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WILLIAM MORRIS

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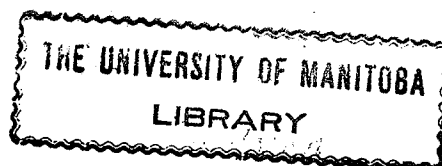
HIS RELATION TO PRE-RAPHAELITISM

-by-

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INTRODUCTION.

"There is no Wealth but Life", life, including all its powers of love, of joy, and of admiration. That country is the richest which nourishes the greatest number of noble and happy human beings; that man is richest who, having perfected the functions of his own life to the utmost, has also the widest helpful influence, both personal and by means of his possessions, over the lives of others". (1)

"It has been written, 'an endless significance lies in Work'; a man perfects himself by working.....Destiny on the whole has no other way of cultivating us....Blessed is he who has found his work, let him ask no other blessedness. He has a work, a life-purpose: he has found it and will follow it. How, as a free flowing channel,it runs and flows; making.....a green fruitful meadow, with its clear flowing stream. Labour is Life: from the inmost heart of the Worker rises his god-given Force." (2)

William Morris has been called the heir of Ruskin and Carlyle. Their words were the 'Staff and Scrip' of

(1) Ruskin, John, - "Unto This Last," - Essay II.

(2) Carlyle, Thomas, - "Past and Present," - Book III. 178.

his inspiration. In his own words we sense the kinship -

"Imaginative work is the very blossom of civilization triumphant and hopeful; it would fain lead men to aspire towards perfection; each hope that it fulfils gives birth to yet another hope; it bears in its bosom the worth and the meaning of life and the counsel to strive to understand everything; to fear nothing and to hate nothing; in a word 'tis the symbol and sacrament of the Courage of the World."(1) and again -

"It is not by accident that an idea comes into the heads of a few; rather they are pushed on, and forced to speak or act by something stirring in the heart of the world which would otherwise be left without expression". (2)

Perhaps no one loved life more than he did or used the gift of life more fully. "A gifted poet, a distinguished prose man, a superb craftsman and a vigorous social force. Yet first and foremost, ^{he} was a great personality". (3)

"His love of the beautiful work of the past, material and imaginative stood for him in the place of religious fervor, and his whole strength of purpose was dedicated to the reconstruction of modern life upon conditions similar to those under which such work.....was produced. Read in this

- (1) Morris, William, - "Architecture in Civilization", "Hope and Fears for Art" - p. 210.
- (2) Morris, William, - "The Lesser Arts", "Hope and Fears for Art" - p. 18.
- (3) Morris, William, - "A study in Personality", Preface.

light his writings are no mere pictures of an irrecoverable past.....they are a coherent revelation of his sources of inspiration in his combat with the torpor from which like Ruskin and Carlyle, he, not the least of all the three strove to deliver the life of his day". (1)

(1) "Cambridge History of Literature" - Vol. XIII, p. 128.

Chapter I.

LIFE AND HIS PLACE IN THE VICTORIAN ERA.

"Boyhood"

"The first step, says Ruskin, to the understanding either the mind or position of a great man ought, I think, to be an inquiry into the elements of his early instruction and the mode in which he was affected by the circumstances of surrounding life". (1)

The essence of all that made William Morris may be traced to his uneventful boyhood. The "thoughts of youth are long long thoughts" and what they feed upon prognosticates harvest.

William Morris, the eldest son and third child of William Morris and his wife Emma Shelton was born at Elm House, Clay Hill, Walthamstow, on the twenty-fourth of March 1834.

His family records are meagre and do not go far back.. His father's family was originally of Welsh descent and in later years his critics tried to trace his romantic development to a Celtic strain. His father was a City man and the family lived in comfort and comparative opulence.

(1) Walker, Hugh, - "Literature of the Victorian Era"

Shortly before the birth of William the family moved to Elm House situated within a mile or so of Epping Forest.

When William was six years old the family moved across the Forest to Woodford Hall. The Hall stood in about fifty acres of park, only separated by a fence from the Forest itself. "Behind lay the pathless glades and thickets of hornbeam and beech which still in spite of all encroachments..... remain in all essentials a part of primeval England, little changed in the course of hundreds, perhaps thousands of years. From the Hall the course of the Thames might be traced winding through the marshes". (1)

The Jesuit claim - "Give me the first seven years of a child's life and you may have the rest", was founded on a strong psychological basis much in advance of its time. We cannot find a better example of the shaping influences of environment and early customs than in the boyhood of William Morris.

"If he owed his creativeness to nothing but his own endowment, the colour and atmosphere with which his work came to be suffused were largely influenced by the memory of days spent among the hornbeam thickets of the Essex woodlands and the meadows of Woodford on the edge of Epping Forest".....(2)

Fifty years later the picture which Morris draws

(1) Mackail, J.W., - "The Life of William Morris" - p. 6.

(2) Drinkwater, John, - "William Morris, A Critical Study" p. 24.

of this Essex country in "News from Nowhere", his Utopia of a distant future, gives us a sense of the vividness of his boyhood impressions:

"Eastward and landward," he says "it is all flat pasture, once marsh, except for a few gardens, and there are very few permanent dwellings there, scarcely anything but a few sheds and cots for the men who come to look after the great herds of cattle. What with the beasts and the men, and the scattered red-tiled roofs and the big hayricks, it does not make a bad looking holiday to get a quiet pony and ride about there on a sunny afternoon of autumn, and look over the river and the craft passing up and down, and on to Shorter's Hill and the Kentish uplands, and then turn around to the wide green sea of the Essex marshland, with the great domed line of the sky, and the sun shining down in one flood of peaceful light over the long distance." (1)

With his brothers he roamed park and forest and there was formed "his intense love of nature and his keen eye for all sorts of woodland life." (2)

Epping Forest was to him always "the lady of his delight". A toy suit of armor was one of his most cherished possessions and attired in this he ranged the forest paths on foot or on his Shetland pony and re-peopled it in imagination with the goodly company he was fast making his own in

(1) Morris, William, "News from Nowhere", - p. 79.

