

WILLIAM MORRIS
OUR COUNTRY RIGHT OR WRONG:
A CRITICAL EDITION
EDITED BY FLORENCE S BOOS

In his prescient essay *Our Country Right or Wrong* (1880), William Morris stringently criticised 'false patriotism' as the enabler as well as byproduct of 'National Vain-glory, which is both begotten of ignorance and begets it . . . : its great office is for ever to cry out for war without knowing what war means.'

In her introduction, Florence S Boos explores the personal and political antecedents of Morris' lifelong opposition to British militarism, capitalism and the imperialist adventures which sustained them.

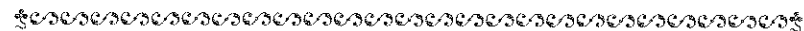
Florence S Boos edited *William Morris's Socialist Diary* for *History Workshop* (later reprinted by Journeyman Press) and was the co-editor with Carole Silver of *Socialism and the Literary Imagination*, a collection of essays on Morris's Socialist writings.

WILLIAM MORRIS OUR COUNTRY RIGHT OR WRONG

WMS

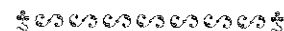
WILLIAM MORRIS
OUR COUNTRY
RIGHT OR WRONG

A CRITICAL EDITION



EDITED BY

FLORENCE S BOOS





WILLIAM MORRIS
OUR COUNTRY RIGHT OR WRONG
A CRITICAL EDITION

EDITED BY
Florence S Boos

WILLIAM MORRIS SOCIETY

2008

Published by the William Morris Society 2008
Kelmscott House, Upper Mall, Hammersmith, London W6 9TA

ISBN 978-0-903283-26-7

Copyright © by Florence S Boos 2005

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a mechanical retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior permission of the author through the publisher.

Printed by Russell Press, Nottingham.

CONTENTS

Illustrations, 6

Acknowledgements, 7

Dystopian Violence: William Morris and the Nineteenth-Century Peace Movement by Florence S Boos, 9

Introduction to the Text by Florence S Boos, 49

Our Country Right or Wrong by William Morris, 53

ILLUSTRATIONS

1. Frontispiece, *Punch, or the London Charivari*. 5 August 1876, ii
2. The arrival of Botev's Cheta on Bulgarian Soil. From a painting by Professor Dimiter Gudzhenov, 10
3. The suppression of the April Rising in Batak, Bulgaria, 21
4. Marshal Patrice MacMahon, 61
5. Jules Grévy, 62
6. The *Mosel*, blown up by dynamite in December 1875, 66
7. William King Thomas, the 'Bremen Bomber,' placed dynamite on the steamship *Mosel*, killing 81 people and wounding about 200 in the resulting explosion, 67
8. Cetewayo, valiant leader of the Zulu against British troops, 78
9. The British camp after the battle of Insandlwana, in which British troops armed with guns were routed by Zulu tribesmen with spears defending their land, 1879, 80
10. Cetewayo in captivity, 81
11. British troops fight the Afghans in the Second Anglo-Afghan War, fought to establish British dominance in the region, 82
12. Afghans firing at British invaders at Sangar, January 1880, 83

The last page of Morris's manuscript is reproduced on the inside covers.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I AM GRATEFUL to William Boos for his contributions to the essay's introduction, to Peter Wright for his expert comments on its historical notes, and to Donna Parsons and Sean de Vega for their help with initial transcription and research. I also owe thanks to the William Morris Society of Great Britain for their willingness to undertake to publish this booklet, David Gorman for its design and layout, David Latham for his kind reception of an earlier version of the introduction and edition for the *Journal of Pre-Raphaelite Studies*, and his permission to republish them in their present form.

Florence S. Boos
Iowa City, Iowa
October 2007

DYSTOPIAN VIOLENCE

WILLIAM MORRIS AND THE
NINETEENTH-CENTURY PEACE MOVEMENT

Florence S. Boos

IN THIS ESSAY I will argue that William Morris's critiques of capitalism flowed from a prior rejection of its imperialist wars; that his analyses of social and economic causes of armed conflicts drew strength from a broad tradition of nineteenth-century peace movements; and finally, that his views gradually converged toward pacifism as he gained in wariness and political sophistication.

Near-War in the Balkans and 'The Eastern Question'

The 'Eastern Question' dealt with areas in the Ottoman empire which now form parts of Romania, Bulgaria, Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro, Albania, Moldova, Macedonia, and Greece.¹ Rebellions against Turkish rule in Bosnia, Serbia, Montenegro, and Bulgaria in 1875 and 1876 aroused dissident British sympathies with European liberation movements which echoed Byron's fatal engagement in



The arrival of Botev's Cheta on Bulgarian Soil. From a painting by Professor Dimiter Gudzenov (Khristo Khristov, *A Short History of Bulgaria*, 1963).

the Greek war of independence (1821–1830), and British Christians also had their own reasons for solidarity with orthodox brethren denied the practice of their religion under the Turks.² During the Bulgarian revolt of 1876, Turkish troops called Bashi-Bazouks raped and kidnapped several hundred women and massacred thousands of Bulgarian Christians, and extensive newspaper-coverage of these atrocities aroused what A.J.P. Taylor later called 'the greatest storm over foreign policy in [British] history' (Duggan 133; Stojanovic 55–56).

