

The following is the Lecture given by Mr. A. J. Wyatt, M.A., Cambridge University Lecturer, to the League of Fever Nurses on November 26th.

THE ART OF WILLIAM MORRIS.

I am going to regard you all as young innocents—you are obviously young and I have no doubt you are innocent—and treat you as if you had never heard of William Morris before.

William Morris is an essential part of the life of to-day. I begin with a challenging statement. He is the biggest man of the nineteenth century.

On October 20th I went to a remote village in Oxfordshire, and in the William Morris village hall, named after him, there were crowded that afternoon about three hundred people—in a tiny village! It was opened by Bernard Shaw, and after the speeches we had a short service read by Canon Lilley, and we all joined in singing "O God, our help in ages past," and Blake's "Jerusalem," and saying the Lord's Prayer.

William Morris did six things, and all those six things are still being perpetuated and carried on. That is why I claim he was the biggest man of the nineteenth century. He was:—

- (1) The greatest printer that ever lived.
- (2) The greatest decorative artist (in the sense in which I have explained). He had that reputation with Rossetti at the age of 20.
- (3) He saved several hundreds, if not thousands, of our Parish Churches from ruthless restoration by founding and running what was humorously called "The Anti-scrape Society."
- (4) Morris, unintentionally, was the founder of the Queen Anne revival in house building.
- (5) He re-created the craftsman, who had been ousted by the manufacturers. (He believed that one of the possible cures for unemployment was to get back to the craftsman and craftswoman).
- (6) Morris was a manufacturer of beauty. Wallpapers and photographs, etc., manufactured by him, *i.e.*, by hand, not steel. He used always water power, not steel. He never used steel for anything.

Between 1850 and 1870 Morris refurnished our houses, and rescued them from Victorian ugliness, *i.e.*, horsehair sofas, etc., which may still be found in third-rate lodging houses in Brixton and Great Yarmouth.

Morris was born in the thirteenth century and strayed by accident into the nineteenth. He always said he was a thirteenth century man. Morris knew that Parish Churches were built, not by monks or wealthy patrons, but by the people, those skilled and excellent workmen.

Morris loved Oxford. He was an Oxford man. He loved Cambridge. He did a great deal of work in Cambridge.

Throughout life architecture was his first and last love. The queen of all the arts and the interpreter of them all. He was a great admirer of Amiens Cathedral, of which he said, "It is so vast and free and noble."

His desire was to be a painter, but he could not master the human figure. But he remained an artist. Perhaps the greatest that ever lived. The pursuit of Art may narrow a man or it may broaden him. It was characteristic of Morris for Art to broaden him.

For a long time Mrs. Morris' portrait by Rossetti was on exhibition in the Tate Gallery. Morris was not a Bohemian. Married in 1859 he required a house to live in and that house must be furnished. But he could find neither a house nor furniture to suit him. He had a house designed for him, in reality carrying out his own ideas, Upton, Bexley Heath, which proved to be the prototype of the Queen Anne revival houses. The first adornment of his home was his wife. You could always pick out Mrs. Morris at once from an assembly of one thousand people.

Morris revived the art of embroidery which replaced the Berlin woolwork.

It was one of Morris' rules that nothing should be done that he did not know how to do himself, and he was his own most skilled workman.

He was reviving textile weaving with the hand loom and found a few weavers still surviving in Spitalfields.

A Few Personal Reminiscences.

It would be affected to say anything about my own association with Morris. Morris had only one way of treating a fellow workman—as an equal.

Morris was taken at different times for a butcher and a sea captain.

He anglicised every possible foreign name.

He had a particular aversion to cats. We were reading aloud one night when the cats of the neighbourhood decided to make a unanimous protest. We rose as one man!!!

It was one of Morris' rules never to soil the face of nature.

He cared for no music that was not all melody and easy to enjoy and understand, *i.e.*, he cared only for old music. Morris' reading was extensive but peculiar. He always knew by intuition whether he wanted to read a book or not. It was the same with the theatre. He was bored by the theatre. At last he was prevailed upon to go and see "Charlie's Aunt." He yawned through two acts and then came out. When he had finished a book, no matter how detailed it might be, he remembered everything of value to him that it contained.

He took his sleep in solid bars. On one occasion, when staying at a friend's house, his host asked him in the morning if he had slept well. His reply was "What do you think I go to bed for?"

He was a man of great physical strength. Once, when wishing to give an example of porters at a railway station, he picked up two armchairs—one under each arm—and the coal-scuttle in his mouth.

His pet name was "Topsy" because he was so curly.

Of all our poets Morris is perhaps the least religious, but he believed heart and soul in conduct. The soul of the man was right and it was a great soul. Pagan he was, if you please to call him so, but he had supreme qualities we might well envy. He never tried to get round anyone. He was literally as transparent as a child.

THE LEAGUE OF SISTER TUTORS.

A Conference was held by the League of Sister Tutors on Saturday, November 3rd, at the Club of the Royal British Nurses' Association.

After a social hour over the teacup, Miss Ballard, Hon. Secretary, took the Chair and expressed the regret of the President, whose ill-health prevented her from attending.

Miss Challenger gave a descriptive comparison of Preliminary Training School syllabuses and methods of administration both in the Municipal and Voluntary Hospitals.

Miss Lotherington also gave, from her experience of building up a new School, the important points to deal with.

Miss Redknapp very ably outlined the Status of Sister Tutors, as it often is and what it really should be—namely, a Sister Tutor should be Matron's Educational Assistant. These short talks led to much interesting discussion and proved very helpful and inspiring.

We were very disappointed that Miss Nelson was unable to deliver her paper, but we hope to have another Conference in the New Year.

Annual Dinner.

The Annual Dinner has been arranged to take place on Saturday, January 26th, at Slater's, 142, Strand, at 7 p.m.

Particulars from Miss Challenger, Sister Tutor, Bethnal Green Hospital, E. H. G. BALLARD, *Hon. Secretary.*

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