(2) Mackail, J. W. "The Life of William Morris", - p. 7.

his reading.

He learned to read unusually young. By the time he was seven he had read all the Waverley Novels and a copy of Gerard's "Herbal" became one of his choicest possessions and a source of inspiration for his own designs in paper and tapestry of later days.

"The love of the Middle Ages was born in him according to his biographer" Mr. J. W. Mackail. The old Essex churches, their monuments and brasses were known by Morris at a very early age. Going "a-brassing" became one of his favorite forms of adventure in his school days. The splendid Essex country houses, which survive from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were equally loved.

From 1843 to 1847 he attended a preparatory school near his home. In 1843 Mr. Morris obtained a grant of arms from the Herald's College and the boy of nine was already of an age and background to be keenly interested in heraldry.

"Marlborough College"

Some time before his death Mr. Morris had bought a nomination to Marlborough College for his son.

The school had been recently founded, "in the centre of one of the most beautiful and romantic parts of England, in a neighborhood full of history and still fuller of pre-historic records.....It is not easy to over-estimate the influence of these surroundings on the development of a sensitive

and romantic nature, or their share in fostering that passionate love of earth and her beauty which remained a controlling and sustaining force throughout his life." (1)

Morris entered the school in 1848 and remained until the Christmas of 1851.

Founded in 1843 it was at that time a new school with no tradition, little organization and insufficient funds. The nearest railway station was eleven miles off. There was no regular system of athletics and in their playtime the majority of the boys used to ramble about the country.

For Morris with his strong tastes and exceptional gifts it was not without advantages. The weekly whole holiday was spent by him in rambling over the Downs and in Saver-nake Forest and he made his own the beauties and historic landmarks of the region.

The school library was well provided with works on archaeology and ecclesiastical architecture. Through these he ranged at will. His power of assimilation was prodigious and he left Marlborough, he used to say afterwards, a good archaeologist and knowing most of what there was to be known of English Gothic.....The romantic movement, which had originated a generation before, and had received so prodigious an impulse from Scott's novels, was now flooding into

(1) Mackail, J. W., op. cit., - p. 15.

the channels of Anglo-Catholicism, and Morris left school a pronounced Anglo-Catholic". (1)

The earliest extant script of Morris's writing is a letter to his sister Emma, written November, 1848. In this he is asking for details of the new home to which they removed after the death of Mr. Morris. "I'm sure you must think me a great fool to be always thinking about home but I really can't help it. I don't think it is my fault for there are such a lot of things I want to do and say and see". This desire "to do and say and see" was the motif force of all his future life.

The new home, Water House was near his first home, Clay Hill. Behind the house was a wide lawn and beyond it the feature which gave the house its name, a moat some forty feet in breadth surrounding an island planted with a grove of aspens.

"Here again", says John Drinkwater, "the boy found full store upon which to indulge his imaginative bent. A broad moat, a great paved hall, a wooded island, wide marsh lands, all fitted well with the tendencies that had already asserted themselves. When he left Marlborough at the age of seventeen, there was nothing to show that he was to become a great creative artist, but there was everything to show

(1) Mackail, J. W. op.cit,- p. 17 -18

the atmosphere in which his work would be conceived in such an event! (1)

In June 1852 Morris went up to Oxford and wrote the matriculation examination at Exeter. Next to him in the Hall sat another boy who had come up for the same purpose from Birmingham, and was destined to be his most intimate and life-long friend, Edward Burne-Jones.

"Oxford"

The Oxford to which they came in 1853 was still in all its main aspects a medieval city and the same roused (in Morris's own beautiful words) "a vision of grey roofed houses and a long winding street and the sound of many bells".

Arnold voices the homage of Morris in his lovely apostrophe to Oxford - perhaps the finest passage in the whole of his prose, where it is as a "queen of romance whispering from her towers the last enchantments of the Middle Ages".

As for the inner life of Oxford, the old world air, of fashions and ideas past and gone, was deceptive. The spirit of change was all-prevailing. The Oxford movement had come and gone and thought it still continued a force of prodigious importance, other movements were crowding up along side of it. Reform was in the air - "Oxford had at a thousand points become inextricably attached to the outer world" accord-

(1) Drinkwater, John, - op. cit., - p. 29.

(1) Burns-Jones, Lady - "Memoirs of Edward Burns-Jones"

"Here when they were alone together in the evening the friends read Chaucer, and in the day time they went often to look at the painted books in the Bodleian. Old chronicles too, they devoured, and things of any kind written about the Middle Ages, yet somehow missed for a little longer the two great books that afterwards filled so much of their lives -

poetry and art.

powerfully given up a wider interest in history, mythology, and of young men destined for the Church, more and more over- together omnivorously. Outside of the professional read- In their own rooms Morris and Burns-Jones read

thusiasm about something or someone." (1)

ing up that of the others, all earnest, all filled with en- I see them in my mind as I sit then, the thought of one bring- Lady Burns-Jones in her memoirs of her famous husband - "still "So we that group will never grow old," writes

should think"

settled down together and settle once for all how all people Paulkner's, where about nine of the evening Morris would often Burns-Jones writes, "our common room was invariably

the little Birmingham colony at Pembroke.

friendship ripened rapidly, found their kindred spirits in Before many weeks Morris and Burns-Jones whose

ing to Mr. Mackall.