Two books on the subject quickly appeared: J.A. MacGahan's impassioned eyewitness account of *The Turkish Atrocities in Bulgaria* (1876), reprinted from his dispatches to the

London *Daily News*;³ and W.E. Gladstone's *Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East* (1876), in which Gladstone denounced British 'moral complicity with the basest and blackest outrages upon record within the present century, if not within the memory of man' (61–62).

Gladstone wrote in opposition to the policies of Disraeli's Conservative government, which had assumed power in 1874. For several decades, however, British governments had opposed any Russian activity in a region they sought to control, and more recently they sought to secure access to the Suez Canal (opened in 1869), as well as overland routes to Britain's preeminent colony in India.⁴ When with Austrian contrivance the Russians successfully seized control of Bulgaria and much of Macedonia in 1877, Disraeli saw this newly-acquired outlet to the Aegean as a threat to British naval supremacy, and made two secret agreements: with the Austrians to block formation of any Balkan state which threatened Austrian interests; and with the Turks to permit British occupation of Cyprus, in return for British guarantees to respect Turkey's northeastern borders.

In effect, these 'successful' manoeuvres furthered imperial ('Crown') interests on terms that effected few improvements in the political situation of oppressed Balkan peoples, and the Workman's Peace Association (about which more below) correctly denounced the deals as a 'peace of military despots' that left a 'legacy of disappointment and ill will' against England on the part of 'every free or ... enslaved Christian in the South East of Europe' (Laity 77). When subsequent English governments confined themselves to more peripheral imperial conflicts, Morris turned his attention in the last eighteen years

of his life to flagrant inequities at home. But his initiation into political activism – like that of many of his late-twentieth and twenty-first-century successors – derived from an early engagement in a ‘liberationist’ anti-war movement, which prompted insights he later clarified and refracted through the lenses of anarchist and Marxist critiques of imperial domination.

Religious and Socialist Anti-War Traditions

Opposition to war has flowed through every major religious tradition, but its most influential nineteenth-century British tributary was to be found in the Society of Friends. The Friends’ most cogent pacifist theorist may have been Jonathan Dymond, a little-remembered linen-draper from Devonshire who died at the age of 31. In *An Inquiry into the Accordancy of War with the Principles of Christianity...* (1823) and *Essays on the Principles of Morality* (1829), Dymond argued that

national irritability is at once a cause of war, and an effect.... In this state of irritability, a nation is continually alive to occasions of offence – and when we seek for offences, we readily find them.... At length we begin to fight, not because we are aggrieved, but because we are angry. (*Inquiry* 4–6)

Rulers or ministers often ‘discover ... pretext[s] for ... war ... in order to divert the indignation of the public from [themselves] to their new-made enemies’ (11), and ‘during a war of ten years, there will be many whose income depends on its continuance.... The more there are who profit by it, the more

numerous will be its supporters’ (8).

Rulers, ministers, and schoolmasters preach that systematic murder for reasons of state is a sacred duty, but they aim such phrases at very young men exactly because these have yet to develop certain basic forms of political insight:

If the soldier speculated on his country’s good, he often cannot tell how it is he is affected by the quarrel. (16)

Does not everyone know that with whatever motives of defence one party may have begun the contest, both, in turn, become aggressors? In the fury of slaughter, soldiers do not attend, they cannot attend, to questions of aggression.... Moralists may talk of distinctions, but soldiers will make none; and none can be made. (77)

But sanctimonious prayers for victory merit a special place of dishonour in the liturgy of officially sanctioned hypocrisy: ‘Surely it were enough that we slaughter one another alone in our pigmy quarrels, without soliciting the Father of the universe to be concerned in them; surely it were enough that each reviles the other with the iniquity of his cause without each assuring Heaven that he only is in the right’ (109).

Fifty years after Dymond’s death, the peace movement he worked to encourage included the British Peace Society, the Workman’s Peace Association, the Rationalist Peace Association, and the International Peace Association, and ‘trimmed’ variants of his views influenced legislators such as John and Jacob Bright and Richard Cobden to advocate moderation and the use of diplomacy in international quarrels. During the same period, nineteenth-century anarchists and socialists developed roughly parallel secular critiques of military vio-

lence and its geopolitical uses, and some construed the 'nation state' itself as a form of protection racket designed to enforce oligarchical rule.

