

EDITORIAL

By the time this Winter number of The Journal is in members' hands, the 366 days of the 150th Anniversary year will be behind us: but the activity grows and spreads.

Without taking the whole credit for this, the Society may fairly claim the major share, having played an active part, as promoter, as adviser, as supporter: as a body, through individual members, through local groups, in the celebrations of the year: in publications, films, lectures, schools, exhibitions, one of which, at the ICA, fittingly framed the Birthday Party on 24 March; an occasion enriched if also saddened by Imogen Holst's splendid gift of her setting of Morris's words, and her death a few days before. All these occasions have been rewarding in themselves, and have brought new members at a greater rate than at any time since the first year of our existence: over one hundred and fifty as we go to press.

Is Morris so English a phenomenon that this work should be seen only in terms of England, or is he a figure whose importance over-rides frontiers? If his work is indeed of such significance then we must expect and welcome interpretations which may at times differ widely from those prevalent in Britain. Goethe, in a conversation with Eckermann on New Year's Day, 1827, developed the notion (previously mooted by A.W. Schlegel) of a class of writing which transcended merely national literature and which because of its universal validity should be called world literature. He foresaw the progressive reduction of the globe through increased spatial and intellectual proximity, that would lead to a greater awareness of the shared essentials of our world. The time was coming when important works would be relevant to all.

We must make continuous efforts to see Morris and world literature in this Goethean sense to counteract all the factors that tend to put him in a parochial light. Even though this Journal does not (yet) have foreign language editions, we should remember that there is little if anything in Morris that is not equally meaningful in other parts of the world. The work of the Society must be seen as international.

Our membership is, more and more, world wide, and the exchange of ideas around Morris's life and work, for which The Journal offers a modest opening, is in itself some realisation of his essential idea: that Fellowship is Life, and lack of Fellowship is Death: and with it that other revolutionary idea: that Art and Work and the Pleasure of life can only be separated at the expense of our common humanity. Articles for The Journal, on all aspects of Morris's work, from every country where it is, however slightly, known, will be warmly welcomed.

H.B./R.W.