

WILLIAM MORRIS
NORMAN KELVIN

The Collected
Letters of William
Morris, Volume II,
Part B

1885-1888



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THE COLLECTED LETTERS OF
WILLIAM MORRIS

VOLUME II



EDITED BY NORMAN KELVIN

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**William
Morris**



VOLUME II

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TO PHYLLIS, JANE, AND ELIZABETH

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THE COLLECTED LETTERS OF
WILLIAM MORRIS

VOLUME II



**1038 • FROM A LETTER
TO JAMES LEIGH JOYNES**

[January 1885]

Here is the point of view as I look at it: if we had stayed in the Federation what would have been the result? There were obviously two parties, neither strong enough probably to crush the other; one might [have] obtained a preponderance in the Executive; that advantage might have been reversed at the next conference and so on: that is to say, we should have had a regular parliamentary faction-fight in our very midst; all very well for parliament, which don't want to do anything — but for a propaganda! Don't you think on reflection that it is much better for the two sides to go on working apart, not interfering with one another in any way?

Those whose tendencies lead them toward politics and parliamentarianism will fall naturally towards the Social Democratic Federation; those who are more of purists will fall towards us: I don't care if we are the smaller group even, so long as we can go on working.

TEXT: MM, II, 172.

1039 • TO ROBERT THOMSON

Kelmscott House,
Upper Mall, Hammersmith
January 1, 1885

Dear Mr. Thomson

In answer to your note I will first give you the notice of our resignation which was handed in last Saturday:

“Since discord has arisen in this council owing to the attempt to substitute arbitrary rule therein for fraternal cooperation contrary to the principles of Socialism, & since it seems to us impossible to heal this discord, we the undersigned think it better in the interests of the cause of Socialism to cease to belong to this Council & accordingly hand in our resignations.” This was signed by

E. Aveling
Eleanor Marx-Aveling
Belfort Bax
Robert Banner
— Cooper

W. J. Clarke
J. Lane
J. L. Mahon
— Mainwaring
William Morris

The whole thing really lies in this statement: the attempt to establish absolutism led to its usual results and had to be backed by the usual means. But the immediate causes which led to the actual split were two-fold:

1st It was attempted to expel Mr. W. J. Clarke from the Federation, the

charge alleged against him being that he had in conversation with certain members of the Council made or hinted charges of self-seeking against Mr. Hyndman, & on one or two of his known supporters.

Now it may be admitted that Mr. Clarke had been injudicious in his remarks, but surely expulsion was much too heavy a penalty to inflict on a useful and energetic member of the Federation for the crime of a little incautious talk to *members of the Council*. Moreover others had notably been guilty of the crime such as it was, probably we all had, more or less: certainly Messrs. Frost, Champion & Hyndman had. In short the attack on Clarke was made because he, like others of us, had objected to Mr. Hyndman's tendencies, and had had the courage to let it be known; while his injudicious way of doing this gave a handle against him. I was quite prepared to vote against Mr. Clarke's expulsion, & if need be to follow him out of the Federation, as I thought he had been treated very unfairly.

The 2nd matter relates to our comrade Scheu, who has been ever since I joined (the) an able, devoted, and trusted member. Briefly the facts are these. Scheu when he left London last summer for Edinburgh set himself vigorously to getting the Branch there, which was very weak, into a good state: for reasons of policy, such as not wishing to alienate the Land-restoration people there, the Branch thought it better to call themselves "The Scottish Land & Labour League, being the Scottish section of the Social-Democratic Federation."¹ I can easily understand exception being taken to this additional name: but the Branch under that name was accepted as an affiliated body by the Council, and at the Annual Conference Scheu represented it, and explained in the open meeting which followed the Conference why they had added to the name of the Branch, and no objection was made to it either by Mr. Hyndman or anybody else.

Well, some three or four weeks ago Hyndman gave an address at Glasgow, which resulted in the forming anew a Branch of the S.D.F. in that city: the Edinburgh Branch sent a deputation to the Glasgow one, asking them to join them: the result of their consenting, as of couse the Edinburgh people must have known, would certainly have been that Glasgow would have led as the more important body: however the Glasgow Branch demurred, as they had full right to do, and some of the members seem to have written to Hyndman for *orders* as to what to do. Accordingly when I came to Glasgow about three weeks ago, I found the the executive divided, and in fact quarrelling: at the meeting I attended a letter from Hyndman was read attacking Scheu in what I am compelled to call a treacherous manner: accusing him of being an anarchist,² a friend of Johann Most,³ and disloyal to the cause of Socialism; in short saying just what the writer thought would injure Scheu the most with the Glasgow people. These charges I knew to be untrue and I saw therefore that it was

no longer any use trying to smother the smouldering discontent in the Federation.

I was bound, you see, either to accept Hyndman's charges against Scheu whom I knew to be trustworthy, or to declare against Hyndman. I did not hesitate; and in the meeting of last Tuesday fortnight, at which the motion for Clarke's expulsion was thrown out, I plainly expressed my opinion as to Hyndman's absolutism and self-seeking. I need go no further into this matter in detail, except to say that on Tuesday week Scheu vindicated his conduct and position triumphantly: though even that was scarcely needed, as his antecedents, whatever they were, had been known to Hyndman all along, and yet he had treated him as trustworthy till the moment when he found it convenient to attack him, Scheu having done nothing fresh in the meantime to inspire any want of confidence.

I will be frank with you and say that though I have called these two cases the cause of the split, I should rather have called them its *occasion*: to my mind Hyndman's tendencies have led the S.D.F. or at least were leading it into a futile and even dangerous policy, nor could I in any case have worked with him long in carrying out that policy. It has meant adventure show, & advertisement, which would have found us out in the long run, and shown us to be a small party without organisation and with no very clear aims.

Hence all these theatrical boasts, and warnings about immediate violent revolution, which frighten those who are ignorant of our condition away from us, and disgust those who know how weak we are; many of whom are just the men who would be the staunchest if occasion offered. Hence also the perpetual sneers at, and abuse of, the radicals who, deluded as we must think them, are after all the men from whom our recruits must come. Hence attacks on foreigners as foreigners, or at least sneers at them; coquetting also with jingoism in various forms, all of which mean waiting about to see what can be made of the political situation, if perhaps at the best one may attain to a sort of Bismarkian State Socialism,⁴ or as near it as we can get in England. I cannot stand all this; it is not what I mean by Socialism either in aim or in means: I want a real revolution a real change in Society: Society a great organic mass of well-regulated forces used for the bringing-about a happy life for all. And the means for attaining it are simple enough; education in Socialism, and organization for the time when the crisis shall force action upon us: nothing else will do us any good at present: the revolution cannot be a mechanical one, though the last act of it may be civil war, or it will end in reaction after all.

Nothing hinders us from this education and organizing work: if there are laws against it we know nobody will dare to put them in force: why then should we swagger about violence which we know we cannot use:

when the time comes to use it we shall not need to tell everybody beforehand.

I finish by saying that whatever faults I have, I am by no means a quarrelsome man; and if I could have avoided this quarrel I would have done so. In fact I have gone on hoping against hope for the last six months that the differences might heal up: but the truth is that Hyndman is determined to be master, and will not accept any other place, and he cannot change his nature and be otherwise than a jingo and a politician even if he tries. I can only hope that some of his friends may keep him straight for a while; but I believe that in time they will be driven to the same conclusion as we have been — that they cannot work with him.

As you may have heard, we have formed another body, the Socialist League, from which you will shortly hear: I can only say of it that it begins at all events with the distinct aim of making Socialists by educating them, and of organizing them to deal with politics in the end; that it expects single-heartedness from its members and fraternal cooperation, and that it will not suffer any absolutism amongst it.

Asking you to give my kind regards to our other comrades

I am

Yours fraternally

William Morris

P.S. I had written this letter as an answer to comrade Yewen,⁵ I think I cannot (think) express myself very differently in any case so I ask you to accept the same statement copied out again: with thanks for your letter

I am

Yours fraternally

William Morris

ms: Harvard. Published: Hubbard, 49-55: Henderson, *Letters*, 226-29.

¹ See letter no. 1026, n. 4.

² See letter no. 1022, n. 3.

³ See letter no. 693, n. 5.

⁴ Believing that repression was not enough to contain the socialists, Bismarck, in the 1880's, advanced a series of bills designed to institute social welfare. Compulsory insurance was established against illness in 1882 and against accidents in 1884. The sickness insurance funds were raised by contributions from workers and employers; the accident insurance was carried entirely by the employers. In 1889 old age and invalidism insurance were to follow, with workers, employers, and the state contributing.

⁵ A. G. Yewen. He appears in the list of weekly subscribers in *Justice*, August 2, 1884, p. 5.

LETTERS OF WILLIAM MORRIS

1040 • TO ANDREAS SCHEU

Kelmscott House,
Upper Mall, Hammersmith
January 4, 1885

My dear Scheu

Thank you for your letter:¹ I quite agree with your point of view of not letting the League degenerate into a mere opinion-society, and will do my best to keep it lively: as to the paper please understand that I intend, as far as I go to turn it into a weekly if possible: but paying for Justice has some what crippled me, and I shall have to find money for the other expenses of the League at first. I am not quite sure of Carpenter yet,² but expect to see him in a day or two. Faulkner will give us £100 also which is something. I can be *sure* of giving £300 altogether & hope for more. The point always is that we cannot risk having to stop a paper once started: at least that is my view.

I fear we shall find it difficult to persuade the Branches to join us en bloc even when they agree:³ I am pretty sure of Merton Abbey & Hammersmith of course. I think we ought to start new branches, wherever we can get someone to work them, at once. I am anxious to hear what you think of the manifesto, it is Bax and I conjointly.⁴

Sketchley⁵ called on Thursday & had a long talk with me: he had already had the story from the other side; but it was obvious that he agreed with us. I have a note from Joynes friendly but vague; he is going to stay in Germany some time longer; in short keep out of the way.

I will write again after Tuesday.

Yours affectionately
William Morris

MS: IISH. Published *Socialist Review*, May 1928, 34; Henderson, *Letters*, 229-30.

¹ Morris and Scheu exchanged a number of letters in January. On January 11 Scheu wrote from Edinburgh, thanking Morris for this letter of January 4 and for a second of January 8 (which apparently has not survived) and telling Morris that he would send an article the following week titled "Sincerity and Devotion" (see *Commonweal*, April 1885 Supplement, pp. 25-26). Of more significance, Scheu also wrote, "Our general meeting resolved unanimously to join the 'Socialist League,' so you will refer to us always as the 'Scottish Section (Scottish Land and Labour League)'" (MS. IISH.)

² When Carpenter visited London in January he saw both Morris and Hyndman and "had long talks with them." Writing to Robert Sharland (1849-1931), a Bristol socialist, on January 22, 1885, Carpenter had told him this and continued: "With great admiration and friendship for Morris I feel almost certain that he has had his mind poisoned against Hyndman and the others by certain schemers, and he has led out into the wilderness a body of men who undoubtedly have done very little in the cause, and several of whom are ambitious and designing. If he can weld them together . . . good; but it seems to me probable that he will have . . . trouble in doing that. There is a certain colour in the charges against Hyndman. He is hasty, feverish and rather sharp-tongued as times, but . . . at bottom genuine and faithful to the cause. . . . There must not be any breakup of the Federation. . . . *Justice* must

be kept going. . . . We regret the departure of Morris from the Federation, but I do not myself think that we have lost much in the others." (Lee, p. 71). Carpenter did, however, join the Socialist League in September 1886 (see letter no. 1132).

³ Not many branches of the S.D.F. did join. For an analysis of the immediate "aftermath" of the split, see E. P. Thompson, pp. 362-65.

⁴ The *Manifesto* closely follows *Das Kapital*. Addressed to "Fellow Citizens" it begins: "We come before you as a body advocating the principles of Revolutionary International Socialism; that is, we seek a change in the basis of Society — a change which would destroy the distinctions of classes and nationalities." It goes on to assert that in the entire civilized world as presently constituted there are two classes of society: the owners of wealth and the instruments of production, and the labouring class. It then introduces Marx's theory of value and alludes to "unpaid labour," asserting that the sole possession of the producing class is the power of labour in their bodies. It explains Marx's term "surplus value" and his theories concerning profit and competition. It calls for public ownership of the means of production and promises a society in which human potential will be realized in terms of social relations and obligations to the community. It rejects all previous forms of government—state socialism as well—and asserts that the Socialist League "aims at the realization of complete Revolutionary Socialism and well knows that this can never happen in any one country without the help of the workers of all civilization." (See Appendix A for second edition of the *Manifesto*, annotated by Bax and Morris; see *Commonweal*, February 1885, for first edition of the *Manifesto*.)