The most prominent anarchist unequivocally opposed to violence in all forms was probably Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (1809–1865), a survivor of the French revolutionary uprising of 1848 and mutualist pacifist who opposed killing even as an instrument of (alleged) workers' revolutions. He also considered centralized power *intrinsically* authoritarian, anticipated Morris's view that a true revolution would be economic and social rather than political, and argued that only egalitarian, worker-established social institutions such as credit banks would respond without manipulation to genuine human needs.

Mikhail Bakunin (1814–1865), by contrast, another anarchist opponent of the nation-state and inherited property, considered truly 'revolutionary' those groups – such as peasants and bandits – whom he considered most susceptible to unfocussed outbursts of violent expression (see Paul Thomas 249–340). Bakunin further argued that armed violence was the only effective purgation for the intolerable repression and injustice of contemporary society and claimed that 'the passion to destroy is a creative passion' (Sonn 28).

Peter Kropotkin (1842–1921), who joined Morris in Hammersmith in 1886, subscribed initially to the orthodox socialist view that concerted violence – as opposed to individual acts of terrorism – was an inevitable concomitant of efforts to overthrow repressive tyranny of the sort he had experienced in Russia. In such later works as *Fields, Factories and Workshops* (1899) and *Mutual Aid* (1902), however, he drew on his experi-

ence as a scientist as well as political dissident to argue that human society's deepest origins were inherently cooperative, and in 1916 he argued, as Morris had done in chapter XI of *News from Nowhere*, that 'the opening of new markets, the forcing of products, good and bad, upon the foreigner, is the principle underlying all the politics of the present day throughout our continent, and the real cause of the wars of the nineteenth century.'⁷ He left it to his reader to make the obvious observation that 'opening of new markets' and 'forcing of goods upon the foreigner' were inherently uncollective and uncooperative activities.

The 'scientific' socialist Karl Marx, by contrast, was a devout believer in what might be called 'revolutionary reasons of state.'⁸ In an 1879 conversation with the British Liberal politician Grant Duff, he expressed hopes for a collapse of Tsarism and 'the existing military system' in Germany, but rejected Duff's suggestion that European rulers might reduce their spending on armaments and lighten thereby the economic burden of their people. 'All sorts of fears and jealousies' made this impossible; instead, he remarked presciently, 'the burden will grow worse and worse as science advances, for the improvements in the art of destruction will keep pace with its advance and every year more and more will have to be devoted to costly engines of war.'⁹

Such apprehensions did not restrain Marx's advocacy of armed Turkish and British resistance to Russian expansion in the 1870s. In marked contrast to Morris, and unmoved by the atrocities of Turkish mercenaries and their subjects' long-frustrated desires for ethnic independence and autonomy, he followed the Russo-Turkish War of 1877 with great sympathy for

the Turks, and Jenny Marx reported that he was 'highly elated over the strong and noble performance of the sons of Mahomet' (McLellan 438–39). He also wrote Engels that 'the defeat of the Russians in European Turkey will lead directly to revolution in Russia,' and attacked Gladstone's non-interventionist policy in unsigned pieces in 'the fashionable London press' (McLellan 444).

*The Nineteenth-Century Peace Movement
and Working-Class Reform*

Few twentieth-century peace movements have been closely associated with working-class agitation, but these were closely intertwined in the period of Morris's introduction to political activity. According to Paul Laity, hopes that war might be eventually abolished remained more influential in Britain than on the Continent (1), and various peace movements held together broad coalitions of 'pacifists,' who opposed war on any grounds, and 'pacific-ists' (whom I will henceforth call 'anti-bellucists'), who rejected most justifications for war, but not all.¹⁰

In day-to-day political activity these differences often faded into the background, for both pacifists and anti-bellucists rejected every 'small' war Britain entered during the nineteenth century, and most of the latter would acknowledge that all war-makers claim *their* aggressions are instances of 'legitimate defence.' Defenders of both positions could also make common cause (then as now) on the reprehensibility of resorts to jingoism, the role of richly vested arms-manufacturing and

extractive commercial interests, and the urgent need for new forms of international mediation and social justice (Laity 8, 9).

This loose and heterogeneous coalition of pacifists, liberals, radicals and socialists also found partial allies in the aforementioned M.P.s who could usually be relied upon to vote for arbitration and negotiation rather than military aggression as geopolitical means for the settlement of disputes (Laity 2). In Richard Cobden's words, for example, 'The middle and industrious classes of England can have no interest apart from the preservation of peace. The honours, the fame, the emoluments of war belong not to them; the battle plain is the harvest field of the aristocracy, watered with the blood of the people' (quoted in Caedel 40).

Some of these partial allies, among them Cobden and his 'Cobdenites,'¹¹ advocated simple non-involvement in foreign conflicts, but others demanded more aggressive forms of economic and military intervention in aid of oppressed peoples, after the fashion of the movement's Gladstonian Liberal wing in the 1860s and 1870s (as did many assorted centre-left European intellectuals more recently in the Bosnian conflict of the 1990s).¹²

Morris initially wavered between these poles with many of his fellows before and since, but gradually migrated toward the view that drew on another, this time very British, tradition pioneered by the 'moral-force' Chartists in the 1840s – the period, by the way, in which the term 'peace movement' first arose.¹³ William Lovett had put their case in his 1844 *Address to the Working Classes of France on the Subject of War*: 'You, the working millions, are mainly selected to be the tools and

instruments of warfare.... We address you, the working classes, because we believe that the interests of our class are identified throughout the world' (quoted in Laity 15). Morris and many socialists used strikingly similar language thirty-odd years later.