- (1) Burns-Jones, Lady. - op. cit., p. 104.
- (2) Blackett, A. C. "Wm. Morris, poet, craftsman and social reformer," p. 18.
- (3) Jackson Holbrook, "William Morris," p. 17.

engraving of the knight and death, fired their imagination. "Sinttram", prefixed to which was a wood cut copy of Durer's opened to Morris a new world and a translation of Fouque's prose were their start and spur. There's a Northern mythology son in poetry, Carlyle, de Quincey, Thackeray and Dickens in as inspired and absolute truth. Shelley, Keats and Tenny- Carlyle's "Past and Present" stood along side "Modern Painters" of Venice in 1865, became a new gospel and a fixed creed. the famous chapter "Of the Nature of the Gothic" in the Stones "Huskyn became for them a hero and a prophet - and known as the special province of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood" (2)

expression in that romantic Renaissance which was soon to be were to be heard in new impulsion towards art then finding quadrangles, and although past its heyday, its reverberations "The Tranterian movement still echoed through the

through life." (2)

slightest the bonds of interest that were to grip him wood-cutting. Such a list, by no means exhaustive, typifies men and women, Huskyn's, Stokes of Venice, clay modelling, of Rossetti, Pre-Raphaelism, Amiens Cathedral, Brownings Tennyson's hand, Malloy's, Morris's, the personality five life was to be, a series of splendid enthusiasms: Chaucer, "His life at Oxford mixed a little what his en-

the Morris and the Tale of the Nibungs." (1)

like of which had never been heard before. It was a thing
 Redcliffe. As he read it, I felt that it was something the
 Morris read his first poem, it was called, 'The Willow and the
 "We sat down," Cannon Dixon continues, "and heard
 asked us. 'Why Toby?' - the name which he had given him."
 Burns-Jones exclaimed wildly, 'he's a big poet! Who is it?
 found him with Burns-Jones. As soon as we entered the room,
 "One night, he writes, "Crom'rice and I went to Kater, and
 Cannon Dixon tells the story of his first poem -
 expression.

make his utterance certain and invest the ideal with artistic
 write. It only needed contact with these new influences to
 already developed in his consciousness, he was beginning to
 quickened his creative instinct. With a perfectly defined ideal
 shared his enthusiasm and sharpened his imagination and
 a year spent at Oxford in the company of men who

(1) "I have by Morris than by the rest."

by them as a pattern for actual life; and more strongly per-
 the Oxonian war. The young hero of the novel.....was adopted
 striking in the years between the decline of Tractarianism and
 traced the religious ideas and social enthusiasms which were
 Mr. Mackail. "In this book, more than in any other, may be
 ordinary revolution over the whole of their group," says
 "The Hero of Redcliffe", also exercised an extra-

entirely new:.....perfectly original, whatever its value....
and I remember his remark 'well, if this is poetry, it is very
easy to write.' From that time onward, for a term or two, he
came to my rooms almost every day with a new poem !

It is in Volume XXI of his collected works, edited
by his daughter, May Morris and published in 1914, that we come
upon the first appearance in print of this poem. A fragment
is inserted -

"The Willow and the Redcliff.

"About the river goes the wind

And morns through the sad grey willow,

And calls up sadly to my mind

The heave and the swell of the billow.

No living thing on the cliff does stand;

No face from the red cliff looks

But the thorn-bush stretches out his hand

To the leaves in the little nooks.

And from the thorn-bush far away

Does the thrush to the willow sing:

And on the willow branch alway

glitters a golden ring."

But his discovery that he could write prose came
hard on the heels of his discovery that he could write poetry.

"The name and some of the work of the Pre-Raphaelite school were by this time becoming known to Morris and his companions, though the artists themselves were still unknown to them.....A copy of "The Germ" had fallen into their hands and from "Hand and Soul" and "The Blessed Damsel" which they read and re-read forever, Rossetti rose to a first-rank place in their list of heroes." (1)

The last year at Oxford was a busy one. The ardent young band with "Brotherhood" for their group name and Sir Galahad for their patron set about the foundation of the "Oxford and Cambridge Magazine." Twelve numbers of the magazine appeared, financed by Morris. Its aim was the expression of the Brotherhood's artistic creed and its loyalty to the essential idea of the identity with life. Rossetti was among its contributors.

Morris had resolved to become an architect and entered the office of Mr. Street in Oxford in the fall of 1855. Burne-Jones went up to London a few months later and began painting under the friendly guidance of Rossetti. Morris spent the week-ends in London and came under the influence of Rossetti's dominating personality.

In a letter written in July, we sense the extent of this.