⁵ John Sketchley (1822-1902), for whose book *A Review of European Society* (1884) Morris had written a preface, was to become a regular contributor to *Commonweal*. Originally a Chartist, he had been excommunicated by the Catholic Church for writing *Popery: Its Supporters and Opponents* (1870) and had later helped to found the Birmingham Branch of the S.D.F., becoming its first secretary. See E. P. Thompson, pp. 279-81.

1041 • TO WILLIAM SHARMAN

Kelmscott House,
Upper Mall, Hammersmith
January 6, 1885

Dear Mr. Sharman¹

Thank you for your note: I hope you will manage to call here when you come up to town. I can give you a bed, and we shall be very glad to see you.

As to the split, reunion may be possible at some date or another, but it can only be arrived at through present separation. The fact is it has been too long brewing already, and it is good that it has come now, rather than later. Since I shall probably come in for a large share of the blame, or what ever else it may be called which attaches to affairs of this sort, I will venture to bore you with a letter, & should have done so even if I had not received your note.

As you probably know or guess Hyndmans leadership and our distrust of it is what has broken us in two: we think him ambitious, and though intellectually convinced of the economic truths of Socialism, yet at heart

rather a jingo than anything else: but at any rate we know that he has got to the position of leader of the party, and that consequently he will lead if we follow where ever his ambition drives him: as a matter of fact this whither seems to be ultimately towards Tory Democracy, or in other words 'back again'. Meantime it has warped the tactics of the Federation into the direction of mere show & theatrical display of sham revolution; *you* have had experience of how dangerous & futile such tactics may become when handled incautiously: but futile they always must be, as they inevitably lead the party to shut its eyes to the real state of things, and to shun the real difficulties; which in one phrase amount to this the apathy of the working-classes. Education & organization therefore have been neglected for agitation, which in the present state of things is nearly worthless; for when you have agitated miserable & ignorant people, what are you to advise them to do when you know that they cannot and would not rise, and (dar) you dare only hint at it, not meaning it all the time. All this comes of the leader of the party, as Hyndman (has bee) is universally admitted to be, finding his account in puffing up the movement into quite false (p) importance. Do not be distressed at the break up of the organization, for there has been next to none to break up: of floating discontent there is enough; of intellectual revolt against the injustice of the present system, you yourself offer an example of a kind of feeling which is spreading widely I hope and think: but there is no revolt *as yet* among the workers: and I feel sure that the proper aim of Socialists at present is to educate and organize intelligent men, (as much as possible taking them from the working classes) to deal with the approaching crisis when it comes. Here then you have the real difference (in the) between the two sections: on the one hand opportunism & political adventure, ending with controul by a parliamentary party; on the other pure socialism looking towards a revolutionary change in Society, and refusing to follow the parliamentary red herring meantime.

The cause, or rather occasion for the split was furnished by the discreditable intrigues which always go with political ambition: I won't trouble you with the detail of these: it may suffice to say that: Hyndman has made attacks on those whom he thought were his rivals or enemies, beginning with Aveling, and ending with a scandalous attack on Andreas Scheu, one of our best men. This last finished the matter and compelled me 'to take sides.'

We, the malcontents, have started a new organization, the Socialist League, which is well supported and promises to become strong: in a few days we shall have our manifesto and a letter of explanation of our secession printed,² which of course will be sent to you: we hope also before Feb: to have the first number of a new journal out; which however, taught

by the losses incurred over the issue of 'Justice', we shall not venture at first to bring out oftener than monthly, though we have a good list of contributors, including Frederic Engels.³ I venture to hope for your support and encouragement: you understand that we shall not in any way attack the S.D.F., our explanatory letter once published at all events, but shall work on our own lines in the hope that the S.D.F. may some day or other get rid of its dictator, & may meantime muzzle him enough to be able to do some good work. I may mention that I have been appointed to the editorship of the paper, which however will be always under the direct controul of the Council of the League.⁴ In all this I see nothing too discouraging though I have by no means gone into the matter with a light heart. To some extent at least the split is a sign of growth & life in the party: of one thing at least you may be sure, that I did not take action before everything had been tried to solder the split up: it was inevitable.

As to the meeting of the 22nd I shall be by that time clean out of the Federation, and it will not concern me, as far as I can see.⁵

With kind regards to yourself & Mrs. Sharman

I am

Yours very truly

William Morris

MS: Rosenbach.

¹ See letter n. 885, n. 1.

² For the *Manifesto*, see letter no. 1040, n. 4, and Appendix A. As for the letter, signed by the ten who had resigned from the S.D.F., it stated that a socialist body "in the present state of things has no function but to educate the people in the principles of Socialism," and it charged that the S.D.F. was seeking "alliances, however temporary, with one or other of the political factions" and would "weaken our propagandist force by driving us into electioneering." It declared also that there was in the S.D.F. "a tendency towards National assertion, the persistent foe of Socialism." (For a complete text of the letter, see Tom Mann's *Memoirs* [1923; rpt., London: Macgibbon and Kee, 1967], pp. 30-31.)

³ The March issue of *Commonweal* contained Engels' article, "England in 1845 and in 1885," which was later included in his Preface to the English edition of *The Condition of the Working Classes in England in 1844* (1892). This same issue, which E. P. Thompson says (p. 383) "must surely have been one of the most remarkable issues of any British Socialist periodical," included also an editorial by Morris, as well as his "Message of the March Wind"; articles by E. B. Bax, S. Stepniak, G. B. Shaw, Paul Lafargue, F. Kitz, C. Wilfred, and Aveling; and a compilation by Eleanor Marx of messages of greeting to the Socialist League from August Bebel, Wilhelm Liebknecht, E. Vaillant, Paul Lafargue, Leo Frankel, Karl Kautsky, Pierre Lavroff, S. Stepniak, Tichomikoff, and F. Domela Nieuwenhuis.

⁴ At this point, the affairs of the Socialist League were conducted by a Provisional Council. Its members, all of whom signed the *Manifesto* published in the first issue of *Commonweal*, were as follows: W. B. Adams, Edward Aveling, Eleanor Marx Aveling, Robert Banner, E. Belfort Bax, Thomas Binning, H. Charles, William J. Clarke, J. Cooper, E. T. Craig, Charles J. Faulkner, W. Hudson, Frank Kitz, Joseph Lane, Frederic Lessner, Thomas Maguire, J. L. Mahon, S. Mainwaring, James Mavor, William Morris, Andreas Scheu, and Edward Watson.

LETTERS OF WILLIAM MORRIS

⁵ Morris did in fact attend the meeting, which had been called by the remaining members of the S.D.F. executive—Hyndman, John Burns, H. Burrows, Champion, Frost, Amelia Hicks, J. Murray, Harry Quelch, and J. Williams—to discuss the charges of the resigning members and a counterstatement issued by the S.D.F. on December 30, 1884. See Tsuzuki, *Hyndman*, p. 67; and letter no. 1045, n. 2. See *Justice*, January 3, 1885, p. 5.

1042 • TO JOSEPH LANE

The Socialist League¹
27, Farringdon Street,
London, E.C.
January 8, 1885

My dear Lane

Would you kindly write us something for the first no of the *Commonweal* on 'work in the East End' about a column of brevier:² please send a card in answer.³

Yours fraternally
William Morris

MS: Swales Coll.

¹ This is the first surviving letter written by Morris on the Socialist League letterhead.

² Eight-point type.

³ Lane did. His article, "East-End Workers," appeared in the first number of *Commonweal* (February 1885), p. 6. He sketched the employment conditions of the workers, stressed their misery, and denounced the competitive system and the "so-called leaders of the working class with their Fair Trade Leagues" and "Industrial Conferences."

1043 • TO THOMAS COGLAN HORSFALL

Kelmscott House,
Upper Mall, Hammersmith
January 10, 1885

There *is* a split in the Socialist camp and as I have unfortunately been placed more or less in the position of leader, it gives me a lot more work to do. I fear I can scarcely hope that either you or Rowley will agree enough with us to join the Socialist League (the new body), though I know the good will of both of you.¹

TEXT: Horsfall

¹ Skinner wrote that Horsfall "did not join the S.L. and his intercourse with Morris seems to have languished after this date." As for Rowley, he, too, did not join, but Morris continued to lecture for the Ancoats Recreation Committee in Manchester.

1044 • TO ROBERT THOMSON

Kelmscott House,
Upper Mall, Hammersmith
January 15 [1885]

Dear Mr. Thomson

Thanks for your letter: to a certain extent it is answered by your enclosure of the vote of censure:¹ but I will just write a line or two to excuse myself to a comrade. And first I thank you for your personal kindness to me and I suppose the rest of us, & quite understand how it must have failed; in these matters there is sure to be partizanship somewhere. I must say that the latter part of your letter in which you point out a real difference of opinion amongst the S.D.F. explains why we did not hesitate to resign when we saw how far the split had gone: I mean that quite apart from any personal differences we saw the difference of opinion which was sure to widen. Now a propagandist body cannot afford to have 2 parties in it, however friendly they may be personally; they had much better work apart, otherwise we shall only have an image of the parliament with its ceaseless wrangles & no work done. Understand that I no longer fear differences of opinion in our ranks: only when the difference is established, let us separate & work side by side rather than wrangle on together: thus we shall keep friends and the cause will be sped. Of course this doesn't suit the tactics of political adventure which wants to get together a political party for immediate political ends, & they will call these views anarchical: I say they are common sense, as applied to a weak party with no means of action & with the one necessary aim of building up opinion.

I haven't time to argue the points of principle (for it amounts to that) on which I see we differ: but I hope to meet you soon and then we can discuss them frankly & without acrimony. Meantime I thank you again for taking the trouble to explain your views and for your friendliness, and wish you all success in pushing the cause: I am convinced this schism will further it rather than retard it.

I am
Yours fraternally
William Morris

MS: Harvard. Published: Hubbard, 56-57.

¹ After Morris and his followers had resigned, the remaining members of the executive of the S.D.F. passed a vote of censure. See Hubbard, p. 65.

LETTERS OF WILLIAM MORRIS

1045 • TO CHARLES JAMES FAULKNER

Kelmscott House,
Upper Mall, Hammersmith
January 17, 1885

My dear Charley

I did my best about that letter to Socialists but was only partially successful: compromise was the result: I wrote a very brief paper free from personal matter which is *printed* for general distribution;¹ and Avelings letter is lithographed & addressed to the S.D.F. only: also we had another subcommittee over it, and modified it a good deal: meantime the other side have sent out *their* letter² and ours is an answer to it.

We discussed the matter at length on Tuesday last; and I am bound to say that some arguments were brought forward in favour of a detailed account being written which shook me somewhat; so I took my defeat with a good grace: in fact we were all of us both very friendly and very outspoken in the discussion; there is not any spite about the men in general and they are genuinely eager to get over the controversy & go for the capitalists.

Item, I was beaten on another point: I was opposed to going to this meeting which the other side have called, not seeing what we have got to do there: but the feeling was that we were bound to give an account to the constituency which had elected us; and some perhaps were moved by the fear of being called afraid if we were to decline going: so go we do:³ of course we shall not get a fair hearing, and it may end in a shindy: but I shall do all I can to keep our people in order, & must take a black eye if it comes to me as part of the ordinary business of the League.

I meet my branch tomorrow to try to settle matters with them: they are not a large body after all: but we have some good men among them; all I want is to give them an opportunity of joining us.

How are you getting on down there: I will come when you want me.⁴

Yours affectionately
William Morris

MS: Walthamstow.

¹ See letter no. 1041, n. 2.

² At a meeting of the Socialist League on January 18, 1885, the secretary read a long letter from the Council of the S.D.F. "embodying their views as to the causes of the rupture." See *Ham. Min. Bk.*

³ To the general meeting of the S.D.F. held on January 22. See letter no. 1041, n. 5.

⁴ Morris probably refers to Faulkner's efforts to convert the Oxford Radical Association, of which he was a member, into the Oxford Branch of the Socialist League. On February 7 the *Oxford Chronicle and Berks and Bucks Gazette* reported (p. 6) under the headline "Oxford Socialist League" that the Association had changed into a socialist association. On February 25 Morris delivered a talk to the new Oxford Branch of the Socialist League. See letter no. 1058.

1046 • TO JAMES LEIGH JOYNES

Kelmscott House,
Upper Mall, Hammersmith
January 18 [1885]

My dear Joynes

Bax showed me your last letter to him yesterday: I thank you very much for your good opinion of me, which I am sure I don't deserve except so far as sincerity goes.

