witness of a fine anti-Oxford formulation of Morris's which I quoted in William Morris and Oxford from a much later source: ‘after what he considered the desecration of St Mary's [Church], he could never enter the city again “unless they make me drunk at the station” ’. I knew that Morris had been reading Richard Jeffries' After London on his visit to Edward Carpenter in Millthorpe in 1885, but not that, in Carpenter's own words, ‘he read page after page of it to us with glee that evening as we sat round the fire’. Nor did I know, as Henry Salt assures us here, that Morris was fascinated by the doggerel stanza: ‘See o’er the sea Flamingos flaming go,/The Lark hies high, the Swallow follows low,/The Bees are busy on their threshold old,/And Lambs lament within their threefold fold’. Denys Leighton’s admirable collection thus gives us much of the necessary personal quirkiness of William Morris, as well as many fine contemporary evocations of his political, artistic and literary endeavours.

Tony Pinkney


It is a pleasure to be able to welcome the continuation of this impressive edition of D.G. Rossetti’s correspondence, inaugurated by William Fredeman, carried on by a distinguished group of American scholars, and finely published by D.S. Brewer. It is inevitably the case, because of the less-than-happy shape taken by Rossetti’s life, that these later volumes lack the richness and vitality found in the earlier ones, but there is still a good deal to enjoy and admire. These five years show Rossetti trying to keep his life and artistic practice going despite the health problems in which his taking of chloral played a significant part, as carefully explained by the editors in VII, 308–9. But when depression lifted, he could still give abundant evidence of his generosity to fellow artists and his concern for those suffering either financially or in spirit. Above all, we see him, particularly in his correspondence with F.J. Shields, trying to help their common friend James Smetham, who had become bedridden and uncommunicative, leaving his wife Sarah perplexed and fundless.

The letters to Sarah herself are models of tact. Rossetti writes to many friends and patrons to ask for their help in this crisis, with a good deal of success. And he also writes supportively to old friends such as William Bell Scott and Dr Gordon Hake, and to newer acquaintances such as the dealer Edmund Bates, the pitman
poet Joseph Skipsey, and the young writer Hall Caine; the letters show his admiration for the skill of the youthful James Allen in the cutting of silhouettes, and of the dramatist Charles Wells, who died in February 1879 and whom he places improbably near to Shakespeare. His generous response to the poetry of Skipsey, whose subject-matter of industrial life is so distant from his own, is attractive evidence of his range of sympathy; of Skipsey’s work in comparison with his own, he writes to Thomas Dixon, ‘Mine are full of work which is art-study & speaks a much less universal language than his own.’ (VIII, 183)

His relations with his brother William and his old friend Ford Madox Brown went through bad periods in these years, but recovered by the end. His unfortunate choice of Howell as his agent still left difficulties, but he was helped by his young assistants Henry Treffrey Dunn, George Hake (though he forfeited the service of the latter in 1877) and latterly Hall Caine, and by his most constant friend and advisor, Theodore Watts-Dunton. Other correspondents who meant much to him in these years included his mother (with whom he and Christina shared the sad loss of his sister Maria in 1877), Mrs. Cowper-Temple (whom he describes in a letter to Watts-Dunton as ‘my most womanly & most queenly hostess’ [VII, 298]), and Alice Boyd, to whom he writes on 24 August 1875: ‘The sight of your writing is so welcome beyond almost any other friend’s that I must avail myself of a rest in my day’s work & write in time for post’ – although the editorial note tells us that ‘AB’s letter of the preceding day contained little news ...’

Jane Morris continues to occupy the most important place in his affections. The letters to Jane have been published before and so contain no surprises, but they still give striking evidence of how much she had come to mean to him. They include letters about the arrangements for the settling on Jane of the £1,000 that Rossetti received on the breakup of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. Very unusually for him, he concludes a brief note to Jane, when she was setting out with the girls for Italy in November 1877, with the words ‘God bless you’. A long and unusually relaxed letter of 19 December 1877 jokes about the girls, presumably following their father’s enthusiasm, as possibly being ‘bent on talking Icelandic in Italy’; gives affectionate news of Marie Stillman, who was sitting for him, and of her family, Lisa, Bella and ‘little Effie’; tells of his selling to a new buyer, Mr. Turner, his Proserpine and ‘the little picture of you painted at Kelmscott’ (Water Willow); points out what he sees as the disadvantages of ‘the house in Hammersmith Mall’ – ‘the garden is generally being overflowed by the Thames’; and concludes with a lengthy ‘amusing anecdote’ about Howell and Whistler.