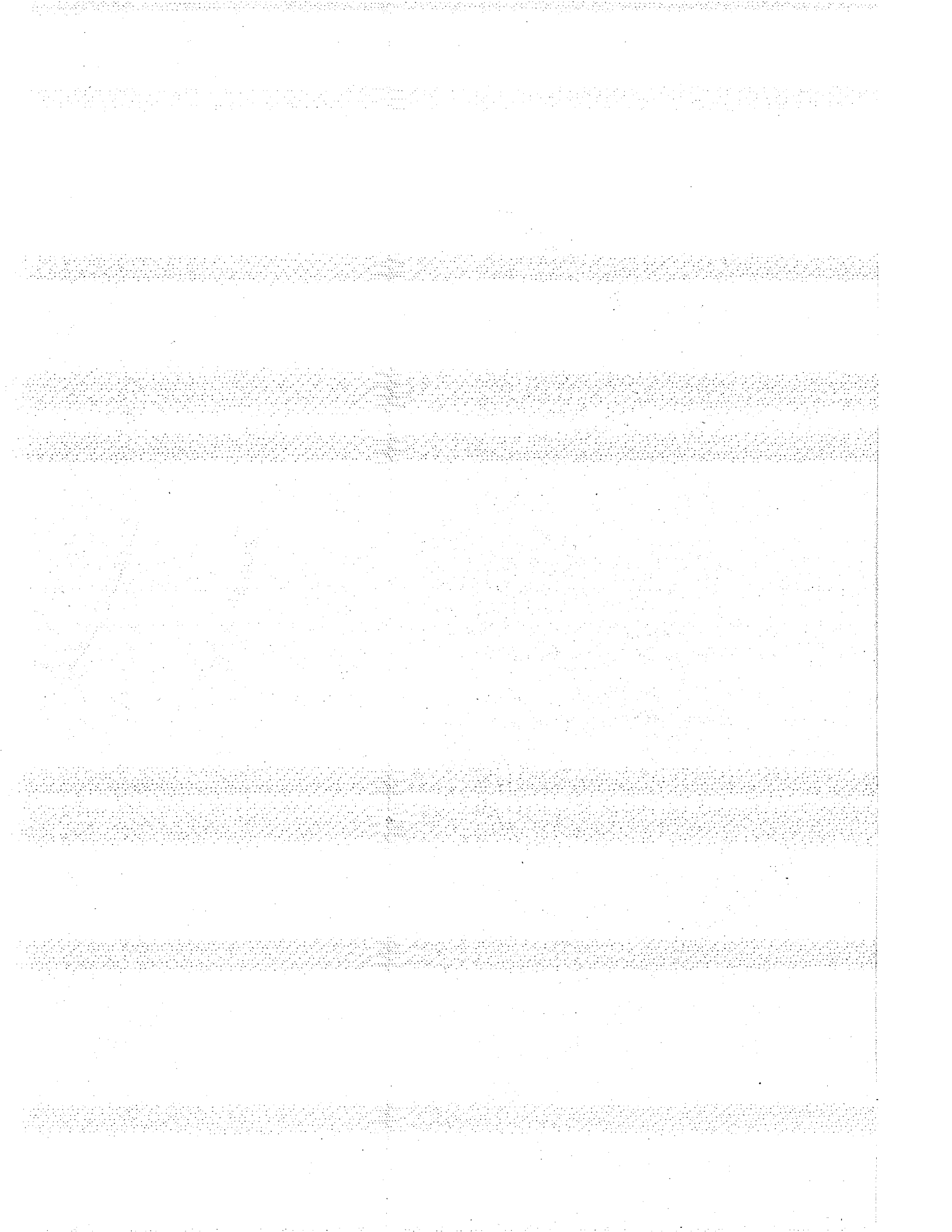
"I have seen Rossetti twice since I saw the last of

(1) Mackail, J.W. op. cit., p. 74.

self-sufficing was, while it lasted, complete in proportion
himself.....Rossetti's conquest of a mind so strong and so
at painting, he was moody and irritable, he brooded much by
for the two years or so during which he worked hard

August" (1)

and I are going to live together. I go to London early in
off into a kind of small (very small) Palace of Art.....He
am glad that I am compelled to try anyhow. I was slipping
and yet I know in my mind that my chances are slender. I
of painting; I dare scarcely think failure possible at times,
yet I shall have enough to do, if I actually master this art.
My work is the embodiment of dreams in one form or another.....
power or reaction to set them right in ever so little a degree.
on the whole I see that things are in a muddle, and I have no
enter into politics-social subjects with any interest, for
events: - love and work, these two things only.....I can't
but that don't matter: I have no right to ask for it at all
won't get much enjoyment out of life at this rate, I know well,
get six hours a day for drawing besides office work. One
giving up the architecture, but trying if it is possible to
say, yet will try my best.....So I am going to try, not
and not as the scribbler, I must try. I don't hope much, I must
be able! now as he is a very great man and speaks with authority
you,.....Rossetti says I ought to paint, he says I shall



W. of. cit., p. 114.
John, of. cit., p. 45.
Brook, "William Morris", - p. 26.

Arthur, Dent and Beatrice; Sir Galahad

Jones and Rossetti contributed to the

he wanted made to his own design" (3)

any nothing to satisfy his taste;.....

entering had become so degraded that

to furniture began. The crisis of

own room, that his life as the revolution-

le ages, coupled with the necessity of

kill in that art, and his love of the

before this been drawn toward design.

in Red Lion Square" (2)

one furnishing in England are clearly

ed until 1861.....but the beginnings

his and company, although the firm

ut of this circumstance really sprang

ite-Raphaelite Brotherhood. "They

occupied by himself and Deverell in

's suggestion they moved to Red Lion

and" (1)

o got beyond that: I want to imitate

own original work, Morris answered with

the design he made in Rossetti's manner

was subdued.....Once, when Burne-

church of St. Michael's in Oxford; he was then just five and twenty. Dixon.....came down to perform the ceremony; Bulmer was best man; and Burne-Jones and a few more of the old Oxford set were there. It was the last scene in the Oxford life of the Brotherhood.

later influences -

"The need of a new home and the opportunity of making the occasion a further experiment in the realization of cherished ideas of art and life, was not only a turning point in his own career, but the turning point in the history of English domestic architecture. Red House was duly built by Philip Webb." (1)

The concreteness of the man was here visible as in all else -

"He wanted it not merely as a place to live in, but as a fixed centre and background for his artistic work. He hated designing in the air, without relation to a definite material and a particular purpose." (2) But the real house of his dreams was "Kelmscott" which became his home in 1871.

