into an artist, and thereby bring taste and dignity and simplicity and beauty into ordinary everyday homes. With the hope that the spirit in which William Morris printed this volume may guide the nascent art of America, and with renewed assurances of gratitude and friendship towards yourself,

I am, dear Professor Baker,  
Always faithfully yours,  
HENRY ARTHUR JONES.

(pp. 199-200)

This seems to me an eloquent and intelligent tribute to Morris, although pedants among us may wonder whether anything can be *bought* ‘without money and without price’. Morris had died some ten years earlier but was evidently still very much in Jones’s mind. Whether American artists would subsequently work in the spirit that Jones attributes to Morris might make a good topic for debate.

As we have seen, Doris attributed her father’s most reactionary views to the period ‘from the Great War onwards’, so that ‘at the end of his life it was only rarely that one could wring from him a grudging and superficial acknowledgement of the wrongs or disabilities of working men’ (p. 99). The ultra-patriotic Jones devoted much of his energy during and after the war years to attacking, in the strongest possible terms, those who did not share his outlook, in particular two of his former friends, H.G. Wells and Bernard Shaw. Both angered him by refusing to enter into controversy. In *Patriotism and Popular Education* (1919) Jones directly attacked Wells’s politics and advanced the argument that the education of working-class children, who constituted eighty per cent of the population, should be strictly vocational, because ‘popular

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education was one of the main sources of unrest in the working class' (p. 263).

The book is addressed to H.A.L. Fisher, the President of the Board of Education, and Jones was congratulated on it by Rudyard Kipling and, more surprisingly, by R.B. Cunninghame Graham, the Radical M.P. and former comrade of Morris, who had been beaten and arrested on Bloody Sunday, 13 November 1887, and sent to prison for six weeks. In his letter, he told Jones: '[y]our ideas are practically the same as those of poor old Morris, at whose feet I brought myself up, politically' (p. 264). It is not easy to see how he came to this conclusion; perhaps he was referring to Morris's dismissal of formal academic education as limited and limiting. In Chapter 24 of *News from Nowhere* the travellers row past Eton, and Dick tells Guest that it had once been 'a great college or teaching place' intended for poor men's sons, but had become a place where the rich could 'get rid of the company of their male children for a great part of the year'.<sup>42</sup> He explains that 'we cannot use it quite as the founder intended, since our ideas about teaching young people are so changed from the ideas of his time; so it is used now as a dwelling for people engaged in learning; and folk from roundabout come and get taught things that they want to learn; and there is a great library there of the best books'. He adds: '[t]here are often plenty of boys there, who come to get taught; and also [...] to learn boating and swimming'.<sup>43</sup> (Modern readers will regret the limitation to boys). The suggestion is of a liberal and holistic kind of education, recalling the early days of progressive schools like Dartington. For the thoroughly democratic Morris there could be no question of different forms of education for different social groups. He never moved away from the ideal he expressed in 'The Lesser Arts' in 1878: 'I do not want art for a few, any more than education for a few, or freedom for a few'.<sup>44</sup> His commitment was to the Society of Equals.

In his letter, Cunninghame Graham recalls that as a young man he had been a Socialist, largely owing to Morris. He goes on: 'I had hoped in Socialism to find a gradual demise of selfishness and the gradual establishment of better feeling between man and man' (p. 265). He then offers a disillusioned commentary in terms that would have appealed to Jones:

You will admit, I think, that my ambition was not a low ambition. That I was deceived, and that all the golden dreams of Morris have vanished in the nine bestial and inartistic years of the reign of King Edward, the War, and now in the increasing inartisticness of everything, the prostitution of the stage and literature, and now in the ever-increasing selfishness and lack of patriotism of the working classes, have not been my fault. The ambition (I think) remains all right. Poor, dear old Morris! Take him for all in all [...]!

But a slightly different note emerges at the end, as Cunninghame Graham recalls all the uncomfortable travelling he has done recently during the war, including being ‘with the skipper on the bridge looking out for torpedoes, I have thought – where are the dreams of Morris? But on arriving at port, or at the camp, they have come back; they always do. Let us, I say cherish them ... *Vale*’ (p. 266).