In 1864, the inaugural address of the 'First International' – the International Working Men's Association – vigorously denounced war's effects on working people in similar terms: 'How are they to fulfil that great mission [of emancipation] with a foreign policy in pursuit of criminal designs, playing upon national prejudices, and squandering in piratical wars the people's blood and treasure?' (quoted in Laity 27).

Three years later, a degree of common membership still existed between the International Working Men's Association and outliers of the Liberal Party such as the Reform League. The Council of this League had issued a call 'to the Peoples of Europe' in 1867 which called for arbitration in power-struggles such as the looming conflict between France and Germany, and characterized war-making as a 'mad and wicked game played by emperors and kings with the lives and wealth of the people.... If you refuse to furnish the men and the means – if you refuse to sacrifice yourselves and immolate others – the bloody game will cease' (quoted in Laity 29). The Geneva-based International League of Peace and Freedom (*Ligue internationale de la paix et de la liberté*) was also founded in 1867, and its British adherents included Karl Blind (friend of Mazzini and father of the poet Mathilde Blind) and the former Chartist leader Ernest Jones, as well as the poet Algernon Swinburne.

When France declared war on Prussia in 1870, radical arti-

sans organized to oppose British intervention against France, and a newly founded 'Workmen's Peace Committee' (later 'Workmen's Peace Association'), headed by Randal Cremer, proclaimed that 'war, that great curse and scourge of mankind, is especially our deadliest foe, for we are ever its most numerous victims, whether as regards the interruption of employment from national distress, or our enrollment in military service.'¹⁴

This Association claimed 300 'honorary agents' in towns throughout Britain in 1876, and more than a thousand in 1880, with links to more than 600 radical and working-men's clubs in Britain and the Continent.¹⁵ When Morris encountered the Association in the late 1870s, it was thus one of the largest working-class political organizations of its time,¹⁶ and the breadth of such collective opposition gave substance to later arguments that worker-organized protests persuaded the Disraeli government to draw back from intervention in the Balkan war (Taylor 27, 74).

In the months before Disraeli signed his secret agreements with Austria and Turkey, the Workmen's Peace Association, the Peace Society, the Eastern Question Association (for which Morris served as treasurer), the Workmen's Neutrality Committee, and the Labour Representation League (which included some remnants of the First International) all worked more or less in concert to counter their Conservative adversaries, as well as street toughs and other 'jingoes,' a term G.J. Holyoake coined in response to concerted efforts to break up the movement's meetings. (In 1877 *The Arbitrator*, the magazine of the Peace Society, claimed that pro-war agents paid musicians to sing 'We don't want to fight, but by Jingo if we do' nightly in

London music halls [Laity 71]).¹⁷ Joseph Arch, the head of the National Agricultural Labourers' Union, warned Disraeli on behalf of his 60,000 members that 'he must not count on taking the agricultural labourers to be shot at for thirteen pence a day. They were determined that until they had obtained the franchise they would take no part in the wars of England' (Laity 70).

Morris at this point was also one of many in middle-class reformist circles who shared or sympathized with such views, among them (according to a letter he wrote to the E.Q.A. chairman A.J. Mundella) William Allingham, F.S. Ellis, W.B. Scott, Henry Wallis, Philip Webb, C.J. Faulkner, and W.T. Stead. According to E.P. Thompson, Anthony Trollope, Robert Browning, D.G. Rossetti, Stopford Brooke, Edward Burne-Jones, John Ruskin, and even Thomas Carlyle also showed some interest in or support for the movement (207). By February of 1877, the Workmen's Peace Association had organized fifty new district committees, and later that year circulated 50,000 copies of an anti-war leaflet, *Shall We Go To War?*

All these loosely confederated groups organized rallies during Disraeli's eighteen months of Balkan brinkmanship. Morris, for example, participated in an inaugural gathering of the Eastern Question Association on 8 December 1876 which the *Herald of Peace* hyperbolically characterized as 'the grandest public meeting of modern times' (quoted in Laity 67). He made his first impromptu public speech at an E.Q.A. meeting in Lambeth eleven days later, and by January 1878 the *London Times* could report that he 'spoke in strong terms [before a Workmen's Neutrality Demonstration] against the action of



