

Anette Carruthers and Mary Greenstead, *Good Citizen's Furniture: The Arts and Crafts Collections at Cheltenham* (Lund Humphreys, 1999 [1994]), 168pp., 12 colour and 198 b&w illustrations, £19.95 pbk, ISBN 0 85331 650 3.

Anette Carruthers and Mary Greenstead, eds., *Simplicity or Splendour. Arts and Crafts Living: Objects from the Cheltenham Collections* (Lund Humphreys, 1999), 184 pp., 128 colour and 152 b&w illustrations, £19.95 pbk, ISBN 0 85331 779 8.

It is a pleasure to recommend these two attractive books based on the Arts and Crafts Collections in the Cheltenham Art Gallery and Museum, the first a reprint from 1994, the second new in 1999. No doubt all members who can do so have visited the Cheltenham Collections and have enjoyed what they saw. These two books can serve both as reminders for those who have been to Cheltenham and as encouragement to those who have not yet done so. In addition, as well as being a pleasure to look at, they are both of considerable scholarly interest.

The two books are organised in the same way, with a group of introductory essays followed by a series of catalogue entries; they are well illustrated throughout, with a high proportion of colour in the later book. *Good Citizen's Furniture* takes its title, as we discover from the quotation under the striking photograph of the interior of Sidney and Lucy Barnsley's house in Sapperton, given opposite the title page, from Morris's 'The Lesser Arts of Life' of 1882: 'So I say our furniture should be good citizen's furniture, solid and well made in workmanship'. A fuller version of the quotation begins the text proper, neatly juxtaposed with an illustration for Mayhew's *London Labour and the London Poor* showing a flashy 'garret master' exploiting a poor furniture maker. Morris's position in relation to the Arts and Crafts Movement is fittingly acknowledged in the opening chapter, as also in the first section of the catalogue – the first five objects in the collection come under the heading 'William Morris and his Circle'. But since this is the Cheltenham Collection, it is fitting that the discussion moves on through 'The Arts and Crafts Movement in the Cotswolds' to 'Arts and Crafts at Cheltenham', and that the catalogue takes us through a rich roll-call of furniture makers working in the Cotswolds from Voysey, Ashbee, Baillie Scott, Lethaby and Gimson, to living makers like Oliver Morel, Hugh Birkett, Alan Peters, John Makepiece and Tony McMullen.

*Simplicity and Splendour* takes its title from Walter Crane in *The English Revival in Decorative Art* in 1911: 'The great advantage and charm of the Morrisian method is that it lends itself to either simplicity or splendour', setting

the quotation beneath a photograph of Emery Walker's dining room at 7 Hammersmith Terrace. The opening section of the text gives us an account of the Arts and Crafts domestic interior in the context of the quotation from Crane, followed by 'Defining the Arts and Crafts Movement' (which, in reminding us of the important Emery Walker Library at Cheltenham, shows the Kelmscott Chaucer along with letters from Jane and William Morris) and 'Artistically Attired: Arts and Crafts Dress and Jewellery' (not an area in which we would expect to find Morris prominent, although we are reminded that Elizabeth Siddal, Jane Morris and Georgiana Burne-Jones 'all wore loose-fitting artistic dresses', and were presumably pioneers in doing so). There is a wonderful full-page photograph of a pensive May Morris in a striped dress and bead necklace, holding a guitar, as well as a more familiar one of Jane on a divan in 1865, and William in his working smock (and round hat) in 1876. The colour illustrations are a great pleasure, and take us from de Morgan pottery and tiles, through a range of Ashbee's work for the Guild of Handicraft, and Alfred Powell's for Wedgwood, to Liberty dresses and art pottery from Bretby and the Ruskin Pottery, glassware and a reading lamp by Gordon Russell, to Eric Gill's 1920 limestone carving 'Nativity' and Ashbee's splendid 1900 semi-grand piano – a visual feast. The catalogue takes us from 'William Morris and his Circle' (20 items) through Voysey, Gimson, and the Birmingham School to Eric Sharpe, Michael Cardew, and recent craft commissions: Alan Evans's grille for the entrance to the Art Gallery, Bryan Feddon's commemorative plaque for the opening of the extension in 1989, Chinks Vere Grylls's stained glass window, and the plaque for the Summerfield Galleries by the Cardozo Kindersley Workshop. The emphasis is thus, appropriately, on the continuing vitality of the tradition of workmanship to which Morris contributed so much. Both books are thus thoroughly worthy of their subjects and a credit to Cheltenham.

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