In 1878 – the year producing most letters of these five years – Jane was written to in Italy on 10 February about his difficulty in finding a house to move to from Cheyne Walk – he was never to find one – and about Morris’s political activities: ‘Morris, I hear, is dealing about him on all sides, & you will see my prophecy as to his parliamentary career will come true yet’; Rossetti evidently assumes that
anyone seriously concerned about politics will end up in parliament. The next sentence expresses the concern of a man who was never financially confident: ‘However I suppose the picture market will soon be nowhere’. An editorial note confirms this, referring to Gerald Reitlinger’s 1961 book *The Economics of Taste*. The letter ends with a reference to a recent visit from P.P. Marshall ‘in his usual condition’: ‘His leading opinion, as I gathered it, is that he ought to shoot down every man he ever knew if he would not be hanged for doing so.’ The note tells us a little about Marshall, a founding member of the Firm who ‘dropped out when the company was reconstituted in 1875’, but makes no comment on his ‘usual condition’. Perhaps the most moving of these letters is that of 31 May 1878 in which Rossetti responds to a letter in which Jane told him she had put off a visit because she feared that he would be distressed by her thinness and ‘altered looks’. He denies strongly that her looks could have affected his desire to see her: ‘The supposition would be an outrage to my deep regard for you, – a feeling far deeper (though I know you never believed me) than I have entertained towards any other living creature at any time of my life’. It comes as a relief to the reader when he goes on to suggest that Jane should take cod-liver oil.

His sense of fun is still able to show itself on occasion, as in his letter to the Morris girls at Christmas 1871 signed ‘The Third Gravedigger’ and announcing a Christmas Box about to be sent containing ‘all Fiends, Spectres, Vampires and other persons of any interest’ from ‘a well-known series of the British Drama’. His response to the suggestion of F. G. Stephens in a letter of 15 April 1877 that he might consider joining the committee of the newly established SPAB is both amusing and sensible: ‘As regards to Top’s Society, really I feel so much of an Ancient Monument myself that to sit on a committee for my own preservation might seem like “pardonable egotism”. Seriously however, I of course sympathise completely with your views, but would feel rather a humbug from my complete inactivity even as to attending meetings. This I wrote to him’. (VII, 376).

The editorial note comments on the foundation of the Society, but makes no reference to a letter from Rossetti to Morris on the subject; no such letter is included here. Kelvin’s edition of Morris’s letters shows that he wrote to Rossetti – ‘My dear Gabriel’ – on 3 April asking him to give his name for the committee and concluding ‘Please answer’, but no answer is recorded there either. We must assume that the letter has disappeared. Rossetti’s humour is evident too when he comments that the Evangelicals holding a conference on the Cowper-Temple’s estate treat him with ‘the utmost toleration ... as an entirely foreign substance’. (VII, 298) He seems to have found in Aglaia Coronio a woman of entertainingly strong opinions; he writes to Jane on 9 October 1879, ‘Aglaia’s attitude when here would have amused you. The number of people she managed to be nasty about was surprising. Her hatred ... for Poynter & scorn of his works, was very marked.’
References to Morris, as is well known, lack the generosity Rossetti showed to most of his acquaintances. He implies that Morris paid too little attention to Jane’s health in taking over Kelmscott House (in which he had originally been interested himself) despite the damp Rossetti attributed to its situation. On 1 August 1879 he remarks to Jane, about a collection being made on behalf of Keats’s surviving sister, in terms that suggest he feels that she has been corrupted by Morris’s political ideas: ‘I know it is vain to try & interest you in such subjects as the sale of Smetham’s pictures, or anything one is able to do for any poor unit like oneself & not for wholesale mankind. I suppose Top never gave one farthing to Keats’s sister, but then he writes long epistles on every public event’. More amusingly, he writes to Jane on 15 August 1879, ‘Ellis I hear has gone to Kelmscott, so I suppose Top is tugging & blaspheming in a boat with him, while he indulges in sonorous British guffaws’.