The suppression of the 1875 April Rising in Batak, Bulgaria

the 'war-at-any-price-party.'¹⁸

In a letter to his wife, Morris described this event, at which thousands sang Morris's 'Wake, London Lads,' which he had set for the occasion to the tune of 'The Hardy Norseman's Home of Yore': 'It went down very well and they sang it well together: they struck up while we were just ready to come onto the platform and you may imagine that I felt rather excited when I heard them begin to tune up: they stopped at the end of each verse and cheered lustily: we came onto the platform just about the middle of it' (*Letters* 1:435). A few lines of this song – Morris's first political hymn – bear quotation. Its expressions were rather florid but a good deal more nuanced than (say) the repetitious '60s' chant of 'one/two/three/four/ We don't want your [in Morris's case, Turkish] War':

From out the dusk, from out the dark,
 Of old our fathers came,
 Till lovely freedom's glimmering spark
 Broke forth a glorious flame:

And shall we now praise freedom's dearth
 And rob the years to come,
 And quench upon a brother's hearth
 The fires we lit at home?

O, happy England, if thine hand
 Should forge anew the chain,
 The fetters of a tortured land,
 How were thy glory vain! (*Letters* 1:436-37)

Morris tried unsuccessfully to organize another mass rally the following month in the Agricultural Hall, London's largest building, but Disraeli signed the secret treaties outlined above shortly thereafter.

E.P. Thompson has observed that Morris's first experiences with the hopes and disappointments of political activism brought him into contact with working-class leaders such as Henry Broadhurst and George Howell of the Labour Representation League, and inspired him with a sense of what organized working-class protest might accomplish (225). What I wish to underscore in what follows is the extent to which Morris also strove for the rest of his life to deepen and internalize the ideals of the largest British anti-war movement of his century. He was not a pacifist in the most active years of

his political life, but his fundamental opposition to militarism remained a ground-motive in all his mature political work.

Morris and the Threat of War in the Balkans

Morris took his first tentative steps towards global activism in a letter to the *Daily News* of 24 October 1876, reprinted by May Morris under the title 'England and the Turks' (*Artist, Writer, Socialist* 2: 483-87). In this letter, written a month after the appearance of Gladstone's *Bulgarian Horrors* and five months before the Russian/Austrian invasion of Turkey, he tried to analyse the reasons of state which might lie behind the British government's abandonment of its support for Balkan autonomy¹⁹:

I cannot help noting that a rumour is about in the air that England is going to war; and from the depths of my astonishment I ask, On behalf of whom? Against whom? And for what end? Some three weeks ago, if such a rumour had arisen, my questions would, I imagine, have been answered this way: 'The English nation has been roused to a sense of justice ... by a story of horrors that no man has been able to gainsay....' The end and aim of the war is to force the Turkish Government (who to speak the downright truth, are a gang of thieves and murderers) to give these subject peoples, who are quite orderly and industrious, some chance for existence ... but, alas, though I have not slept, I have awakened. (483-84)

I appeal to all men of sense and feeling of all parties, and bid them think what war means, and to think if only perhaps

this were an unjust war! What then, could come of it but shame in defeat and shame in victory. (486)

He also appealed for the first time in print to English working-people and members of his class to protest that 'we have refused to help these poor people, that we have refused to take orders that the like desolation shall not happen again, and have forced the Russians to do our share and their own of the business – for which we propose to go to war with them!' (487). The humanitarian motives of Morris's earliest statement of public opposition were clear, as were his transitory hopes – also shared by many of his spiritual descendants – that something better could be extracted from the political institutions of his country.

Seven months later, in May of 1877, his appeal 'To the Working-men of England' discerned power and money behind demands for regional domination:

Who are they that are leading us into war? ... Greedy gamblers on the Stock Exchange, idle officers of the army and navy (poor fellows!), worn-out mockers of the Clubs, desperate purveyors of exciting news for the comfortable breakfast-tables of those who have nothing to lose by war... O Shame and double Shame, if we march under such leadership as this in an unjust war against a people who are *not* our enemies, against Europe, against freedom, against nature, against the hope of the world. (Henderson, *Letters*, 388)

Three years later, in 1880, Morris wrote out careful notes for a talk on 'Our Country Right or Wrong,' which May Morris later excerpted in *Artist, Writer, Socialist* (2:52–62), described

only as a lecture on 'War and Peace.' We do not know his intended audience, but the draft, entitled 'Our Country Right or Wrong,' remains in the British Library as Add. MS. 45,334, and was one of two essays in that collection which had not yet been published in full.²⁰ Since I consider the entire essay an important document, I have prepared an annotated edition of it below.