I have little more to add to what I have said before except as to our resignation: the point of view you put forward would of course be the one taken at first sight by most people; but here is the point as I look at it: if we had stayed in the Fed: what would have been the result? There were obviously two parties, neither strong enough probably to crush the other; one might have obtained a preponderance in the executive; that advantage might have been reversed at the next Conference & so on: that is to say we should have had a regular parliamentary faction-fight in our very midst; all very well for parliament, which don't want to do anything, — but for a propaganda! Don't you think on reflection that it is much better for the two sides to go on working apart (?), not interfering with one another in any way?

Those whose tendencies lead them toward politics & parliamentarism will fall naturally towards the S.D.F. those who are more of purists will fall towards us: I don't care if we are the smaller (party) group even, so long as we can go on working.

I know & knew that our (fe) resignation would throw us into the back ground at first, though I think some of us were more sanguine about it: I mention this because I am responsible for that step: I hope it was not too much because I felt personally that I could not keep up the quarrel, as I certainly could not as far as I myself am concerned.

Well I will say no more about that at present: I will however ask you to be so good as to write for the 'Commonweal'¹ which will be only a monthly at first; till we have time to look about us: of course it will not prejudice this request, that you write for Justice or any other Socialist paper; even the 'Anarchist' which is shortly coming out.²

Amidst all our quarrels it is really encouraging to see how Socialism is making way in England: there have been articles in the Pall Mall & Standard last week which would have been rank treason & heresy 5 years ago.³ The S.D.F. & The Socialist League are but little outposts of the great army; but I don't think it is very far behind; and then he who lives (as I don't suppose I shall) will see.

Yours very truly
William Morris

LETTERS OF WILLIAM MORRIS

P.S. I shall be glad of any little thing from you at once: I wont edit, i.e. (change) alter it without your consent.

WM

MS: BL, Add. mss. 45345. Extract published: MM, II, 172.

¹ Joynes contributed an article, "Hopeless Toil," to the fifth issue of *Commonweal*, June 1885, p. 43.

² The first issue of the *Anarchist* appeared in March 1885.

³ Morris may be referring to reports in *The Standard* and the *Pall Mall Gazette* of Joseph Chamberlain's speech on January 5, 1885, before the Birmingham Artisans Association. *The Standard*, January 6, reported (p. 2) Chamberlain's assertion that legislation of the future would be directed toward social problems, since "private ownership has taken the place of . . . communal rights." The *Pall Mall Gazette*, January 6, printed (p. 1) an editorial on Chamberlain's speech, and on January 14 published (pp. 1-2) an article: "Mr. Chamberlain Translated Into Plain Speech: An Interview with Mr. Henry George." On January 16 the *Gazette* informed its readers that *Justice*, in a series of "Letters to Revolutionary Agents," had advised Chamberlain that "you cannot buy or break the Socialists."

1047 • TO JOSEPH LANE

The Socialist League
27, Farringdon Street,
London, E.C.
January 19, 1885

My dear Lane

I have read your article, which I think very good, and I hope we shall get it in this month:¹ we are somewhat cooped up for space; but it won't do to shorten it even a little.

Yours fraternally
William Morris

MS: Berger Coll.

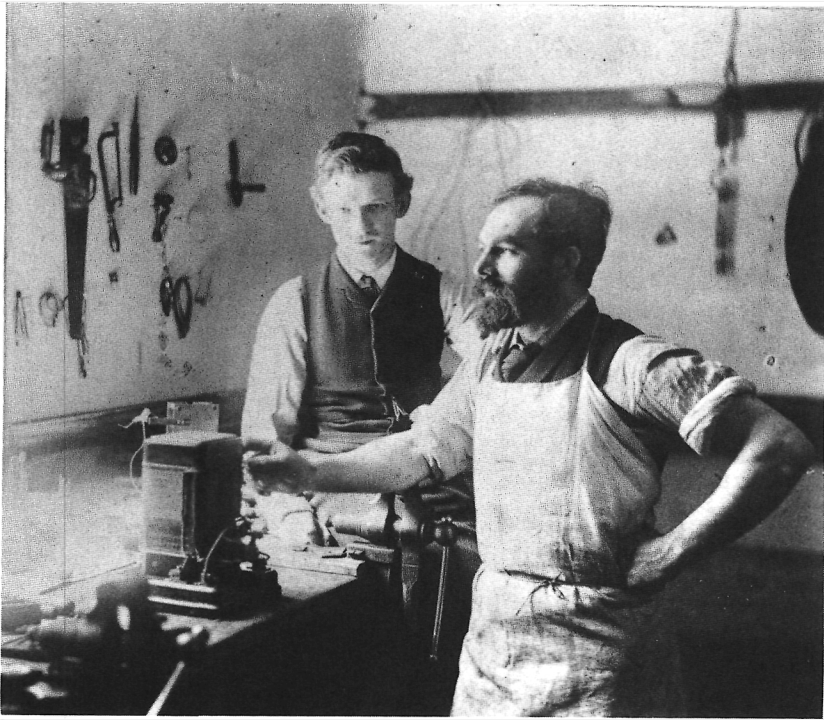
¹ See letter no. 1042, n. 3.

1048 • TO JOHN BURNS

Kelmscott House,
Upper Mall, Hammersmith
January 19, 1885

Dear Mr. Burns¹

You are put down to lecture here next Sunday (8) 7.30 on Trades Unions:² I write to ask whether you wish to do so under the circumstances. I do not wish at all to urge you to anything you think unfitting, but I (d) need scarcely say that I should be glad if you would come: I myself shall be away lecturing,³ or I should have had great pleasure in meet-



John Burns in his workshop with unidentified apprentice, c. 1888.

ing you, as I shall on any occasion when we meet in spite of any difference of opinion.⁴ Would you kindly send me a card as we want to advertise the lecture.

Yours fraternally
William Morris

MS: BL, Add. MSS. 46288.

¹ See letter no. 981, n. 3.

² The minutes of the Hammersmith Branch of the S.D.F. for December 17, 1884, record a list of lectures for January and note: "Ask J. Burns for 25th." At a January 18 meeting, it was resolved that the first meeting of the new branch should be on January 28. Morris may or may not have known, on December 17, that Burns would support Hyndman when the split in the executive of the S.D.F. occurred. But it is clear from the tone of this letter and from his report of Burns's conduct, that he felt no rancor toward Burns. The conciliatory tone of this letter suggests that the finding of themselves on opposite sides was one of the consequences of the split that he was unhappy about. Burns, however, apparently felt more strongly about the split than Morris did (see n. 4 below). He did not lecture at the Hammersmith Branch of the Socialist League on January 25.

LETTERS OF WILLIAM MORRIS

³ On January 25, Morris lectured before the Woolwich Branch of the S.D.F. (see LeMire, p. 245). Morris's dislike of conflict among socialists is suggested by his readiness to keep an S.D.F. lecture engagement so soon after the weeks of the acrimony.

⁴ At this point, "difference of opinion" was too mild a description of what Burns saw and felt. Tsuzuki writes (*Hyndman*, p. 67) that on January 22, at the general meeting of the S.D.F., Burns "spoke up warmly, saying that the whole thing was 'an organized attack on H. M. Hyndman, who at least had shown some sincerity for Socialist principles by advocating them at street corners on sixty-seven consecutive Sundays.' He declared that the majority of the executive had resigned, 'because they were afraid of the members.'" Despite his manifest anger, however, Burns seems to have regained his friendly feeling for those who had left the S.D.F., including Morris, only a few weeks later. See letter no. 1056.

1049 • TO THOMAS JAMES
COBDEN-SANDERSON

Kelmscott House,
Upper Mall, Hammersmith
January 23, 1885

My dear Sanderson

I confess I don't quite understand part of your letter; and, not to hide (f) one's feeling from a friend, I am vexed with you.¹ But as you are ill I will not trouble you any more at present.

Banner will call on me tomorrow, and I will tell him that you have changed your mind, and, as far I can why.

Yours faithfully
William Morris

ms: Bucknell.

¹ Sanderson seems to have drawn back from a decision to join the Socialist League. Earlier, in November 1884, Morris had apparently tried to persuade him to join the S.D.F. Sanderson's entry in his *Journals* for November 25 notes (I, 205: "I am reading *Le Socialisme Contemporain* [by Emile Laveley]. . . . Bookbinding till 4 P.M., then socialism literature. I trust to prepare a *milieu* for Richard [his son, born November 22] to work in. I suspect that I must give up a large section of my old friends — the Howards, the Stanleys, the Russells. Preparing and hoping for a state of society which shall make their position impossible, how, if they are bound up with their social position, can I continue to be friends with them? Onwards without them, then!") Sanderson goes on to record that he had met with Morris on the previous Monday and had talked about the organization of the "Democratic Federation." Sanderson, however, apparently made no move to join the S.D.F. in the single month remaining before Morris left it. That Morris was "vexed" with him in January 1885 suggests that Morris, recalling Sanderson's expression of sympathy for socialism two months earlier, assumed that he would as soon join the Socialist League as a way of giving active expression to his good wishes. The fact, however, is that Sanderson seems not to have developed a real interest in socialism at this time, and his explanation to Morris seems to have been that he had not been able to reconcile daily devotion to his kind of art with socialist activism. See letter no. 1050.

1050 • TO THOMAS JAMES
COBDEN-SANDERSON

Kelmscott House,
Upper Mall, Hammersmith
January 24, 1885

My dear Sanderson

Thank you for writing me again so quickly and at such length. I will not say any longer that I am vexed *with you* which implies blame on my part; but I still don't agree with you in the estimate of certain kinds of work. Take my position, not yours, as an illustration of my stand point from which to look at the relations between a Socialists' ordinary life & his furtherance of the cause.

I have work to do outside the propaganda by which I live, and which is mostly specially pleasant: as it happens I cannot release myself from that work on the one hand, and on the other it amuses me vastly: but if I could live and have money for the propaganda without working at it I would not do another stroke at it, but would give myself up wholly to the propaganda. That is I regard my work as far as it pretends to produce anything as absolutely worthless; and what I say of my own work I feel of everybody else's that has in it any pretence to art or sentiment (in it). Society is to my mind wholly corrupt, & I can take no deep-seated pleasure in anything it turns out, except the materials for its own destruction in the shape of discontent and aspirations for better things. To keep ourselves alive for revolution, and to gather what influence we can for that purpose are the only aims I can recognize in the daily work of those who consider themselves Socialists. At the same time I quite admit the necessity of amusing ourselves with work if we have the chance; (and) because (and here I imagine I touch your point of view somewhat) if we don't, we are like to become too bitter to be of any use, or at least to be of as much use as we otherwise should be. Also I admit that a man may be of some use without actively working in the cause; nor am I sure that his little bit of work is of much more use than his existence in company with his passive conviction: I don't feel responsible for more than a very small, almost infinitesimal, portion of work: but that portion you see I am impelled to give, whether I like it or not.

That's my own position therefore, which I don't (on reflection) feel at all bound to thrust on you: perhaps it is founded on a certain sanguineness of disposition. Item, I feel (<) and say (in order to have last word) that if we *all* have good reasons for standing out of the movement, the movement won't move. Here is a long tiresome letter which I have sent you in all friendliness; and as to my anger you know

'I was angry with my friend
I told my wrath my wrath did end'

LETTERS OF WILLIAM MORRIS

I will talk over our differences when we meet next. As to Banner of course if you have any doubt, it is much better not to engage in what might be difficult to shake off without a convulsion.¹

Yours affectionately
William Morris

MS: PML.

¹ Presumably Morris had asked Cobden-Sanderson if he could employ Banner, who was himself a bookbinder.

1051 • TO THE EDITOR OF THE *Daily News*

The Socialist League
27, Farringdon Street,
London, E.C.
January 26 [1885]

Sir,

Your notice of the forthcoming Socialist journal, the *Commonweal*, was so worded that perhaps the public might not clearly understand that in editing the journal of the Socialist League, I am but acting as the servant of that body.¹

I am, Sir,
Yours obediently
William Morris

TEXT: *Daily News*, January 27, 1885, 3. Published: McMinn, 78.

¹ The *Daily News*, January 25, 1885, had reported: "Mr. William Morris, the poet of English Socialism — and of other things besides — will issue the first number of his new journal *The Commonweal* next Wednesday. It is understood that the paper, unlike *Justice* — the organ of the Social Democratic Federation, from which Mr. Morris lately seceded, will be under his personal editorship. *The Commonweal* will thus be the official organ of the new body which Mr. Morris has founded, namely, the 'Socialist League.' The number will contain a new poem by Mr. Morris, as also the manifesto of the new organization, besides a number of articles on social and political topics. On the following Friday Mr. Morris' revolutionary song, 'The March of the Workers,' to the tune of 'John Brown,' will be sung at a Socialist entertainment which is to be given at Ladbroke Hall, and which will comprise, besides readings and musical selections, a three-act comedy-drama by Mr. Palgrave Simpson and Mr. Herman Merivale."