"Here in this Thames backwater, forgotten of time and turmoil, was the embodiment of all he loved in art and life. Kelmscott became the symbol of his social religion;

- (1) Jackson Hobrop, - "William Morris" - p. 29.
- (2) Mackail, J. W., op.cit., p. 142.

the centre of his Utopia". (1)

"A house that I love", he wrote in the last year of his life, "with a reasonable love I think; for though my words may give you no idea of any special charm about it, yet I assure you that the charm is there; so much has the old house grown out of the soil and the lives of those that lived in it; some thin thread of tradition, a half anxious sense of the delight of meadow and acre and wood and river; a certain amount (not too much let us hope) of common sense, a liking for making materials serve one's turn, and perhaps at bottom some little grain of sentiment: This I think was what went to the making of the old house."

"The journey through Iceland in the summer of 1871 had, both before and after its occurrence, an importance in Morris's life which can hardly be over-estimated, and which, even to those who knew him well, was not wholly intelligible.....The heroic stories of Iceland stood in his mind at the head of the world's literature; the deeds which they chronicled were the summit, in their tragic force, of all human achievement. And the Icelandic Republic represented, more nearly than any other state of things recorded in history, the political and social frame work of life which satisfied his mind and imagination.

(1) Jackson, Holbrook, - op.cit., - p. 32.

(2) Mackail, J. W. - op. cit., p. 247.

In a summarized statement of the Northern mythology which he wrote out about this time, he concludes with the following confession of faith: "It may be that the world shall worsen, that men shall grown afraid to 'change their life', that the world shall be weary itself, and sicken, and none but faint hearts be left - who knows ?.....till at last the great destruction breaks out over all things, and the old earth and heavens are gone, and then a new heaven and a new earth.....And what shall be our share in it ? Well, sometimes we must needs think that we shall live again; yet if that were not, would it not be enough, that we helped to make this unnameable glory and lived not altogether deedless ? Think of the joy we have in praising great men, and how we turn their stories over and over, and fashion their lives for our joy; and this also we ourselves may give to the world."

"But the manifesto which Morris issued in May 1877, when the recent declaration of war by Russia had brought the Eastern question into a very acute and dangerous stage, is remarkable, less for any unusual insight into what is called the political situation, than for the body to whom he addressed it, and the tone it took on political action in the largest sense.....It contains his later socialist teaching as yet folded in the germ - "

"To the working men of England" the manifesto is

tried to recall the larger nobler issues.
 spoken to a crowd fast melting away in the darkness and rain,
 Sunday. The brief speech which he delivered over the grave,
 hospital from injuries received in the struggle of bloody
 of December. A young man named Alfred Linnell had died in
 Morris took part during the rest of the year was on the 18th
 The only other important public occasion in which
 guard were summoned up from Whitehall.
 the ducky swaying masses when two squadrons of the life
 and the river of steel and mortar that moved slowly through
 the brief but fierce struggle at the corner of the strand.
 sight of that grey winter day, the vast sombre-colored crowd,
 one who saw it will ever forget the strange and indeed terrible
 ber, 'Bloody Sunday', in and around Trafalgar Square. He
 and then - says Mr. Mackay - "the 13th of Novem-
 unjust war, and urge us of the middle class to do no less" (1)
 of the world, then cast aside steth and cry out against an
 ities which have been our stumbling block since the beginning
 leisure and knowledge, if you long to lessen these inter-
 your whole order peacefully and solidly, if you thirst for
 redressed, if you cherish your most worthy hope of raising
 fellow citizens, look to it, and if you have any wrongs to be
 "Working men of England, one word of warning yet....."

headed.

"Our friend who lies here has had a hard life, and met with a hard death; and if society had been differently constituted, his life might have been a delightful, a beautiful and happy one. It is our business to begin to organize for the purpose of seeing that such things shall not happen; to try and make this earth a beautiful and happy place."

"Man fight and lose the battle", says John Ball, "and the thing that they fought for comes about in spite of their defeat, and when it comes it turns out not to be what they meant. The silent permeation of a new spirit was making itself felt." (1)

His Place in the Victorian Era -

"The life of Morris is an epitome of what Carlyle and Ruskin, Maurice and Kingsley were teaching; and he shows in his own person, better than anyone else, how that democracy which in 1832 began to find its footing in English politics affected every form of intellectual activity." (2)

Mr. G. K. Chesterton in his trenchant style, traces the connection - "Now for the great part of the Victorian era the utilitarian tradition, which reached its highest in Mill, held the centre of the field....."

But though this simple Victorian rationalism held the centre, and in a certain sense was the Victorian era, it

(1) Mackail, J. W., op. cit., Vol. 2, p. 207.

(2) Walker, Hugh, - "The Literature of the Victorian Era", p. 528.

was assailed on many sides, and had been assailed even before the beginning of that era. The rest of the intellectual history of the time is a series of reactions against it, which come wave after wave. They have succeeded in shaking it but not in dislodging it from the modern mind. The first of these was the Oxford movement; a bow that broke when it had let loose the flashing arrow that was Newman. The second reaction was one man, without teachers or pupils - Dickens. The third reaction was a group that tried to create a sort of romantic Protestantism, to pit against both Reason and Rome - Carlyle, Ruskin, Kingsley, Morris - perhaps Tennyson. Browning also was at once romantic and Puritan, but he belonged to no group and worked against materialism in a manner entirely his own,..... From Ruskin again, descend those who may be called the Pre-Raphaelites of prose and poetry."