There are occasional interesting comments about artists, including Guido Reni (‘in Guido & those later men I have always thought the soul to be too visibly in a minor ratio, as compared to the body’, [VII, 11]) and Botticelli (Fairfax Murray brings ‘a most divine Holy Family [photo] in which the Infant Christ is kissing the little St. John – really sweet beyond Words’. [VIII, 331]). Of his own art we learn a certain amount, though a good deal more about his complex relations with his various patrons, and his anxieties over the possible over-exposure of his work, as well as over the fakes that turn up on the market, probably as the result of the dubious activities of Howell, of whom Rossetti remains surprisingly protective. He turns down an invitation to exhibit at the new Grosvenor Gallery in 1877, but indicates to other correspondents later that he is not uninterested in the possibility. His attitude to Ruskin is distinctly unsympathetic, and he finds the Whistler/Ruskin case entertaining rather than deeply significant. He writes to Shields on 26 November 1878, ‘What a lark the Whistler case is! I must say, he shone in the box. The fool of an Attorney General was nowhere. I am glad to see that Ruskin is not to be hauled out’. And on 27 November he writes to Marie Stillman, ‘What a tremendous piece of fun is the Whistler-Ruskin trial! I forget which of the two litigants you hate the most cordially’. But he adds, more humanely, that he thinks Whistler should have had the costs, ‘as I fear the poor fellow must be viewed as ruined’, since the pleasure gardens by the Thames have recently been closed so that ‘a Fire-King is no longer wanted at Cremorne’. He goes further in the conclusion of a letter to Jane on Xmas Eve 1879, ‘I wish I had more news – for instance such tidings as that Ruskin was hanged or something equally welcome. But I haven’t, so its (sic) no use going on’. His sense of himself as an outsider is suggested by his punning remark on the same day to Edmund Bates, who had loaned a copy of Rossetti’s poems to a clergyman: ‘I ... apprehend that there may be things here & there in the book which might rather ruffle the nap of “The Cloth”, though not a line that is vile, by God!’

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The format of the edition, with its introductory documentation for each year in the form of a list of Major Works, a Summary of the year’s letters, and a Chronology, makes it easy to put the events into sequence, and the annotations are usually full and accurate, though occasionally one feels that the main point has not been addressed. For example, when Rossetti tells Scott that his brother William has been ‘kicked off’ *The Academy* ‘in the coolest way ever heard of’ (VIII, 134), the note simply tells us that the editor replaced William with J.W. Comyns Carr on 14 June 1878. Although perfection is not to be expected even in scholarship of this quality, it is surprising to encounter the Society for the Preservation of Ancient Buildings in a note on VII, 297, and Algaia Coronio, in capitals, at VIII, 52. A note on VII, 457 states, not altogether accurately, alas!, that ‘Kelman scott House is now the headquarters of the William Morris Society’.

The appearance and printing of the books is a credit to the publishers; the title is printed separately and gummed attractively into the cover. Each volume contains a well-chosen coloured frontispiece, *La Bella Mano* in Vol.VII and *A Vision of Fiammetta* in Vol.VIII. The black-and-white illustrations are fewer than in Norman Kelvin’s edition of Morris’s letters, consisting of six in the first volume, including two of Rossetti’s Fanny Cornforth Elephants, and four in the eighth, including Brown’s caricature of the portly Rossetti lying back with his feet up on the back of the couch at Cheyne Walk, drawn on a visit there by Brown in August 1879 and described by the editors as ‘Hogarthian’. (VIII, 330) Some three years of Rossetti’s life remain to be covered by this scholarly undertaking, and although these will necessarily contain much sombre material, we nevertheless look forward to them and are grateful to all the scholars contributing to this large-scale and important work.

*Peter Faulkner*


I have been wondering, if I were given the task of ‘turning someone on’ to Ruskin, how I would go about it, and to be honest, I doubt that I would put this book into their hands. There are many books about Ruskin, and I have read quite a few of them. Kevin Jackson, I am sure, has read more, and I do not doubt that he has also read more of Ruskin himself than I have, though I have read a fair bit. His is a good book, I think, but reading it with the responsibility of writing a review has caused me to question the usefulness of any ‘Introduction’ to Ruskin’s work, or at least to recognise that it does not really matter how one is persuaded to read him as long as read him one eventually does. My own starting point, for what it is worth, came in 1973 with no weighty or dignified tome but in a Shire book, *An