1052 • TO FRANK KITZ

Kelmscott House,
Upper Mall, Hammersmith
January 27, 1885

Dear Comrade,¹

I hunted for the letter² and found it under a heap of others: I feel very vexed & ashamed at not having read it before, but you will easily understand that I have been very much driven by correspondence the last week or two, and I must add that I am bad at the sort of thing.

Please to believe that I have all good will to help you: would it be at all in your way to dye me some morocco skins for book-binding & furniture? fast colours and special colours about which we could talk. If this is no good I will talk to you and see if we could hit on something which would be. I employ a few skin-dyers, but their places are all filled, as I never can make up my mind to send a man away. Also I am myself a bit of a dyer; but all our work is in the old style: blue-vat, madder, grain, & weld.

Now please don't be offended if I offer you some temporary money help till something turns up, but take it as a commonplace affair between two friends; I will send a cheque tomorrow (when I go to business) unless you write to pitch in to me meanwhile.

I don't understand leather-dyeing, our work is skein dyeing (wool & silk) and cotton-printing: do you do piece-goods & re-dyeing? I might have jobs of that kind some times: I hope pretty often.

Thanks for your suggestions which are good: I am doubly vexed again that I didn't get them against the meeting.

As to the 'Englishman's Home' I confess I have never had the courage to face the sight of those things though I think I can imagine them and am sick and ashamed of the whole thing: fancy people making all that row about last Saturdays squibs & crackers, and then sitting down comfortably cheek by jowl with all the murder of body & soul which goes on every day in the midst of 'our civilization'.

Yours fraternally & friendly
William Morris

MS: SUNY, Buffalo.

¹ Frank Kitz (1849-1923). Boos writes (*Diary*, p. 65) that "Frank Kitz" was the name assumed by Francis Platt, born out of wedlock to Mary Platt and John Lewis, an English watchmaker. (E. P. Thompson, however, identifies him [p. 281] as the son of a German exile; but Kitz's self-description as "a fatherless lad" whose mother "had to go out to service" is closer to Boos's account.) Apprenticed to a dyer, he was also, as a young man, active in radical clubs, eventually becoming an anarchist and the editor of the English language version of *Freiheit*. In 1882, along with Lane and others, he started the Labour Emancipation League. He joined the Socialist League when it was first formed and was a member of the provisional council. Later he worked as a dyer for Morris and Co. at Merton Abbey. E. P.

LETTERS OF WILLIAM MORRIS

Thompson describes him (p. 595) as part of "the extreme left wing" of the socialist movement. See also Frank Kitz, "Recollections and Reflections," *Freedom*, 26 (January 1912).

² Kitz had apparently asked Morris to help him find work. See letter no. 1053.

**1053 • TO THOMAS JAMES
COBDEN-SANDERSON**

Kelmscott House,
Upper Mall, Hammersmith
January 27, 1885

My dear Sanderson

I want to give a job to one of our people who is a dyer and a good one at that: now I know you want some marocco skins of good colours; so would you like to buy some of me if I could get Comrade Kitz (aforementioned) to help me in the matter? What I want is that you should tell me (whe) how many skins you want and where to get them & what they are and then I will have my try.

I hope you are better: I may call in on Thursday before the anti-scrape.

Yours affectionately
William Morris

MS: Bucknell.

1054 • TO GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

[January 27, 1885]

You are booked for the 22nd at Kelmscott House. Iron Law of Wages.¹
time 7.30

Thank you.

W Morris

MS: BL, Add. MSS. 50541.

¹ Noted in Lecture List in the *Ham. Min. Book*, January 28, 1885.

1055 • TO WILHELM LIEBKNECHT

The Socialist League
27, Farringdon Street,
London, E.C.
[February ? 1885]

Dear Comrade Liebknecht,¹

You will have doubtless heard of the new Socialist body which has been founded in this country and which has now an official organ, the *Commonweal*: the League holds the doctrines of Collectivist Socialism with-

out compromise, and it is hoped will make rapid progress in this country.

We should be very grateful to you if you would send us any literary contributions to our paper; either short notes of passing events in your own country, or longer and more serious articles.²

I may add that we shall have no difficulty in translating any articles so that you may write, if convenient to you in your own language.

I am Dear Comrade

Yours fraternally

William Morris

Edward Aveling³

MS: IMLM. Published: Meier, 842.

¹ Wilhelm Liebknecht (1826-1900), one of the leaders of the Social Democratic Party in Germany and a member of the Reichstag, to which he had been elected in 1874.

² Liebknecht sent a message of greeting that was published in the March issue of *Commonweal*.

³ This letter was written by Morris as editor and countersigned by Aveling as sub-editor.

1056 • TO JAMES LEIGH JOYNES

Kelmescott House,
Upper Mall, Hammersmith
February 3, 1885

Dear Joynes

I owe you an apology for being a party to the printing of a part of your letter (about the Avelings) in the Daily News: I would not have done so without directly asking your leave, if it had not been that I had to answer Hyndman's challenge at once, & that as the passage was purely *exculpatory* I didn't think you would object. If you want to curse me write the curse: if not I shall be the better pleased.

We of the League are getting on soberly enough, but I think getting on: for myself I feel miserably uncomfortable at having any leadership put upon me, but hope I shall be able to learn to do whatever is necessary.

Have you seen the *Commonweal*? and when are you going to send us anything?

That blessed Industrial Rem: Conference¹ has been at work. The Fed: sent Burns & Williams there who seem to have had some fun; they called in at the League yesterday morning & were in very good spirits about it though Burns has had the sack from his employers for his pains:² they were both quite friendly to us. I have made Kitz' acquaintance lately: like most of our East-Enders he is certainly somewhat tinged with anarchism or perhaps one may say destructivism: but I like him very much: I called on the poor chap at the place where he lived, & it fairly gave me the horrors to see how wretchedly off he was; so it isn't much to wonder at that

LETTERS OF WILLIAM MORRIS

he takes the line he does. I suppose you know him by the way. I've been sinning in the verse line of action again I dont know if you have seen it —³

Well, I suppose you are coming home again soon, & then we can talk of many of these matters.

Yours very truly
William Morris

MS: BL, Add. mss. 45345.

¹ The Industrial Remuneration Conference was held in January 1885 (see letter no. 1013, and n. 1).

² "Years later when he was a cabinet minister, Burns was asked by George V to show a party of visiting German dignitaries round London's engineering shops. Burns included Brotherhoods in the tour and noted gleefully that his former employer had bowed and scraped to his guests. 'Revenge is sweet', Burns commented." Kenneth D. Brown, *John Burns* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1977), pp. 17n-18n.

³ A reference possibly to "The March of the Workers," which appeared in the February issue of *Commonweal*.

1057 • EXCERPT FROM A LETTER
TO [JANE MORRIS]

February 10, 1885¹

They had sold 5,000 and are in a second edition. . . .² I have written a poem for the next number, not bad I think.³

TEXT: Mackail, II, 140.

¹ Jane Morris had left for Italy on February 2, 1885 (see Cobden-Sanderson, I, 207) and this extract seems to come from a letter to her summarized by May Morris (*CW*, 19, xxiv-xxv). The letter mentioned also that the Persian carpet that hung in the dining-room had gone to a show at the Burlington Fine Arts Club, which was held during March and April (see *The Times*, February 3, 1885, p. 10; and March 19, 1885, p. 10); that Morris had received £6 7s. 8d. for sales of books in America; and that Khartoum had fallen (news of the city's fall reached England on February 5, and of Gordon's death on February 10). Morris wrote also that he had seen a crowd round a shop in Charing Cross looking at the steamer-ticket that had taken a notorious lady-poisoner to America.

² Morris refers to *Commonweal*.

³ "The Message of the March Wind." Morris later decided to continue the theme begun in this work and to develop it into a long narrative poem, titled *Pilgrims of Hope*, that tells of three English people,—a husband, wife, and the husband's best friend—who go to France to fight for the Paris Commune in 1870-1871. The wife and the friend have fallen in love (creating a triangle characteristic of several of Morris's romances in prose and verse), but the painful conflict is ended by the death of the wife and the friend in the Battle of Paris. The husband is wounded but recovers, returns to England, and dedicates his life—and that of his young son—to "the love of the day to be." The *Pilgrims of Hope* appeared in thirteen installments between March 1885 and July 1886, was privately reprinted from *Commonweal* by Buxton Forman in 1886, and then published by J. B. Mosher of Portland, Maine, in an unauthorized American edition, 1901. The first regular English edition in book form was issued by Longmans in 1915, with "Chants for Socialists" added.

THE COMMONWEAL.

REGISTERED
FOR

THE OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE SOCIALIST LEAGUE.

[TRANSMISSION
ALLOWED]

Vol. I—No. 1

FEBRUARY, 1885.

ONE PENNY.

INTRODUCTORY

We beg our readers' leave for a few words in which to introduce to them this Socialist journal, *THE COMMONWEAL*. In the first place we ask them to understand that the Editor and Sub-Editor of *THE COMMONWEAL* are acting as delegates of the Socialist League, and under its direct control: any slip in principles, therefore, any misstatement of the aims or tactics of the League, are liable to correction from the representatives of that body.

As to the conduct of *THE COMMONWEAL*, it must be remembered that it has one aim—the propagation of Socialism. We shall not, therefore, make any excuses for what may be thought journalistic shortcomings, if we can but manage to attract attention to the study of our principles from those who have not yet thought of Socialism, or who are, as often happens, bitterly hostile to them through ignorance; or if we can help those whose feelings are drawing them towards the cause of the workers, but who need definite instruction as to its aims and methods. To awaken the sluggish, to strengthen the waverers, to instruct the seekers after truth, these are high aims, yet not too high for a journal that claims to be Socialist, and we hope by patience and zeal to accomplish them.

It is our duty to attack unsparringly the miserable system which would make all civilisation end in a society of rich and poor, of slaves and slave-owners. In all its details we must attack it, but in doing so we shall avoid mere personalities, not for the sake of escaping the accusations of bad taste and bitterness, which doubtless will in any case be flung at us, but because it is illogical to attack those men, monstrous as their position is, who are themselves mere helpless wheels in the terrible machine of modern commerce. To attack such persons unless they put themselves forward as the representatives of the system, implies the belief that the decency or benevolence of their conduct would usefully palliate the evils of that system, an implication against which we protest from the outset.

THE COMMONWEAL will only deal with political matters when they directly affect the progress of the Cause. We assume as a matter of course that a government of privileged persons, hereditary and commercial, cannot act usefully or rightly towards the community; their position forbids it; their arrangements for the distribution of the plunder of the workers, their struggles for the national share of the exploitation of barbarous peoples are nothing to us except so far as they may give us an opportunity of instilling Socialism into men's minds, or of organizing discontent into Socialism.

We invite from all Socialists or others, free discussion of anything we put forward in the belief that even an un instructed attack may elicit useful information which might otherwise have lain dormant.

Our articles will, for the most part, be of an educational nature: there will be a series on historical revolutions, expositions of the scientific basis of Socialism, and contributions from men of various nationalities.

Lastly, a word of appeal, to the workers chiefly. It is not only that whatever we say is professedly directly in their interest: much more it is that through them alone, through the slaves of society, we look for its regeneration, for its elevation from its present corruption and misery. We cannot pretend to think that they, the workers, as yet know much of the principles of the cause that rests upon them, of their own cause, in fact. We beseech them to help us in spreading knowledge of those principles amongst their fellows, that as we believe they will now find us honest, so their support may make us resolute, patient, and hopeful—in a word, successful in our efforts for the furtherance of the cause we have at heart.

WILLIAM MORRIS.

THE MANIFESTO OF THE SOCIALIST LEAGUE

FELLOW CITIZENS,

We come before you as a body advocating the principles of Revolutionary International Socialism, that is, we seek a change in the basis of Society—a change which would destroy the distinctions of classes and nationalities.

As the civilised world is at present constituted, there are two classes of Society—the one possessing wealth and the instruments of its production, the other producing wealth by means of those instruments but only by the leave and for the use of the possessing classes.

These two classes are necessarily in antagonism to one another. The possessing class, or non-producers, can only live as a class on the unpaid labour of the producers—the more unpaid labour they can wring out of them, the richer they will be, therefore the producing class—the workers—are driven to strive to better themselves at the expense of the possessing class, and the conflict between the two is ceaseless. Sometimes it takes the form of open rebellion, sometimes of strikes, sometimes of mere widespread mendicancy and crime, but it is always going on in one form or other, though it may not always be obvious to the thoughtless looker on.

We have spoken of unpaid labour: it is necessary to explain what that means. The sole possession of the producing class is the power of labour inherent in their bodies, but since we have already said, the rich classes possess all the instruments of labour, that is, the land, capital, and machinery, the producers or workers are forced to sell their sole possession, the power of labour, on such terms as the possessing class will grant them.