"Carlyle's great and real work was the attack on Utilitarianism.....Ruskin may be very roughly regarded as the young Lieutenant of Carlyle in his war on Utilitarian Radicalism. Ruskin left behind him in his turn two quite separate streams of inspiration. The first and more practical was concerned like Carlyle's 'Chartism', with a challenge to the social conclusions of the orthodox economists.....On this side of his soul Ruskin became the second founder of Socialism.

"On the other side of his literary soul, his mere

unwrapping of the wealth and wonder of European art, he set going another influence.....He represented what was at first the Pre-Raphaelite School in painting, but afterwards a much larger and looser Pre-Raphaelite School in poetry and prose." (1)

Vida Scudder gives a similar summing up of the social forces stirring the forties. "In the decade of 'Sartor Resartus,' the Reform Bill was succeeded by the Anti-Corn-Law League; the Owenites introduced into familiar though not yet popular use the word, Socialism; the first volumes of Tennyson and Browning promised the exquisite art and searching psychology of the Victorian poetry that was to follow. John Stuart Mill and Frederick Denison Maurice began to be felt in their different ways as intellectual forces and the Oxford movement quickened in England a spiritual revival.....Chartism gathered gloomily and gloomily dispersed in the social heavens. Once more in 1848 revolutionary idealism led to disillusion. The Christian Socialism of Kingsley and Morris, like Chartism, arose only to vanish as a formal movement, though not as a spirit and an influence. Pre-Raphaelitism in art awoke a new passion for romantic beauty, and however remote in its earlier phases from social feeling, yet unconsciously festered one of the strongest factors in the radicalism of the century. This was Morris." (2)

(1) Chesterton, G.K., - "Victorian Age in Literature", p. 68,

(2) Scudder, Vida, "Social Ideals in English Letters", p. 158.

"To William Morris Art was not a thing apart, it was life itself. Like Keats he cried "my world is dis-enchanted. Where shall I find loveliness? Where does Beauty sleep? There is the Healing of humanity, there is truth."

Morris had even greater reason than Keats for his rejection of the present. Beauty had wholly disappeared from life; and the horrors of its absence had reached their height in the first half of the nineteenth century. Art had all but perished;.....Sculpture and architecture were mere conventions. They had neither truth to nature, nor imagination, nor originality." (1)

Morris's share in the Pre-Raphaelite movement was in the special field of decorative art. Remarkable as were the various phases of his activities in craftsmanship, "they interest us most by the fact that craftsmanship for him was at bottom, a branch of sociology. The first important artistic influence in his life was the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood.

He was by turns a poet, a painter, a prose romancer, a designer, a student of economics, a printer, a street orator; but through these varying manifestations of his activity he remained all along a Craftsman." (2)

"Quite unlike as was Morris to Scott in temper and mental endowment, his position in the romantic literature of

(1) Brooke, S., op.cit.,- p. 207.

(2) Rickett, A. Compton -, op.cit., p. 131-3.

the second half century answers very closely to Scott's in the first,.....For the second time he made the Middle Ages popular." (1)

"To go back to the fourteenth century, not with the view of staying there, but of advancing from it, in what he conceived to be the true high road out of which the true arts had long wandered, was his perpetual principle." (2)

John Drinkwater says - "His love for medievalism was neither accident nor fruit of any refusal to face his own age."

In an unpublished address he himself says - "I know that in those days life was often rough and evil enough, beset by violence, superstition, ignorance, slavery, yet sorely as poor folks needed a solace they did not altogether lack one, and that solace was pleasure in their work."

William Morris stands out among the great figures of the Victorian era not so much because he was a visionary, there were many such, but because he strove not without success, to transmute his dream into the currency of everyday affairs. If he dreamt and sang of a world in which heroism dwelt..... he worked hard to make the world about him worthy of a new race of heroes as yet unborn. The Golden Age for William Morris was not only in the past, it was in the future, and

(1) Beers, H.A., op.cit., - p. 320.

(2) Mackail, J.W., op.cit., - p. 358.

he believed that the new Golden Age could be brought ever nearer by the simple process of putting your joy into every job of work which fell to your hand. He loved beauty..... but his love was not yearning, it was action.

He was a "Dreamer of dreams" as he knew, but he was also striving to "put the crooked straight". (1)

"And in all I have been saying, what I have been really urging on you is this - Reverence for the life of Man upon the Earth: let the past be past, every whit of it that is not still living in us: let the dead bury their dead, but let us turn to the living, and with boundless courage and what hope we may, refuse to let the Earth be joyless in the days to come." (2)

(1) Jackson, Holbrook, - op.cit., p. 60.

(2) Morris, William, "Hopes and Fears for Art", "Architecture in Civilization", - p. 217.

Chapter II.

THE PRE RAPHAELITE MOVEMENT.

"The real importance of these movements in literature or art which have been definite enough in aim to enlist an active membership of gifted persons and to formulate something like a creed, is to be found as a rule, not in the creed, but in the fellowship. The formulation of principles, the agreement upon methods, seen at the moment of first importance; but time, that patient corrector of inadequate judgments and false perspectives, is indifferent to theories of art, and cares only for the work which discovers the inspired touch, and the personality through which the vision of truth or beauty enters into the common life of men. Such movements are often fruitful of great works and great souls, and mark great expansions of thought; but the specific creeds which they profess, like creeds of every sort, are always partial, inadequate and provisional. That which seemed a finality to the men who were under the spell of its fresh and thrilling influence, in the end falls into line with the continuous process of development of which it was a part, and is recog-

nized as a new and fruitful evolution from the past." (1)

Again he says in the same connection - "We are chiefly concerned to know that the Pre Raphaelite movementwas not so much the outcome of a new doctrine, a novel creed, as a new attitude toward nature and life, a more sincere and earnest mood, a fresh perception of truth and beauty through individual genius, a deep and spontaneous feeling for things which had come to be treated in a conventional and formal way."