In 1921 Jones continued his polemics with *My Dear Wells: A Manual for the Haters of England*, and then turned his attention to Shaw, spending some three years writing what he intended to be a book called *Bernard Shaw as a Thinker*. He failed to complete the book, but published the first six chapters in the *English Review* in 1923, and three others as a book entitled *What is Capital?* in 1925. Quite what entitled Jones to see himself as someone who could outthink Wells and Shaw is far from obvious, but he was not a self-doubter. The congratulatory letters he received for his attacks on Wells and Shaw show clearly how sharply divided English political culture was at the time (pp. 282 ff.).

But friendships were always very important to Jones, and amid his physical sufferings during the late 1920s, Dorothy tells us, ‘[h]e was uneasy unless he saw Sir Emery Walker regularly; I love to remember their welcome to each other and how, when Sir Emery was going to dine with us, as soon as the door-bell rang H.A.J. would struggle out of his armchair to meet his friend with outstretched hand’ (p. 326). (The outstretched hand is shown in several caricatures of Jones by Max Beerbohm, with whom he was on good terms). Walker was a pall-bearer at Jones’s funeral on 10 January 1929. Sir James Barrie, Rudyard Kipling and Sir Arthur Pinero were also invited to be pall-bearers, but were prevented by illness from attending the funeral. Doris remarks movingly: ‘[m]y deepest sympathies were with dear Sir Emery Walker, who in acting as a pall-bearer paid a last tribute of love and admiration to a close and unbroken sixty years’ friendship’ (p. 356). It was Walker, as we have seen, who brought Morris and Jones into a real if somewhat one-sided relationship. It is fitting that the Emery Walker Library at Cheltenham contains twelve books and plays by Jones, together with a number of other publications, including the Order of Service from Jones’s funeral.<sup>45</sup>

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#### NOTES

1. This article is a revised version of a lecture given to The William Morris Society at Kelmscott House on the afternoon of 11 June 2016.
2. J.W. Mackail, *The Life of William Morris*, New Impression, 2 vols (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1922), II, 198. (Afterwards Mackail).
3. Mackail, II, 197.
4. Nicholas Salmon, ‘The Unmanageable Playgoer: Morris and the Victorian Theatre’, *JWMS* 12:4 (Spring