These terms are, that after they have produced enough to keep them in working order, and enable them to beget children to take their places, when they are worn out, the surplus of their products shall belong to the possessors of property, which bargain is based on the fact that every man working in a civilised community can produce more than he needs for his own sustenance.

This relation of the possessing class to the working class is the essential basis of the system of producing for a profit, on which our modern Society is founded. The way in which it works is as follows. The manufacturer produces to sell at a profit to the broker or factor, who in his turn makes a profit out of his dealings with the merchant, who again sells for a profit to the retailer, who must make his profit out of the general public, aided by various degrees of fraud and adulteration and the ignorance of the value and quality of goods to which this system has reduced the consumer.

The profit-grinding system is maintained by competition, or veiled war, not only between the conflicting classes, but also within the classes themselves: there is always war among the workers for bare subsistence, and among their masters, the employers and middle men, for the share of the profit wrung out of the workers. Lastly, there is competition always, and sometimes open war, among the nations of the civilised world for their share of the world market. For now, indeed, all the rivalries of nations have been reduced to this one: a desperate struggle for their share of the spoils of barbarous countries to be used at home for the purpose of increasing the riches of the rich and the poverty of the poor.

For, owing to the fact that goods are made, primarily to sell, and only secondarily for use, labour is wasted on all hands, since the pursuit of profit compels the manufacturer competing with his fellows to force his wares on the markets by means of their cheapness, whether there is any real demand for them or not. In the words of the Communist manifesto of 1847—

"Cheap goods are their artillery for battering down Chinese walls, and for overcoming the obstinate hatred entertained against foreigners by semi-civilised nations, under penalty of ruin to the bourgeoisie

First page of the first number of *The Commonwealth*, second edition.



Woodcut designed by Walter Crane as an ornament for Socialist League publications (including the Manifesto on the Sudan War), 1885.

1058 • TO MAY MORRIS

Kelmscott
February 20 [1885]

My dearest May

I am writing to you in the last (waking) hour of my two days holiday, which I rather wish were longer; not that it has been quite workless: for the floods being out, I have been in, & have designed a carpet, and prepared a speech.¹

Let me see, you have been away nearly three weeks;² what has happened in that time? Kartoum fallen — into the hands of the people it belongs to — and what else? The S.L. in full conclave last Monday week expressed its pleasure at that event, and sent a resolution to the papers which some of them to wit *Standard*, *Pall Mall*, *St. James' Gazette* published:³ Bax has also been allowed a free hand on that subject in the *Commonweal* and has written a very good article for the *March* No.⁴ The radical press is waking up a little, and some people outside the S.L. seem somewhat ashamed of the whole dirty job — which will go on all the same.

Well, on the due Saturday we had our meeting at South Place and it went off very well;⁵ there were about 200 people there; that's not much; but they were all our supporters. Aveling gave his first lecture or lesson rather this day was-a-week,⁶ and it was very successful 150 audience all attentive many taking notes and answering very well. The Leeds Branch of the S.D.F. has come over to us: not a big one but good to begin

with. Item, the Labour Emancipation League has formally joined us now; they are in very good humour. Item we are starting 3 new branches in London.⁷ Item the Hammersmith Branch is starting its reading-room:⁸ we have got a ⟨p⟩ moveable partition put up, and shall start a free news room in the worser end keeping the better one for the reading room: old Craig⁹ is in great force now: he took the chair for me last Sunday. The S.D.F had their meeting of the unemployed last Monday: you may see about it in the papers: there were some 5000 people there so it was some thing of a success.¹⁰ But yet no good: very likely it will lead to some relief works being started, but that won't bring people any nearer to Socialism. And if government won't listen to them, what is their next move to be? On the whole things are moving on, and the S.L. is moving with them I think. Did you hear that Faulkner made his coup d'état, and his radical association have turned Socialist Leaguers? Aveling and I are to go down to address them next Tuesday.¹¹ Meantime F has got himself most heartily abused for his share in the proceedings chiefly, I believe for calling the deceased Burnaby 'a scoundrel'. The Telegraph even gave him the honour of an abusive leader: I suspect our friend is somewhat down-right in his oratory.¹²

On Saturday last I dined at Richmonds¹³ (the Saturday before they had auguster company in the shape of Mr. & Mrs. Lorne)¹⁴ I found Richmond seriously excited as to the success of the British arms, & had to enlighten him on the subject of patriotism.

I really don't know if there be an Italian Socialist paper: I will at any rate find out the name of the most advanced, and let you know. Of course you will duly get the March Commonweal: shall I send you an extra copy or two for distribution *among the Macdonalds*?

I got Mothers note this morning; I will write to her in a day or two and send some more money to make up for the tickets of the deceitful Cook.

I had for my part to make excuses for the paragraph to the Avelings lest they should think I had written it myself. I hope they believe I did not.

Jenny very well but for *one* attack two nights after I wrote to your mother tell her Otherwise she is bright and cheerful. She has been about variously lately.

Bright cold weather here these two days: but a fairish flood after the late rains: they have been polling the willows a good deal which must be expected: Hobbs was going to cut down all the bushes on the causeway; but I prayed him not, so he was very civil and consented to spare them: lucky I was just in time! Best love to you and mother and goodbye for the present dear,

Your loving father
William Morris

LETTERS OF WILLIAM MORRIS

MS: BL, Add. MSS. 45341. Extract published: Henderson, *Letters*, 230.

¹ Possibly the talk given before the Oxford Socialist League (by March the Oxford group had become a branch of the Socialist League). See n. 11 below, and LeMire, p. 246.

² May Morris was with her mother in Italy. See letter no. 1057, n. 1.

³ *The Pall Mall Gazette*, February 11, 1885, published (p. 7) the resolution passed by the provisional council of the Socialist League. It read: "That the meeting of the provisional council of the Socialist League is convinced that the invasion of the Soudan was undertaken with the covert intention of exploiting that country for the purposes of commercial greed; and that, therefore the check inflicted on the British invaders should be hailed by all supporters of the cause of the people as a triumph of right over wrong, of righteous self-defence over ruffianly brigandage."

⁴ "Gordon and the Soudan," p. 7.

⁵ On Saturday, February 7, a public meeting was held to explain the object of a series of lectures on Marx's *Das Kapital*, to be given by Aveling at the South Place Institute under the sponsorship of the Socialist League. See *Commonweal*, February 1885, p. 5.

⁶ According to *Commonweal* (February 1885, p. 5) Aveling's first lecture was scheduled for Thursday, February 12. The entire series was published in *Commonweal* between April and December 1885.

⁷ One of the three was the Bloomsbury Branch, led by Thomas E. Wardle (see letter no. 1085b), son of George Wardle. A second branch that Morris might have meant was the Notting Hill Branch, described in the April 1885 issue of *Commonweal* (p. 24) as soon to be started. Possibly the third was the Bethnal Green Branch.

⁸ *The Ham. Min. Book* entry for February 11, 1885, records that Morris proposed the appointment of May Morris as librarian, that Crane (who was elected a member of the Branch at this meeting) suggested "a list of good books for young socialists be exhibited in the Reading Room," and that Morris "presented a number of volumes for the library and promised a copy of Shelley's poems. . . ."

⁹ E. T. Craig (b. 1804), an old-time Owenite. He promoted some of the first cooperatives in Lancashire and in 1831 edited the *Lancashire Co-operator*. In June 1884 he helped inaugurate the Hammersmith Branch of the D.F.

¹⁰ *The Times*, February 17, 1885, reported (p. 6) that on the previous day, from 3,000 to 4,000 unemployed workers had demonstrated on the Embankment and then marched to Westminster and asked that the Local Government Board institute public works.

¹¹ The meeting took place on Wednesday evening, February 25.

¹² Frederick G. Burnaby (1842-1885) was a cavalry officer who was killed in the attempt to retake Khartoum. The *Daily Telegraph*, February 17, 1885, wrote that "a senior fellow of University College—otherwise unknown to fame—has burst forth with something that is more like a shriek than a speech. He denounces public men all round. . . . Colonel Burnaby—for even death does not disarm his criticism—was 'a scoundrel.'"

¹³ See Volume I, letter no. 558, n. 2.

¹⁴ Possibly the Marquis of Lorne (1845-1914), who had married Queen Victoria's daughter, Louise.

1059 • TO JAMES MAVOR

Kelmscott House,
Upper Mall, Hammersmith
February 21, 1885

Dear Mr. Mavor

Thanks for your letter: of course I shall be very happy to speak at Glasgow for you: will you settle with Scheu and our other Edinburgh friends as to details, and also let me know what sort of address you want from me.

Re the Commonweal: couldn't you kindly go a little more into detail as to the grounds of your dissatisfaction; I mean apart from certain blunders, which you must put down to hurry (unavoidable in the case) You see for one thing you had seen the manifesto before the paper came out, and that was its 'piece de resistance'. However I want on all grounds to have a frank criticism on our doings, so please be more explicit. To my mind the second number will be a strong one; but perhaps you will not agree with me: some space we have been *obliged* to give to the wretched Soudan business but Bax's article I think very good: Engels' article is a very important one; and (with excuses for mentioning myself) I think my poem the best short poem I have written.

I rejoice to hear that you are doing so well in Glasgow: we ought to spare no pains (to) in spreading the light there.

I suppose you saw the reports of our would be leader's speech on the Thames embankment last Monday? more preposterous humbug I never heard of. However it will answer his purpose for the time and make him notorious:

Yours fraternally
William Morris

P.S. Yes, I think we are getting on in London fairly well and the Commonweal has sold well.

MS: UToronto.

1060 • TO JOHN LINCOLN MAHON

Hammersmith
Tuesday
[February 24, 1885]

Dear M¹

Are you sending any No 1 to be sold at Oxford?²² if not I could take 2 quires if you will send them down here.

W.M.

MS: IISH.

LETTERS OF WILLIAM MORRIS

¹ Mahon was the first secretary of the Socialist League but held the post only briefly. See letter no. 957, n. 1.

² The February issue of *Commonweal*, presumably to be distributed at Morris's talk on February 25

1061 • RECIPIENT UNKNOWN

The Commonweal¹
27, Farringdon Street,
London, E. C.
February 27, 1885

Dear Madam

I am very sorry for all reasons that the mishap you mention took place; & will try to prevent it in the future; I beg to thank you for writing to me personally and am

Dear madam
Yours faithfully
William Morris

MS: NYU.

¹ This is the first surviving letter by Morris on stationery of the *Commonweal*.

1062 • TO GEORGIANA BURNE-JONES

Kelmscott House
[February 28] 1885

Wednesday I went to Oxford with the Avelings: we went by the early train, and all turned out well, and even amusing: we walked about Oxford a good deal, and even with all the horrors done to it, it looks very well and beautiful on such a bright morning as we had. There were terrible threats about what the lads were going to do, which I didn't suppose would come to much: we met, some of us, in University Common Room to settle the meeting, and it seems the enemy sent in a spy, which however we survived. Charley had asked a great many very young persons to dinner, and their ingenuous visages made me feel rather old. So to the meeting we went, in a room in Holywell, which I daresay you have forgotten: it used to be the room of the Architectural Society when I was a boy, and is now a music room: it is just opposite where Janey used to live¹ — Lord, how old I am! Well, we had a fine lot of supporters, town and gown both, who put on red ribbons and acted as stewards, but the 'enemy' got in in some numbers, and prepared for some enjoyment. Charley was in the chair and led off well, and they heard him with only an average amount of howling:

you must understand that there were but some 20 or 30 of those enemies, and perhaps 100 declared friends, and some 250 indifferents who really came to listen to us: the hall was quite full. I had to get up when Charley sat down: I was rather nervous before I began, as it was my first long speech without book, but the noise and life braced me up, and after all I knew my subject, so I fired off my speech fairly well I think: if I hadn't, our friends the enemy would have found it out and chaffed me with all the mercilessness of boys. Of course they howled and stamped at certain catchwords, and our people cheered, so that it was very good fun. Aveling came next: they had really listened to me, even the noisy ones: but it seems they had agreed that A. at any rate should not be allowed to speak; but he began very cleverly and won their ingenuous hearts so that they listened to him better than they did to me. Then came question-time, and that was more than they could bear; after two or three questions asked and answered, the joke of the evening came off by one young gentleman letting off a bottle of chemical which made a horrible stink, and the respectables began to leave and both the fighting [bodies] to draw nearer to the platform. Then by Aveling's advice Charley, who was by the way getting a bit nervous, broke off the meeting, and we 'got'; which I suppose was the best thing to do, as more horseplay might have made what was serious enough ridiculous.² After all the best joke was what we heard next day, viz. that the disturbers were so angry with their ringleader for not making a better job of it that they broke all his windows that same night. I hope this piece of frankness touches your hard heart as it did mine. We had some serious talk at our inn after the meeting with the best of the lads; and then some of them took us into New College cloisters to see their loveliness under the moon.