Hiram Johnson, an American senator, was the person who remarked before his country's entry into the 'Great War' that 'the first casualty when war comes is truth' – an aperçu which each generation has rediscovered in its own way. Here was Morris's at the age of 44:

I should say then that when stripped of its borrowed gear, false patriotism becomes National Vain-glory, which is both begotten of ignorance and begets it: a legacy of the injustice of past times, it breeds injustice in us in the present that we may be unjustly dealt with in the future: ... it scolds at wise men and honest men for what it calls a policy of isolation, while itself it would have nothing to do with foreign nations except for their ruin and ours: its great office is for ever to cry out for war without knowing what war means: all other nations, it deems[,] pay the price of war; but we never do, and never can pay it, and never shall. ('Our Country,' 53–54)

In another passage, he queried forms of mystification that lie behind standard assimilations of *natio* (birth-place) to nation-state:

For after all[,] what is our country? Is it that part of Earth's surface that geographers call the British islands, or the knot of

officials that diplomatists call England? or is it not rather the great mass of the lives of all the men[,] women and children of our race [i.e., kind]; their hopes and fears and aspirations that we perforce share, their joys and sorrows that we know more of than of any other people's joys & sorrows? (55-56)

[Our country] is a familiar thing, and not some mysterious unapproachable altar of an unseen God: and so, meseems, we are as much bound to rebuke it when it is wrong, as to cheer it when it is right, since we ourselves, whether we will or no, must share its shame as well as its glory. (56)

Surely, therefore, real patriotism bids us be keen-eyed to ... resist both in ourselves and in others blind and ignorant impulses that drive men on to grasp at phantoms of gain and glory created long ago by follies dead or half-dead. (57)

No military exercise of great power, moreover, fails to violate egalitarian principles:

[T]here is always a danger to great nations of some of their best qualities becoming over-masterful, and urging them first to make slaves of other nations & then of themselves: ... if any tendencies to our natural force becoming maleficent are not checked by ourselves, they will burst out full-blown some day, and will have to be smothered by men not of our ... nation; and what widespread ruin will come with that we may perhaps imagine. (56-57)

I can't get out of my head thoughts of how I should like it

myself if real war were here in the land.... How should I like it: I, a man of peace, a craftsman, with a wife and children to take care of.... I can't help thinking what confusion actual war present in the land, in London and its suburbs[,] would make of all this! What a face I should pull for instance when I came back to my house after it had been occupied by our own troops for a morning! What words I should use as I hunted for my MSS. and drawings among the ruins of my furniture: how I should cry out at having to begin life over again at 46 because of the stupid whim of a half-educated subaltern. And yet such a thing as this would be such a trifle amidst the great tragedy, that no one could so much as say, 'I'm sorry for you.' (63-64)

He also recalled the *exemplum* of a man who tried to place a bomb in the hold of a ship in Bremen:

[H]e thought he should make money of it, and did not think of anything else ... [but] was carried to the hospital, and tended there amidst his victims, and when he heard their groans as he was lying amidst their misery, a dreadful lurid light broke in upon him; his own anguish and despair taught him what he had done, what results he had schemed for in his ignorance, and he tore his wounds open, and died in Judas-like remorse. (65-66)

If one replaces 'make money' with 'gain paradise,' 'achieve martyrdom,' 'create accomplished facts' or 'create the revolution,' then other recognizable forms of 'the very type of the blind folly which besets mankind' (66) quickly appear.

Morris included concessions in his essay to the conceptual possibility of 'just war[s],' but followed them with 'anti-belli-

cist' arguments that such actions in self-defence must somehow be restrained to 'leav[e] no revenge behind to fall upon us at some indefinite time' (68), and added that almost all claims to such 'justice' are in greater or lesser part fabrications, by which we have 'over and over again ... allowed ourselves to be satisfied, to be gulled, by wretched travesties of justice' (71).

In other passages which reflected Morris's temperamental meliorism, as well as his mature ideal of political 'fellowship,' he argued that the essential reason warmakers find such 'travesties' (disguises, deceits) indispensable is that 'people at large do instinctively feel that a war in which one side at all events cannot appeal to the highest principles of truth and justice, is a scandal to the world, a ruinous blow to the hopes of humanity' (71). Unfortunately, our past and his future have also offered a long series of brutal counter-examples to his hope that 'in [the] future it will be very difficult for any class or set of men in the country to jockey us either into a big, unjust disastrous war, or a little unjust disgraceful war' (71). (Perhaps Tolkienian fascinations with great cataclysmic struggles of 'good' against 'evil' are what actually sustain the seductive flashes of his treacherously allegorical 'ring?')

Reflections on Tennysonian hopes to 'rise on stepping stones / Of our dead selves to higher things' also led Morris to evoke for the first time his ever-receding ideal of critical solidarity, social justice, and mutual respect:

I think of a country where every man has work enough to do, and no one has too much ... you may be sure he would take good care to have his due share in the government of his country and would know all about its dealings with other coun-

tries: justice to himself & all others would be no mere name to him, but the rule of all his actions, the passionate desire of his life.... I say let us take the trouble – any trouble to live like free men.' (88–89)

Struggling to articulate nascent socialist ideals in conventional liberal terms ('reform,' 'free men,' 'the vote'), Morris also embraced in this essay most of the arguments war-resisters have always adduced against blatant militarism and the casuistry of arguments that one cannot 'make omelets' without 'breaking eggs.' Despite his ritual descriptions of altruistic conflict in *The Pilgrims of Hope* and the late prose romances, these ideals guided his concrete political responses throughout the rest of his life.