"The term Pre Raphaelite belongs properly to the history of painting and not that of poetry. In poetry it has no special significance, except so far as it derives meaning by reflection from its use in relation to art, and indicates a certain phase of the great romantic movement which governed nearly all the imaginative literature of the time. Nevertheless it serves a useful purpose in binding together a group of men who had common aims and whose writings were so intimately related to their art that the transference of a word from one to the other seems scarcely a transference at all. For not only were a number of these men at once artists and writers, but they repeatedly used pen to illustrate pencil or pencil to illustrate pen." (2)

The nucleus of the brotherhood consisted of three

- (1) Mabie, H.W., - "Essays in Literary Interpretation," p. 72.
- (2) Walker, Hugh, - "The Literature of the Victorian Era", - p. 490.

young men - Holman Hunt, John Everett Millais and Dante Gabriel Rossetti.

The claims for leadership of the group have given rise to much controversy. W. D. Rossetti, Mr. F. G. Stephens, Joseph Knight and others place Gabriel Rossetti as leader and inspirer of the movement. The presentation of arguments for and against these claims is outside the scope of my subject. Mr. Holman Hunt, in "Pre Raphaelitism and the Pre Raphealites", has dealt with the subject exhaustively.

"The Life of Sir John Everett Millais" by his son appeared earlier than Mr. Hunt's above-mentioned book. Mr. Hunt says :- "My narrative must conflict with nearly all these which have hitherto appeared on the purpose and progress of Pre-Raphaelitism.

I had long paused in writing these pages when the 'Life of Sir John Everett Millais' appeared. This book supplied the first accurate information about the relative positions of the first three active members of our Body.....the words of my old friend, my only companion in the beginning of the reforms, as written and spoken by himself, and recorded by his son, have strengthened my original resolution to complete the unvarnished story.

A few extracts from chapter 4, vol. I, give the main facts.

"One studentspoke to me of Ruskin's

Modern Painters and when he recognized my eagerness to learn of its teachings,he gained permission from Cardinal Wiseman, to whom it belonged, to lend it to me for twenty-four hours.....To get through the book I sat up most of the night.....When it had gone, the echo of its words stayed with me."

"If there be fuel prepared", says

Bacon, 'it is hard to tell whence the spark shall come that shall set it on fire.' (1)

In conversation with Millais his ideas are formulating. 'What you ask are my scruples? - Well they are nothing less than irreverent, heretical and revolutionary..... When art has arrived at a facile proficiency of execution, a spirit of easy satisfaction takes possession of its masters, encouraging them to regard it with the paralysing content of the lotus-eaters; it has in their eyes become perfect, and they live in its realm of settled law. Under this miasma no young man has the faintest chance of developing his art into living power, unless he investigates - the dogmas of his elders with critical mind and dares to face the idea of revolt from their authority." (2)

"Let us go on a bold track.....We will go carefully and not without the teaching of our fathers: it is simply fuller Nature we want. Revivalism, whether it

(1) Bacon, Essay - "Of Seditions and Troubles".

(2) Hunt, Helman, "Pre-Raphaelitism," p. 82.

be of classicalism or of medievalism, is a seeking after dry bones." -

Rossetti became a student of Hunt's and together they took a studio. "Rossetti, whose enthusiasm for our principles grew with greater familiarity, talked much of Woolner as one to whom he had explained the resolution of Millais and myself to turn more devotedly to Nature as the one means of purifying modern art, and said that Woolner had declared the system to be the only one that could reform sculpture, and that therefore he wished to be enrolled with us." (1)

Now comes the forlorn hope; it appears that the Rossettis are much attached to him,Collinson himself has been pressing me to get him accepted..... I must not forget William Rossetti. Well, Gabriel proposes he too shall become an artist and join us."The numbers grew so fast that I determined to put a limit to the number of probationary members which I did by adding my nominal painting pupil Stephens." (2)

"Rossetti's sentiments of these days is witnessed,..... by his daily words put into permanent form in the short prospectus for The Germ issued a year or two later,"

(1) Hunt, Holman, "Pre-Raphaelitism", p. 112.

(2) Hunt, Holman, op. cit., p. 130.

"The endeavour held in view throughout the writings on art will be to encourage and enforce an entire adherence to the simplicity of Nature, and also to direct attention, as an auxiliary medium, to the comparatively few works which art has yet produced in this spirit." (1)

"The second question, what our corporation itself should be called, was raised by the increase of our company. Gabriel improved upon previous suggestions with the word 'Brotherhood'.....When we agreed to use the letters P. R. B. as our insignia, we made each member solemnly promise to keep its meaning strictly secret, for seeing the danger of offending the reigning powers of the time." (2)

"A new creed requires a new evangel". (3)

On the first of January, 1850, the first number of The Germ was issued by Messrs. Aylott and Jones of 8 Paternoster Row. Only four numbers were published. This 'House of the Interpreter' of the Pre Raphaelite Brotherhood set forth their ideas and aspirations more distinctly than oils and canvas would permit. "

"A characteristic of the Pre Raphaelite

(1) Preface to 'Germ'.

(2) op.cit.,- p. 141.

(3) "Knight, Joseph, - Life of Rossetti," - p. 38.