TEXT: Mackail, II, 141-43. Published: Henderson, *Letters*, 231-32.

¹ Holywell Street.

² For an account of the meeting, see *The Oxford Chronicle and Berks and Bucks Gazette*, February 28, 1885, p. 8.

1063 • RECIPIENT UNKNOWN

Kelmscott House,
Upper Mall, Hammersmith
February 28, 1885

Dear Sir

If you read German or French, you should tackle Karl Marx *Das Capital* at once. The French translation is good:¹ if not Gronlund's *Cooperative Commonwealth* to be had at Modern Press 13 & 14 Paternoster Row will be of some use:² *Commercial & Communal Economy* J. Carruthers³

LETTERS OF WILLIAM MORRIS

— Stamford Charing Cross is from rather a different point of view but is well argued & worth reading. Lassalles Working mans Programme, (socialist) J. L. Joyne's Socialist Sorge's Socialism for Workers are pamphlets published at the Modern Press⁴ and all have some useful information in them; Joyne's a good deal. Hyndman's Historic Basis⁵ states in some of its chapters the Marxian theory; Gronlund carries it out further. Hyndman's book has much information in it; but is ill put together, & not always accurate.

On the whole tough as the (work) job is you ought to read Marx if you can: up to date he is the only completely scientific Economist on our side.

Aveling is giving a series of lessons at South Place Institute under the auspices of the Socialist League;⁶ which are very good. they are on Marx really: the 4th lesson is next Thursday at 8.30 p.m. If you could attend these I think you would be pleased: they would make *reading* Marx comparatively easy to you.

No apology is necessary to me, I am very glad to answer your question.

I am

Dear Sir

Yours faithfully

William Morris

MS Schimmel Coll.

¹ It was the French translation that Morris owned and had specially bound by Cobden-Sanderson.

² Lawrence Gronlund, *The Cooperative Commonwealth in its Outlines* (Boston: Lee and Shepard; London: Modern Press, 1884). Gronlund emigrated to the United States from Denmark in 1867, taught German in the Milwaukee public schools, and became a lawyer. One reason for the importance to English socialists of *The Cooperative Commonwealth in its Outlines* was that it presented the ideas of German writers, especially those of Marx.

³ John Carruthers, *Communal and Commercial Economy: some elementary theorems of the political economy of communal and of commercial societies: with an examination of the correlated theorems of the pseudo-science of wealth as taught by Ricardo and Mill* (London: Edward Stanford, 1883).

⁴ All were published in 1884. The title of Joyne's pamphlet was *The Socialist Catechism*; the one by Friederich Adolf Sorge (1828-1906) was called *Socialism and the Workers*.

⁵ H. M. Hyndman, *The Historical Basis of Socialism in England* (London: Kegan Paul, 1883).

⁶ See letter no. 1058, n. 6.

1064 • RECIPIENT UNKNOWN

Kelmscott House,
Upper Mall, Hammersmith
March [1885?]

Dear Comrade

I shall not [be able to attend?] the W. & M. Committee [meeting tonight as?] I have an engagement to [take the?] chair of the Socialist supper [at?]¹ Weddes in Greek Street.

Yrs fraternally
William Morris

MS: IISH.

¹ The right side of the manuscript is torn off. All the words in square brackets in this letter are conjectural.

1065 • RECIPIENT UNKNOWN [AN AMERICAN WOMAN]

[March 1885?]

I have tried to produce goods which should be genuine as far as their mere substances are concerned, and should have on that account the primary beauty in them which belongs to naturally treated natural substances; have tried, for instance, to make woollen substances as woollen as possible, cotton as cottony as possible, and so on; have used only the dyes which are natural and simple, because they produce beauty almost without the intervention of art; all this quite apart from the design in the stuffs or what not. On that head it has been, chiefly because of the social difficulties, almost impossible to do more than to insure the designer (mostly myself) some pleasure in his art by getting him to understand the qualities of materials and the happy chances of processes. Except with a small part of the more artistic side of the work, I could not do anything (or at least but little) to give this pleasure to the workmen, because I should have had to change their method of work so utterly that I should have disqualified them from earning their living elsewhere. You see I have got to understand thoroughly the manner of work under which the art of the Middle Ages was done, and that that is the only manner of work which can turn out popular art, only to discover that it is impossible to work in that manner in this profit-grinding society. So on all sides I am driven towards revolution as the only hope, and am growing clearer and clearer on the speedy advent of it in a very obvious form, though of course I can't give a date for it.

TEXT: Leatham, 61-62.

LETTERS OF WILLIAM MORRIS

1066 • TO JOHN LINCOLN MAHON

Hammersmith
March 1, 1885

Out of *Commonweal*. Send up 4 quires more. *at once*. Owen Lloyd has not had his card:¹ please send it. with you at 7 p.m. tomorrow unless you want me sooner.

W.M.

MS: IISH.

¹ Owen Lloyd was a subscriber to *Commonweal* who in the first issue was advised (p. 4) through the "Answers to Correspondents" column that "whilst it is useful to order your copies of *The Commonweal* directly from the office, inasmuch as then the League gets the full benefit of your subscription, it must be remembered that ordering through a newsagent, especially if he will show a bill of the journal, is a better advertisement for the latter."

1067 • TO MEMBERS OF THE SOCIALIST LEAGUE

The Socialist League
27, Farringdon Street,
London, E.C.
[March 1, 1885]

Comrades,

The Socialist League has heavy expenses — rent of offices, halls for meetings and lectures, printing of hand-bills, and so forth; it is necessary also that it should at once set about publishing pamphlets and leaflets setting forth the principles of Socialism, and that it should engage in organising Socialism in the provinces. Many of those who are giving the most valuable personal help to the propaganda are not in a position to give money-help to it; we therefore ask those who can afford to give money to do their best in that way also. It is most desirable that the League should have a steady income, and we ask therefore that where possible the subscriptions should be regular, weekly or otherwise. Names and subscriptions should be sent to the Treasurer, William Morris, Kelmscott House, 26 Upper Mall, Hammersmith; they will be acknowledged through the post.

William Morris
Treasurer, Socialist League

TEXT: IISH. Published: *Commonweal*, March 1885, 12.

1068 • TO THE EDITOR OF
The Oxford Magazine

Kelmscott House,
Upper Mall, Hammersmith
[March 1-3?] 1885

Dear Sirs,—

We beg to thank you for your kind and courteous note, and to assure you that it has given us much pleasure. We are sure that the majority of the Undergraduates of Oxford would not wish to stifle the discussion of opinions,¹ however hostile they might be to them, if they were expressed temperately. We did not fail to note that those who seemed unwilling to listen to us last Wednesday seemed a very small minority of the meeting, which for the most part listened with attention and an amount of good feeling which was very gratifying to us.

We venture to hope that we or other delegates from our body shall have other opportunities for discussing with an Oxford audience these most important subjects with the same good-feeling and absence of party spirit which distinguish yourselves.

Thanking you again sincerely,

We are, dear Sirs, your faithfully,
William Morris
Edward Aveling

TEXT: *The Oxford Magazine*, 3 (March 4, 1885), 124.

¹ Presumably the editor of *The Oxford Magazine* had sent Morris and Aveling a note signed by himself and others apologizing for the disruption of the meeting sponsored by the Oxford Socialist Society in the Music Room, Holywell Street, on February 25. See letter no. 1062 for Morris's description of the event.

1069 • TO WILFRID SCAWEN BLUNT

Kelmscott House,
Upper Mall, Hammersmith
March 3, 1885

Dear Blunt¹

I shall be out of town tomorrow & have a lecture on Friday 13th² so I am afraid I can come to neither meeting.³ I should like to have come, but on the whole I don't know that I could have been of much use, because as a Socialist I stink in peoples' nostrils; and I hope by this time most people know what we Socialists think of the Khartoum — stealers and the spreaders of the blessings of shoddy civilisation.⁴

I can only hope that you will make a big row, for it will take a big row to do any immediate good; though even the protest is something. Mean-time I feel sure that a great part of the country is with us against the war;

LETTERS OF WILLIAM MORRIS



Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, c. 1880.

perhaps even the majority, and it would really be worth while to try to make a big thing of the anti-war agitation, and that not on the mere Peace-Society platform, but on wider grounds.

Yours faithfully
William Morris

MS: V&A.

¹ Wilfrid Scawen Blunt (1840-1922). His travels in India and experiences in the diplomatic service made him an anti-imperialist, and on marrying Byron's granddaughter, Lady Anne King-Noel (1837-1917), in 1869 he resigned from the service and devoted himself to poetry and politics. He actively opposed British policy in Egypt and later in Ireland. He and Morris were in sympathy on most political issues, and in 1891 Morris published Blunt's *The Love Lyrics and Songs of Proteus*. Blunt's role in Morris's life, however, was to go beyond that of associate in political and artistic matters. Blunt and Jane Morris became lovers, possibly by February 1885; and his presence, at least, has to be assumed as part of the background to the correspondence among Morris, Blunt, and Jane Morris from then on.

² Morris was scheduled to give a lecture at the Merton Abbey Branch of the Socialist League (S.L.) on March 13, but there is no report of its delivery. See *Commonweal*, March 1885, p. 16; and LeMire, p. 246.

³ *Commonweal*, April 1885, reported (p. 24) that a meeting of the Peace Society had been held on March 4 to protest against the Sudan War. Lord Wentworth (1839-1906), brother of Lady Anne Blunt, was chairman. Other meetings were held at the Croydon Radical Association and at St. Jude's School, Whitechapel.

⁴ At all three meetings, members of the S.L. proposed and carried a rider to the anti-war resolution that read: "That this meeting consisting mainly of working men, is convinced that the War in the Soudan was prompted by the capitalist class, with a view to the extension of their fields of exploitation. And we admit that the victory gained by the Soudanese is a triumph of right over wrong by a people struggling for their freedom." A second rider proposed by the S.L., and carried, urged the meetings to disregard national distinctions and look for class distinctions: the people of England should rejoice at the victory of the Sudanese, the writer asserted, because it had been won by a people who, like themselves, were the victims of commercial marauders. See *Commonweal*, April 1885, p. 24.

1070 • TO CHARLES JAMES FAULKNER

Kelmscott House,
Upper Mall, Hammersmith
March 5 [1885]¹

Dear Charley

It would obviously [be] better if the undergrads: & university men would join the branch; but if they think they can keep a varsity branch going well & good as far as I can see, so long as they will come up to the scratch: I doubt a university branch lasting because men are here today & there tomorrow; (As to Shuttleworth) still if they won't come into the movement any other way, that way might be tried.

Shuttleworth:² I heard of what his doctrines *were*, though of course I

cant speak of what they *are*: he goes in for Socialism by taxation (or did) That is the rich are to be heavily taxed and from the money so obtained, parks & good lodgings and leisure (I suppose) are to be provided for the working classes: morality of the most disinterested kind is to be the order of things of course; but the machinery is to be this taxation business. Obviously this is much the same as the Positivist 'Moralization of Capital'.³

To sum up if Shuttleworth has become a Socialist his conversion is recent: but of course (in) one lecture of his against one of ours might have made him seem nearer to us than he is. It seems to me that this is the crucial point, production for livelihood of the community v production for the profit of the monopolist: or are classes to be kept going by means of *forcing* people to unpaid labor?

If Shuttleworth thinks a capitalist monopolist can be 'moralized', he is in a better position than Harrison as the latter has no god to help him, while Shuttleworth can at least make an appeal to his. Of course meantime the Christian *Church* has always declared against Socialism; its mainstays must always be property and authority: a worthy Irish Catholic member of the S.D.F. resigned on those grounds when he declared for Socialism.

Summâ by all means convert Shuttleworth if you can but I suspect that he needs conversion. Meantime of course as long as people are ignorant, compromise plus sentiment always look better to them than the real article: also you know too well the power of hypocrisy. I am writing in a great hurry but will write again to answer any questions.

Yours affectionately
William Morris

ms: Walthamstow. Extract published: Mackail, II, 123-24.

¹ Mackail dates this March 5 letter 1884 (II, 123), but in it Morris refers to the Social Democratic Federation, the name that the Democratic Federation did not adopt until August 1884.

² Probably Henry Cary Shuttleworth (1850-1900), president of the Oxford Branch of the Guild of St. Matthew, who lectured on pastoral theology at King's College, London. A strong Liberal in politics, he threw himself into Christian Socialist activities. See *The Times*, October 25, 1900, p. 10.