Five years later, for example, Morris focused on greed for profits as a driving force for otherwise inexplicable forms of military oppression ('No Blood for Oil'): 'For here I will say once for all that besides the war between the capitalists of our community there is also a constant war going on between country and country which sometimes takes the shot and gunpowder form: for please to understand that all wars now waged have at bottom a commercial cause' (Le Mire, 'Depression of Trade' 126).

Not all wars are actuated by greed, perhaps, but it never seems far from the minds of the eventual victors. A system in which no one lives entirely on the labour of others

is the only condition of things under which we can have peace:... therefore ... under the Commercial system constant war is necessary to keep the machine going: a war in which

even quakers are compelled to take a part. But in a condition of things where all produce as all consume, peace is possible ... and only in a condition of peace can we make the most of the gifts of nature, instead of wasting them as we do now. ('Depression of Trade' 133)

At a meeting in 1885, he and Charles Mowbray acted for the Socialist League to move and second that 'the invasion of the Soudan has been prompted solely by the desire to exploit the country in the interests of the capitalists and stock-jobbers ... such wars will always take place until they (the workers) unite throughout the civilized world, and take their own affairs into their own hands.' (Morris believed the motion was rejected because of the overt hostility of Charles Bradlaugh, who chaired the meeting.) He also heaped mordant scorn in his *Commonweal* essays of the 1880s on Gladstone's 'liberal' variant of imperial domination, and proposed a sort of Ninevan or Ozymandian monument to its attainments in an 1886 note on the Colonial Exhibition:

We might begin at the entrance with two pyramids, *a la Timour*, of the skulls of Zulus, Arabs, Burmese, New Zealanders, etc., etc. slain in wicked resistance [sic] to the benevolence of British commerce [and] the glory of the British arms gained in various successful battles against barbarians and savages, the same enclosed in the right eye of a louse.²¹

In a moment of remarkable prescience, Morris even anticipated in 1887 the abandonment of internationalist principles by socialist deputies at the beginning of the First World War: 'It is absolutely necessary ... for Socialists to watch the situa-

tion carefully and closely so as to avoid any possibility of their being dragged into a false position by the recrudescence of jingoism which is quite certain to be one result of even the advancing shadow of a European war' (*Political Writings* 220). A slightly different bit of Swiftian satire, finally, appeared in his response to credible reports of Turkish atrocities in Crete and Armenia: 'We shall be less likely to question the substantial truth of these reports when we remember English "atrocities" in Ireland, India, Jamaica, Egypt, and other places where that blameless, religious, and practical race has been dominant' (*Journalism* 617).

Several years later, saddened and repelled at length by certain forms of 'propaganda of the deed,' Morris reluctantly withdrew his editorial and financial support for *Commonweal* in 1890, and resigned from the national Socialist League in 1891. He explained this decision in *The Hammersmith Socialist Record* for May 1892:

There is no royal road to revolution or the change in the basis of society. To make the workers conscious of the disabilities which beset them; to make them conscious of the dormant power in them for the removal of those disabilities... here ... is the work of patience, but nothing can take the place of it... The doing of it speedily and widely is the real safeguard against acts of violence, which even when done by fanatics and not by self-seekers are still acts of violence, and therefore degrading to humanity, *as all war is*.²¹ (*AWS* 2: 326)

I wish to emphasize that the italics at the end of this passage are Morris's. He could readily have distinguished once again between revolutionary and other wars, but did not.

Even more unequivocal were his remarks in an unpublished lecture on Communism drafted in 1893:

The change effected by peaceable means would be done more completely and with less chance, indeed with no chance of counter-revolution.... In short I do not believe in the possible success of revolt until the Socialist party has grown so powerful in numbers that it can gain its end by peaceful means, and that therefore what is called violence will never be needed...²² As to the attempt of a small minority to terrify a vast majority into accepting something which they do not understand, by spasmodic acts of violence, mostly involving the death or mutilation of non-combatants, I can call that nothing else than sheer madness. And here I will say once for all, what I have often wanted to say of late, to wit, that the idea of taking any human life for any reason whatsoever is horrible and abhorrent to me. (*AWS* 2:351)

He was not, however, so naive as to believe that 'non-violence' always 'works,' and these remarks have often been interpreted as comments about revolutionary methodology rather than expressions of a broader ethical commitment, but they remain his last recorded statements on the subject, and I interpret them to mean that he believed that pacific if not pacifist struggles for 'Change' are deeply categorical imperatives. The aim of socialism is to make gun-barrels blossom – as the papal staff had bloomed in 'The Hill of Venus' – and its means must justify that overriding end.