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- 1998), 329-35.
5. Sir Paul Harvey, *The Oxford Companion to English Literature*, 4th edition (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1967), pp. 636-37.
  6. Doris Arthur Jones (Mrs. Jenny Doris Thorne), *Taking the Curtain Call: The Life and Letters of Henry Arthur Jones* (New York: Macmillan, 1930). Page references for quotations from this book are given in brackets after each citation.
  7. *The Collected Letters of William Morris*, ed. by Norman Kelvin, 4 vols in 5 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984-1996), II, p. 242. (Afterwards Kelvin).
  8. Kerry Powell, *Oscar Wilde and the Theatre of the 1890s* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 153. (Afterwards Powell).
  9. Kelvin, II, p. 830.
  10. G.A. Cevasco, ed., *The 1890s: An Encyclopedia of British Literature, Art, and Culture* (New York and London: Garland Press, 1993), p. 324. (Afterwards Cevasco). The sections on Jones are by Guy Willoughby.
  11. *The Athenaeum*, 4 May 1899, p. 477.
  12. Harley Granville-Barker, 'The Coming of Ibsen' in *The Eighteen-Nineties*, ed. by Walter de la Mare (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1930), pp. 159-96.
  13. *Ibid.*, p. 170.
  14. *Ibid.*, p. 171. Of the three men referred to, C.A.V. Conybeare (1853-1919) was a barrister, Liberal M.P. for Camborne, and supporter of women's suffrage, who was imprisoned in Ireland under the terms of the Irish Coercion Act of 1889. R.B. Cunninghame Graham (1852-1936) was a Radical M.P. and Scottish Nationalist. He took part in the events of 'Bloody Sunday' in 1887, and was arrested and imprisoned for six weeks. William Morris was William Morris.
  15. Henry Halliday Sparling, 'Notes on News', *Commonweal*, 5: 183 (13 July 1889), 217. Sparling (1860-1924) was a member of the Socialist League, and worked with Morris on *Commonweal* and at the Kelmscott Press. He married May Morris in 1890, but they separated in 1894 and were divorced in 1898. He wrote the undervalued *The Kelmscott Press and William Morris Master-Craftsman*, published in London by Macmillan & Co. in 1924 and reissued in London by Wm. Dawson and Sons in 1975.
  16. Powell, p. 66.
  17. Henry Arthur Jones, *The Crusaders*, with a Preface by William Archer (London: Macmillan, 1893), pp. vi-xii; Act 1, p. 18.
  18. *Ibid.*, Act 3, p. 107.
  19. *Ibid.*, Act 3, p. 115.
  20. *Ibid.*, pp. x-xi.
  21. H.A. Jones, *The Theatre of Ideas* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1915), p. 12.
  22. Jones to Morris, 8 July 1891; British Library Add. Ms. 45345.
  23. 'Mr H.A. Jones's New Play', *Pall Mall Gazette*, 5 October 1891.
  24. Kelvin, III, pp. 139-40. The cabinet is illustrated on p. 138.
  25. Amy Gaimster, *George Jack 1855-1931: Architect and Designer-Craftsman* (Waltham Forest: William Morris Gallery, 2006), p. 21 and Fig. 14. (Afterwards Gaimster).
  26. *Ibid.*, p. 21. For a critical review of *The Crusaders*, see Clement Scott, "'The Crusaders' at the Avenue Theatre", *Illustrated London News*, 7 November 1891, 595.
  27. Linda Parry, *William Morris Textiles* (London: V&A Publications, 2013), pp. 82-83. (Afterwards Parry). I am grateful to Parry for an email of 11 January 2016 in which she writes: "'Persian Brocatel" was used presumably in "Mrs Greenslade's Drawing Room in Mayfair" rather than the more bucolic settings of "Rose Cottage" and "Rose Farm in Wimbledon." It seems likely that the cabinet was also in the urban interior.'
  28. Gaimster, p. 21.
  29. *Ibid.*
  30. I am grateful to Frank Sharp for providing this text; Sharp is editing Morris letters not included in
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- Kelvin's edition of Morris's *Collected Letters*.
31. Kelvin, IV, p. 153.
  32. *Ibid.*
  33. Cevasco, p. 324.
  34. In his later years, Swinburne became increasingly and stridently reactionary, attacking many whom he had praised as a young man. This is clear from all accounts, including Philip Henderson's discussion in *Swinburne: The Portrait of a Poet* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974). But I have found no evidence that he ever quarreled with Morris, who sent him a copy of the Kelmscott *Chaucer* in 1896; Swinburne wrote to his mother on Morris's death that he was 'one of the best men that ever lived [...]. My friendship with him began in '57 – think of that – and was never broken or ruffled for a moment.' (Henderson, p. 275).
  35. Morris wrote to Blunt on 27 June 1894 giving the price of £544, adding: '[i]t will make a very fine piece of tapestry and I have long wanted to do it'. Kelvin, IV, p. 164. See H.C. Marillier, *The History of the Merton Abbey Tapestry Works* (London: Constable and Company, 1927), Plate 20 and p. 21.
  36. Parry, pp. 157-58. 42; Kelvin, IV, p. 164, Note 1. See also Fiona MacCarthy, *William Morris: A Life for Our Times* (London: Faber and Faber, 1994), p. 661.
  37. Aymer Vallance, *The Life and Work of William Morris* (London: George Bell and Sons, 1897), p. 119.
  38. There is no reference to this remark in Richard Ellmann's 1987 biography of Wilde. It is quoted, undated, in Hesketh Pearson, *The Life of Oscar Wilde* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1960), p. 221.
  39. Powell, p. 106.
  40. Hiram Maxim (1840-1916), prolific American-born inventor, who moved to England in 1881; his best-known invention was the Maxim gun. Eleftherios Venizelos (1864-1936) was leader of the Greek national liberation movement during the early twentieth century.
  41. *Architecture, Industry & Wealth: Collected Papers by William Morris* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1902).
  42. *The Collected Works of William Morris*, ed. by May Morris, 24 vols (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1910-15), XVI, p. 160.
  43. *Ibid.*
  44. *Ibid.*, XXII, p. 26.
  45. The Emery Walker Library is located at The Wilson, formerly the Cheltenham Art Gallery and Museum, in Clarence Street, Cheltenham GL50 3JT.