³ The idea was formulated by Auguste Comte. In January 1884 Frederic Harrison, lecturing at Newton Hall, explained that the "moralization of capital" meant that wealth, being social in origin, should be social in its destination. See *The Christian Socialist*, February 1884, pp. 136-38.

1071 • TO FREDERICK STARTRIDGE ELLIS

Kelmscott House,
Upper Mall, Hammersmith
March 7, 1885

My dear Ellis

I am a wretch for not answering your kind letter before, & taking up the business matter also: concerning which you see this is it. I like the look of the page much, & should be glad to get it done — but — 12^s/0 is still not a cheap book: the stingies would buy it instead of the swell editions, the poors couldn't buy it: therefore it seems to me that I should rather damage us and not do much good. This was Jones' opinion who wanted me to publish a ^s5/0 edition; if that is not possible, I rather think we must let the matter rest. What do you think? I very much doubt if I am enough of 'a draw' to make it possible, judging by the sale of Jason: though I daresay the E.P. would sell better than that immortal work. In any case I would go in for sharing the expenses, as I don't think it fair that you should run all the risk with a book which is old. Thanks very much for your generous offer. Now please think it over.¹

By the way have you seen the Commonweal? Besides my 2 immortal works in the 2 first numbers;² there is an anti-jingo article by Bax,³ which I think is good, in March number; also one by Engels⁴ which is really very good and important; I am sure you would think it so. Down with your 1/6 and you shall have all that literature. I enclose you a gratis piece of ours with a cut of Cranes at the top.⁵ I should say that the sentiments of it were yours to a nicety — What do you bet about a Russian War? I begin to think that my friends the Anarchists are right, and that the world is 'governed' with so little wisdom that it had better not be governed at all.

I hope you are getting on better. What chance is there of seeing you in London before long.

I was at Kelmscott about a fortnight ago: but high floods were there also. I hope to be able to get a spring day or two there again soon.

Yours very truly
William Morris

MS: Clemens Coll.

¹ This discussion of a possible reprint of *The Earthly Paradise* by Ellis was the beginning of negotiations that had not been concluded when Ellis retired from business in 1885. At that time, Morris's poetic works were transferred to Reeves and Turner who published a popular edition in five volumes. See Buxton Forman, p. 71.

² "The March of the Workers" in the February issue and "The Message of the March Wind" in the March issue.

³ "Gordon and the Soudan."

⁴ "England in 1845 and in 1885." See letter no. 1041, n. 3.

⁵ Possibly the *Manifesto of the Socialist League on The Soudan War*.

LETTERS OF WILLIAM MORRIS

1072 • To J. W. BROWNE

Kelmscott House,
Upper Mall, Hammersmith
March 10, 1885

Dear Mr. Browne¹

Many thanks for your kind donation of £5 duly received. I fancy all Faulkner did was to let a few injudicious words 'slip out' as it were; all I mean that was injudicious: but naturally at Oxford no sincere revolutionist (using the word in its true sense) could escape hot water. With all you say I agree of course: "Softly softly catch monkey," as the West Indian niggers say only I fear it is rare that the two gifts of prudent reserve, and courageous enthusiasm are combined in one person.

Meantime of course as one studies the question more on the one hand, and on the other sees more of the workers, the more one is disinclined (if one is honest & noticing) to fix any date or to hurry matters at all: because the economical march of events will be the thing which will help us in the long run. Preaching wont turn men into revolutionists; but men driven into revolutionary ideas may be educated to look to the right aims instead of wild folly — that's our real business in spite of any appearances to the contrary.

I conclude that you will join the League, so send you a paper to fill up.

Mind, I shall hope for some speaking & writing from you. Have you been to Avelings 'lessons' yet? Thursdays 8.30 South Place Chapel; they are well worth attending on all grounds.

Yours faithfully
William Morris

MS: HPL. Published: Meier, II, 586-87.

¹ Possibly James William Browne (b. 1845), a clergyman who later took a degree in medicine. He was a graduate of University College, Oxford — where Faulkner became a tutor in mathematics — and a fellow of Worcester College.

1073 • To MAY MORRIS

Kelmscott House,
Upper Mall, Hammersmith
March 11, 1885

My dearest May

It is so long since I have written to you that I really quite forget what news there is to tell: but I'm pretty sure that I did not say anything about the Oxford skirmish. I am bound to state that apart from any good it did (and I think it did some) it was very amusing. the organized opposition quite failed; so much so that in dudgeon against the incapacity of their leader the malcontents broke his windows that same night; a frankness

quite charming. Still some of the young gentlemen were very rude, especially to Faulkner. They have a donkey-race on this week or last, and have dubbed one of the donkeys 'Socialist' and another 'Comrade Faulkner'. However F. is doing very good service there, and we have a strong branch now, considering. I went to Bristol last week¹ and had a good audience there: earning £4 besides expenses: the Socialists there were mostly of the S.D.F branch: they would not break off from that body, but were very friendly and (I) we shall I hope have a branch at Bath which they will join. I saw Middleton at Oxford for a few minutes by the way: he had to come over because his father was dead: he looked very ill, & has grown a thin woeful looking beard.² Webb is not back yet,³ nor have I heard from him, nor to say the truth written to him. The Hammersmith Branch is rather languishing: poor Walker is so overworked that we practically have no sec: You must be assistant sec: when you come back, my dear, if I can't get another.⁴

I am going to make a dead lift to try if I can't wake them up. The Anarchist has appeared,⁵ a poor little sheet with, it seems to me very little *raison d'être* I send you the Soudan Manifesto which has a pretty ornament of Cranes on it: he has also done one for the Commonwealth.

I have been & am woefully busy,⁶ or I would have written before. I am pounding away at a continuation of my March poem: I want to make a sort of lyrical romance of it: next time I shall try my hand at a versified Socialist meeting — But what shall I do with my couple in the long run?⁷ Scheu is here today: he hopes to establish himself as a Jäger agent. Tell your Mother that Jenny keeps remarkably well and is very little troubled: she seems to like the house-keeping and I think it does her good to have it to do. They are going to Kelmscott for a week or so on Monday.

This is a short shabby letter, my dear, but I will write again.

Best love to Mother.

Your loving father
William Morris

MS: BL, Add. MSS. 45341. Published: Henderson, *Letters*, 232-34.

¹ On March 3 Morris delivered a lecture, "Art and Labour," at a meeting sponsored by the Bristol Branch of the S.L. See LeMire, p. 246, and pp. 94-118 for text.

² J. H. Middleton was working in his father's architectural office at Westminster at this time. After his father's death in February, he disposed of the business. As for Middleton's looking ill, an entry in Blunt's Diaries, June 17, 1896, in which Blunt recorded Middleton's death, perhaps sheds some light: "J. H. Middleton died — jury returned a verdict of misadventure but it has the appearance of suicide. He was a morphine addict, having taken morphine for twenty years. He is a great loss or has been rather for he has been dead to the world and his friends for something like two years." Fitzwilliam, Blunt Archive.

³ Philip Webb was in Italy.

⁴ The Hammersmith S.L. Minutes for April 1, 1885, read: "WM: Moved that Scheu be appointed Second Secretary. Agreed."

LETTERS OF WILLIAM MORRIS

⁵ *Commonweal*, April 1885, noted (p. 22) that the first issue of the *Anarchist* had appeared with articles by Eliséé Reclus, Shaw, and Henry Appleton.

⁶ On the day on which he wrote this letter, Morris testified before a Parliamentary committee on the restoration of Westminster Hall. See LeMire, p. 246.

⁷ A "versified Socialist meeting" is depicted in the fifth installment (titled "New Birth") of *The Pilgrims of Hope* and was published in the August issue of *Commonweal* (pp. 68-69). As for what Morris did with his couple "in the long run," see letter no. 1057, n. 3.

1074 • TO GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

Merton Abbey,
Surrey
March 18, 1885

My dear Shaw

I dont quite know what is to be done with the very clever paper which you have kindly sent us:¹ you see there are some things in it which as a body we couldn't quite endorse. We can hardly attack our own manifesto for instance: also we could not agree that Socialists ought to leave the marriage question alone: there are points also about the bearing of the present marriage laws, or inheritance laws which to my mind rather damage your point of view. Of course I agree that (altering) abolishing wedlock while the present economical slavery lasts would be futile: nor do I consider a man a socialist at all who is not prepared to admit the equality of women as far as condition goes. Also that as long as women are compelled to marry for a livelihood real marriage is a rare exception and prostitution or a kind of legalized rape the rule. I fancy we agree pretty much about the matter; *but* (here comes the point at which you should knock me down) I should like things altered in your article which I am afraid would take the spirit out of it, and it is too good to spoil. I think we of the S.L. must before long state our views on wedlock quite plainly and take the consequences, which I admit are likely to be serious: but I think we had better leave the subject alone till we can pluck up heart to explain the ambiguities of our sentence in the manifesto.²

Please to pity the sorrows of a poor editor
and Believe me to be

Yours very truly
William Morris

MS: BL, Add. MSS. 50541.

¹ "The Future of Marriage." On March 17 Shaw noted in his Diary that Aveling had visited to say that Morris would reject the article. Dan H. Laurence, to whom I am indebted for this information, has told me that he has no evidence of the article's ever having been published elsewhere or given as a paper or lecture.

² The sentence in the *Manifesto* reads: "Our Modern bourgeois property-marriage, maintained as it is by its necessary complement, universal venal prostitution, would give place to

kindly and human relations between the sexes." The second edition of the *Manifesto* (published in October 1885) was annotated by Morris and Bax, and it included a note (F) on the marriage-question sentence:

Under a Socialistic system contracts between individuals would be voluntary and unenforced by the community. This would apply to the marriage contract as well as others, and it would become a matter of simple inclination. Women also would share in the certainty of livelihood which would be the lot of all; and children would be treated from their birth as members of the community entitled to share in all its advantages; so that economical compulsion could be no more brought to bear on the contract than legal compulsion could be. Nor would a truly enlightened public opinion, freed from mere theological views as to chastity, insist on its permanently binding nature in the face of any discomfort or suffering that might come of it

Morris and Bax's annotation may owe something to Engels' *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State* published in 1884.

1075 • TO JOHN LINCOLN MAHON

Merton Abbey,
Surrey
Friday [March 20, 1885?]

My dear Mahon

I forgot like a fool about this Bill;¹ the lecture is to be a special one, & will show how utterly the Capitalist would exploit the worker if he could: every body allowed that it would be a good thing to bill this lecture: so I agreed to tell you to get it printed — & forgot it like an ass.

W. Morris

MS: Page Arnot Coll. Published: Page Arnot, 53.

¹ Possibly a reference to posters advertising a meeting, April 2, 1885, at which Morris made a speech moving a socialist rider to an anti-war resolution that referred to the Sudan. Charles Bradlaugh presided. See LeMire, p. 247; and *Commonweal*, May 1885, p. 36. (See also letter no. 1083.)

1076 • TO JOHN LINCOLN MAHON

Hammersmith
March [21] 1885
Saturday

No harm done: I only waited 30 minutes & smoked a pipe: the child told me that you had got the wire before you went: I called being nervous about the bill since I had forgot it.¹ only we *must* arrange for somebody to be in during business hours. Also get me a key.

W M.

MS: IISH.

¹ See letter no. 1075, n. 1.

LETTERS OF WILLIAM MORRIS

1077 • TO JAMES MAVOR

Kelmscott House,
Upper Mall, Hammersmith
March 23 [1885]

Dear Mr. Mavor¹

Thanks for your letter: I agree to dates & have made a note of them: as to my sittings to Mr. McGillivray² you must <do> make what arrangements are necessary. Please tell me what length my reading is to be, so that I may choose my pieces accordingly.³ I am glad you think well of the March Commonwealth; I hope the April one will not dissappoint you: it will at least be bigger than the March No by a supplement of 4 p.p. As to the Soudan Manifesto; I quite admit that you are right, and that it was an oversight not sending proofs to country members of the Council. There was however no malice-prepense in it; it was because of haste. On reflection I dont see why the names should have been appended at all to it⁴ or to any documents not of the first importance.

I am

Dear Mr. Mavor

Yours fraternally

William Morris

MS: UToronto.

¹ See letter no. 1025.

² J. Pittendreigh McGillivray (1856-1938), who sculpted Scottish memorials of Gladstone, Byron, Burns, and Scott. (See *Who's Who in Art* [London: The Art Trade Press, 1927], I, 147.) Mavor dates (facing p. 198) McGillivray's bas-relief portrait of Morris to 1886 but misremembered the year, as he did the date of his quarrel with the Socialist League over the Soudan Manifesto.

³ Morris read his own poetry at a Glasgow meeting, April 24, sponsored by the Glasgow Branch of the S.L. See LeMire, p. 247.