Brotherhood was its remarkable literary strength, five of the members were writers by preference. "Hand and Soul" Rossetti's only narrative in prose he ever finished and "The Blessed Damozel", first appeared in this Magazine.

The very essence of the Pre Raphaelite theory is contained in "Hand and Soul". The hero, a painter is literally a Pre Raphaelite. From early boyhood he strove towards the imitation of any objects offered in Nature". Having heard of the famous Guinto Pisario, he offered himself as a pupil., He was received with courtesy and consideration and shown into the study of the famous artist. But the forms he saw there were lifeless and incomplete. A sudden exultation possessed him and he said within himself: "I am the master of this man". At times when he could not paint he would sit - "for hours in thought of all the greatness the world had known from of old; until he was weak with yearning like one who gazes on a path of stars."

In a vision his soul appeared unto him in the fashion of a woman clad in grey and grey raiment. "As the woman stood her speech was with ChiaroI am an image, Chiaro, of thine own soul within thee. See me and know me as I am.....In all that thou doest, work from thine own heart, simply.....Chiaro, servant of God, take now thine Art unto thee and paint me thus as I am, to know me:

weak as I am, and in the needs of this time; only with eyes which seek out labour, and with a faith, not learned yet zealous of prayer." "And Chiaro did as she bade him. While he worked his face grew solemn with knowledge, and before the shadows had turned his work was done." (1)

What they sought to follow in the old Italian models, however, with all their archaism and immaturity of skill was the honest striving after nature, sincerity of style, decorative simplicity, and by no means least, the pious selection of worthy subjects.....They set themselves to paint great and ennobling subjects, often greater than they could achieve, out of their imagination, when the rest of the world (always excepting men like Madox Brown, who belonged to them in spirit) were painting what Ruskin calls "cattle pieces", and 'sea-pieces' and 'fruit-pieces' and 'family pieces', the eternal brown cows in ditches and white sails in squalls and sliced lemons in saucers, and foolish faces in simpers.'" (2)

Their code as Mr. W. Rossetti records it was simple and inoffensive enough,

(1) to have genuine ideas to express,

(1) Rossetti, D. G., - "Hand and Soul"

(2) Merillier, H. C., - "Dante Gabriel Rossetti", p. 14.

religious pictures with somewhat archaic simplicity and be-
consequently a 'pre Raphaelite' - who painted

England was just then taking the objectionable form of
Raphael was Medievalism, and the revival of Medievalism in
of the master was a denial of the master; moreover before
pre Raphaelite then must be an anti-Raphaelite; to go back
of the English art critics at that time was Raphael..... A
far as its effect upon the public was concerned. The idol
The name chosen was a marvel of infelicity so

the dogs of war were let loose.
years after through Rossetti's divulging the secret of (P.R.B.)
These first pictures were tolerably well received, but two

Henry, by Holman Hunt.
poem "The Pot of Basil"; and
Lorenzo and Isabella, by Millais, based on Keats's
girlhood of Mary Virgin, by Rossetti.
In this fashion their earliest works were executed.

- thoroughly good pictures and studies.
- (4) most indispensable of all, they were to produce
by rote,
 - (3) what is conventional, self-parading and learned
hearted in previous art, to the exclusion of
to sympathize with what was direct, serious and
to express them,
 - (2) to study nature attentively so as to know how

longed to a Brotherhood was probably a Fuseyite and a danger to be reckoned with." (1)

Charles Dickens was among their more vehement assailants.

The effect^{of} rancorous criticism upon Rossetti was such that he resolved never to exhibit in public again, and he adhered to this determination to the end. (2)

When the press gave their verdict it was with one voice of condemnation. "This school of English youths has, it may be granted, ambition.....Their ambition is an unhealthy thirst which seeks notoriety by means of mere conceit. Abruptness, singularity, uncouthness are the counters by which they play for the game. Their trick is to defy the principles of beauty and the recognized axioms of taste etc." (3)

Many of our literary friends expressed their sympathy with us and declared indignation at the treatment we had received. Patmore said he knew of no such organized conspiracy at any date against young men.....

In the midst of this helplessness came thunder as out of a clear sky - a letter from Ruskin in "The Times" in our defence. (4)

(1) Gary, E. L., "The Rossetti's", - p. 36.

(2) Hunt, Holman, - op. cit., p. 204.

(3) Atheneum, - 1850 - p. 590.

(4) Hunt, Holman, - op. cit., 254.

"The Times in May 1851 missed these 'works of inspiration' as Ruskin had at last taught people to call Turner's picture. But the acknowledged mouth piece of public opinion found consolation in castigating a school of young artists who had 'unfortunately become notorious by addicting themselves to an antiquated style and an affected simplicity in painting -" We can extend no toleration to a mere servile imitation of the cramped style, false perspective, and crude color of remote antiquityThat morbid infatuation which sacrifice truth, beauty and genuine feeling to mere eccentricity deserves no quarter at the hands of the public." (1)

Mr. Ruskin knew nothing personally of these young innovators and had not at first sight wholly approved. "He went to the Academy to look at the "false perspective and expression forced into caricature", and found one error in perspective in the whole series of pictures, which could not be said of any twelve works containing architecture by popular artists in the exhibition. He returned home and wrote to "The Times" his verdict; after further examination he wrote again and made acquaintance with several of the brethren.

According to Elizabeth Luther Cary in her book on "The Rossettis", Pre Raphaelitism has suffered from the tendency of human nature to define a thing "in order", as someone has said, "to save the trouble of understanding it."

(1) Collingwood, John, - "John Ruskin", - p. 130.