⁴ Morris refers to the *Manifesto of the Socialist League on the Soudan War*, dated March 2, 1885. Mavor had objected to his name being included, among the signatories, without his permission. His recollection of the incident (I, 180-81) explains Morris's letter:

The . . . Soudan Campaign induced Bax, . . . Morris [and others], to issue a manifesto denouncing the Government. A chief point in this manifesto was a charge . . . [that] missionaries . . . [had] instigated the Government to attack the Soudanese in order to convert them to Christianity. This charge was . . . preposterous. . . . [In addition], the writers had coolly signed my name to it as well as their own. . . . I wrote a letter of protest to Morris, who sent me a long letter of explanation. He had of course nothing to do with the signing of my name. . . . I allowed the affair to pass; but I gradually ceased to interest myself in the League, although I maintained the warmest friendly relations with Morris until his death in 1896.

See letter no. 1081 and n.7.



Jenny Morris, c. 1885.

1078 • TO JENNY MORRIS

Birfday
Hammersmith
[March 24, 1885]

Dearest Jenny

A little note in a great hurry to thank you for your letter my dear; & to say all right about the invitations:¹ Also Mrs. Poole² has asked to send her son: also I have asked the Avelings: I daresay Annie Cook's cold beef will serve for all. A good meeting on Sunday (Commune-celebration) & went off with great harmony;³ though the police threatened the hall-keeper to send detectives: I dont know if they were there: but if so their ears must have tingled: two or 3 of our Oxford friends were there: also I

LETTERS OF WILLIAM MORRIS

picked up 2 Cambridge ones in the train who came along: one of them had been in the chair at the Cambridge debate on Socialism last year.⁴

Yes, my dear, we had lots of snow on Sunday morning but it soon melted away into slosh: 'tis still very cold here: I must recall my praises of English weather when I write to May.⁵ I have had to go to call on that tiresome Mrs. Clark⁶ at Brentford this morning to talk to her about her curtains: really when one sells a body porridge one should not be expected to put it into their mouths with a spoon. So my dear Jenny, good bye as I am all behind with my Croydon lecture.⁷

Your loving father
William Morris

ms: BL, Add. mss. 45339. Extract published: Henderson, *Letters*, 234.

¹ To Morris's annual party for the Oxford-Cambridge Boat Race, which was held in 1885 on March 28.

² Possibly the wife either of Stanley Edward Lane-Poole (1854-1931) or of his brother, Reginald (1857-1939); both brothers had sons. Reginald was married to a daughter of Frank Malleon, a pioneer in the cause of working-class education.

³ On March 22 the Socialist League and the London anarchists sponsored an anniversary celebration of the Commune, at which Morris delivered a speech. See *Commonweal*, April 1885, p. 24, and LeMire, p. 246.

⁴ Possibly William Blaine (1861-1908), who had been at St. John's College, Cambridge, from 1881 to 1884 and was president of the Union in 1884. The debate had been held on February 5, 1885. See letter no. 949, n. 3.

⁵ May and Jane Morris were on holiday at Bordighera, Italy. See letter no. 1079 and no. 1090.

⁶ Mrs. George Brodie Clark of Syon Park House, Brentford, which had once been a school attended by Shelley.

⁷ "Commercial War," delivered before the Croydon Branch of the S.D.F. on March 27, 1885. See LeMire, p. 247; and letter no. 1083.

1079 • TO EMMA SHELTON MORRIS

Kelmscott House,
Upper Mall, Hammersmith
March 25 [1885]

Dearest Mother

The cloth came today:¹ thank you very much for it; it is very nicely worked and very pretty. I am alone for a day or two, as Jenny & Miss Bailey are at Kelmscott. They wont come back till Thursday as they are going to stay & see Annie Allen married at last.² I am sorry to hear that Henrietta is not well: please give her my love and tell her that I will write & send on the photo as soon as Jenny comes home; I dont know where to lay my hands on it till she comes.

I have been trying to get a day to come down to you, & shall soon be

able I hope: it will be better now the days are drawing out. They seem to have been having but middling weather in Italy up till lately; but it seems they are getting on better now, and the warm weather is coming there. Jenny on the whole is better than she has been, and is very happy and comfortable she much enjoys being at Kelmscott.

Goodbye dearest Mother with best love to you and Henny

I am

Your most affectionate Son

William Morris

MS: Walthamstow.

¹ A birthday present.

² The maid at Kelmscott Manor.

1080 • To JOHN LINCOLN MAHON

Thursday

March 26, 1885

No, I have not seen the ghost of Willis £3.¹ look after it. I will call in at 10.30 tomorrow & bring copy of letter to Mavor² with me.

MS: IISH.

¹ Possibly R.F.E. Willis (d. 1905), whose letter to the editors, "Another View" (July 1885, p. 58), advocating the need for improvement of working conditions through parliamentary action, was answered by Morris (in the Supplement to the July 1885 issue [p. 61]), who insisted that only a change in the system, not meliorism, would do away with the abuses of workers. Willis also contributed an article titled "Confessions of the Capitalist, Samuel Smith, M.P." to the September 1885 issue of *Commonweal* (pp. 82-83).

² The following letter.

1081 • To JAMES MAVOR

March 26, 1885¹

Dear Mr. Mavor²

I have been instructed by the Provisional Council of the Socialist League to answer your letter of the 20th March (in) addressed to Comrade Mahon the Secretary, in which you criticise the Soudan manifesto: what I write therefore expresses the collective opinion of the Council; but I fully concur in it personally.

1st The Provisional Council acknowledges that you have (a firm) a due cause for complaint in the fact that a proof of the manifesto was not sent to you and other out-of-London members before publication with your

name attached to it: it regrets this oversight, and will take care that such a mistake(s) are not repeated.

As to your criticism of the document I have to remark that it divides itself into objections to the matter and the style: as to the style I do not think it necessary to answer objections to that, further than by saying that your objections to the matter carry with them objections to the (style) manner, as the latter expresses the thought well and artistically the style & matter interpenetrate, as they should as in all artistic work: in short you may object to (its) the spirit of it, but (it is certainly) I must assert that it is very well written.

As to the matter I meet your objections (a) by saying that in our opinion it was quite necessary to attack the Gordon-worship which has been used as a stalking horse for (the c) such wide spread murder. we do not form our opinion of (him) Gordon from any rumours of his private life,³ but from his public actions: he betrayed the trust reposed in him & used his military & administrative capacity for the purpose of (enslaving) bringing the Soudanese (to) under the subjection of a vile tyranny.⁴ (whether that were ? vial in English Bourgeois matters) to make a hero of such a man is a direct attack on public morality.

b. we do not assume any facts, we draw conclusions from events which (nobody denies) undeniably took place

d. [sic] We assume, as we must, that the Mahdi is the representative of his countrymen in their heroic defence of their liberties; on that assumption we may well 'approve' of him if we are not to condemn Garibaldi or 'Wallace wight'.⁵ As to his fanaticism ((which it seems must be condoned in him though praised in Gordon)) you should remember that any popular movement in the East is bound to take a religious form, the condition of (the) development of the Eastern peoples (on) forces this on them. Surely it must be considered an article of faith with us to sympathise with *all* popular revolutionary movements, though we may not agree with all the tenets of the revolutionists: e.g. we are *internationists* not nationalists, yet we sympathise with the Irish revolt against English tyranny: (do) neither does (we) any of us withhold (our) his sympathy from the Highland Crofters because they mingle fanaticism with their righteous resistance to oppression.⁶

(e) This objection is properly one against the style,⁷ but it gives me the opportunity of saying that (we do not attack) it is not religion which we attack in (our) the (document) manifesto, but that hypocrisy which has allied itself to the exploitation of barbarous peoples, and which is at once so detestable and so mean that it is almost necessary to use mockery as a (instrum) weapon against it.

I have not Beasleys tract⁸ by me but I have read it, and I must say that

well meaning as it is, it seems to me a frigid performance: besides it has to a Socialist the capital defect of not even alluding to that market hunting of the capitalist which is really the key to the whole subject. As far as I know it has had no effect at all: whereas the Leagues manifesto has been well received everywhere except by you and our friends in the north, and has gained us much support.

In conclusion you must forgive my saying that however you may feel the atrocity of this Soudan war I scarcely think you recognize how entirely it is part and parcel of the system of bourgeois exploitation (we) from which we suffer at home, (and which it is)and which it is the (sole) aim of the Socialist League to attack and (if possible) destroy.

I am

Dear Mr. Mavor

Yours fraternally

William Morris

ms: UToronto (incomplete). Copy (complete) in Morris's own hand, IISH.

¹ Morris made two copies of this letter: one for Mavor and one presumably for the files of the Socialist League. I have used as my copy text the second because the one actually sent to Mavor has survived only in a fragmentary condition and there are several gaps in the text. Although the cancellations in the fragmentary version and in the copy apparently made for the S.L. are different, a comparison of the clear text of each would show that the purposes of the cancellations in Morris's copy were to make the letter an exact duplicate of the letter actually sent to Mavor. It would be impossible, for the reason given, to represent all the cancellations in the copy sent to Mavor, but I can say with confidence that the substantive text he received was the one also recorded in the copy for the League files.

² See letter no. 1025, n. 1.

³ Gordon was said in his own day to be a heavy drinker and was later described as an alcoholic. (See, for example, Lytton Strachey, *Eminent Victorians* [New York and London: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1916], p. 234.) An exhaustive effort to deny the characterization was made by B. M. Allen in *Gordon and the Sudan* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1931), pp. 82-101; and Ensor, p. 81.

⁴ In 1882 England had begun a military occupation of Egypt, an occupation that extended to the Sudan, then under Egyptian control. In 1883 Mohammad Ahmed had proclaimed himself the Mahdi (prophet or guide) of Islam and had begun a Sudanese revolt against Anglo-Egyptian rule. A series of victories, beginning with the defeat in 1883 of a 10,000 man army under British command, led to the consolidation of the Mahdi's power by February 1884. At that point, Gordon, who had previously been governor of the Sudan, was dispatched from Cairo to Khartoum, where he proclaimed himself governor-general and then attempted to negotiate with the Mahdi. Gordon's political overtures were, however, unsuccessful and the war against Anglo-Egyptian rule continued. On January 26, 1885, Khartoum was captured by the Mahdi and Gordon killed. From then on, until the spring of 1885, a struggle between the forces of the Mahdi and the Anglo-Egyptian armies ensued, ending in June with a victory for the Mahdi (who had virtually destroyed the British power in the Sudan) and soon after, his unexpected death. He was, however, immediately succeeded by his lieutenant (the Khalif Abdullah) who ruled until 1898, so this period in Sudanese history is sometimes called the Mahdia.

LETTERS OF WILLIAM MORRIS

⁵ William Wallace (1272-1305), Scottish hero in the struggle against Edward I.

⁶ In April 1883 years of agitation against evictions and excessive rents had led to the "Battle of the Braes" in Skye. By March 1885 there had been trials in Skye, and summonses for arrears of rent were about to be issued, but it was thought that nobody could be persuaded to deliver them. See *The Times*, March 18, 1885, p. 10; March 20, p. 10; and March 21, p. 12.

⁷ The *Manifesto* denounced the English as purveyors in the Sudan of "shoddy wares, bad spirits, venereal disease, cheap Bibles & missionary [*sic*]"; and also sardonically referred several times to Gordon as "the Christian hero" (quotation marks Morris's). These may have been the specific grounds for Mavor's objections. See also letter no. 1077, n. 4.

⁸ Edward Spencer Beesly (1831-1915), a professor at University College, London, and a leader of the Positivists.

1082 • TWO LETTERS TO JOHN LINCOLN MAHON

a.

March 1885

Dear Mahon,

All right I will bring the letters.

E. Owens Blackburne¹

Caramore Sutton Howth

Co. Dublin Ireland

Subscribes to the *Commonweal* & will send money next post: post her the papers please

Yours

W.M.

MSS: IISH.

¹ E. Owens Blackburne was the pseudonym of Elizabeth Casey (1848-1894), an Irish novelist who had gone blind in childhood and had had her sight restored by Sir William Wilde (1815-1876), the father of Oscar Wilde. She contributed a column of "Irish Notes" to the April 1885 issue of *Commonweal* (p. 19). *Commonweal* commented: "We look forward to having a regular series of notes from the same source," but none appeared again

b.

Kelmscott House,
Upper Mall, Hammersmith
April 1 [1885]

Dear Mahon

Can you arrange for at least 2 sellers 4 would be better of *Commonweal* at each entrance of St James Hall tomorrow to be there by 6.30.¹ I will get 2 from our branch. Each man should have if 4 at each door 100 copies if 2 200. They should be folded handily for quick distribution.