Violence in Morris's Literary Writings

The obvious question these convictions pose for those who are familiar with Morris's literary work is one of consistency. Many of his writings – most conspicuously among them *Sigurd the Volsung* – focus on elaborately stylized forms of allegorical combat, often displaced into an alternative present, virtual future, or quasi-historical past, as emblems of personal courage and self-sacrifice. In his early writings he drew heavily for such representations on the chivalric romances of Malory and De la Motte Fouqué, but informed them with sombre, almost 'gothic' qualities (to borrow a term from Isobel Armstrong) which undermine the masks of 'valour' and 'honour' they exploit.

The protagonist of the *Defence of Guenevere's* longest poem, for example, 'Sir Peter Harpdon's End,' dies gallantly rather than 'meanly,' although he knows the cause of the English in northern France is lost. In the larger work as a whole, war is also an ineluctable scourge which extinguishes youthful idealism ('Concerning Geoffray Teste Noire,' 'In Prison'), and inflicts suffering on innocent and guilty alike ('The Haystack in the Floods,' 'Golden Wings'). The sources for *The Earthly Paradise's* twenty-four classical and medieval tales might have also provided ideal sites for military miniatures along the lines of the *Iliad* or *Aeneid*, but almost all their protagonists ('The Proud King,' Michael in 'The Man Born to Be King,' Pygmalion, Admetus, John in 'The Land East of the Sun,' Bharam, Psyche, Rhodope, Aslaug, and Walter in 'The Hill of Venus' among them) are a peaceful and contemplative lot, whatever ritual arms they carry.

Even Perseus' outwitting of Medusa in 'The Doom of King Acrisius' is portrayed as a straightforward act of liberation, and the legendary warrior Ogier le Danois/Holger Dansker spends most of his time brooding over the conflicts and reveries of his past lives and his encounters with Morgan le Fay. Kiartan and Bodli's climactic encounter in 'The Lovers of Gudrun' is similarly muted and ambivalent compared to its Old Norse prototype, and when Bellerophon, legendary slayer of the Chimera, encounters the body of a soldier the 'monster' has overcome, he quietly urges his companions to

Be not ashamed ... but look around,
 And thou shalt see thy fear lie on the ground,
 No more divine or dreadful...
 Belike it was of fear they died,
 Yet wish them not alive again, for they
 Had found death fearful on another day.
 (2655-57, 2690-92)

In brief, the most salient fact about *The Earthly Paradise's* armed conflicts seems Morris's transformation of them into allegories of personal resignation or transcendence, after the fashion of Ruskin in 'The Lance of Pallas' (*Modern Painters* v) or Swinburne in the meditative lyric 'The Lake of Gaube.'

The most obvious counterexamples to my 'Ferdinand-the-Bull' interpretation of Morrisian warriors are not to be found in *The Life and Death of Jason*, but in *Sigurd the Volsung's* Ring cycle and 'Story of our North' (CW 7:286), whose protagonists' intricately orchestrated betrayals, entrapments, and assignations take on lurid lives of their own. Book IV's account of the sword-swinging butchery of the Niblungs and Atli's

men, for example, extends over twenty pages, in which Hogni is cut to pieces by a band of assassins, and his brother Gunnar sings that he has 'fought and was glad in the morning, and ... [sang] in the night and the end:'

So let him stand forth, the Accuser, and do on the earth-shoon
 to wend....
 I crave and I weary, Allfather, and long and dark is the road;

 And the feet of the mighty are weakened, and the back is bent
 with the load.

His Norse imperialist murderer Atli then proclaims

the gain of mine and me:
 For this day the Eastland people such great dominion win,
 That a world to their will new-fashioned 'neath their glory
 shall begin.

(iv. 'The Ending of Gudrun')

Despite the work's intermittent rhetoric of social justice, there is something obsessive about its Old-Norse-set-pieces of butchery and conflagration – a last tribute, perhaps, to the resignation and 'stoicism' Morris found in the sagas. The work also throbs with pained empathy for the cycle's maddened warriors – even criminals such as Gunnar, who doggedly confront obstacles greater than themselves – and this response suggests that these elegiac cartoons of muscular paganism (as opposed to 'muscular christianity') embodied martial counterparts of the loyalty, persistence, and courage Morris wished to emulate.

It may even be that the work's conflagrations bore some analogy with paroxysmic notions of revolution *à la Bakounine*, as some commentators have suggested. But most of *Sigurd's* warrior-monologuists lacked utterly Morris's common sense, much less his desire (or his ability) to 'see things bigly and kindly.' Political interpretations of the cycle must therefore confront sooner or later the fact that *Sigurd* remains a cycle driven by retributive violence, in which endless 'revolutions' of *ekpyrosis* and *Wiederkehr* reduce us to a night in which none can work.

All the more, I find it intriguing that Morris drafted this work just before he turned to oppositional antiwar politics. He seems later to have decided that poetic celebrations of resistance to irredeemable loss could dispense with gratuitous dismemberment, and he never wrote again in this vein, from 1878 to his death. *The House of the Wolfings* (1888) and *The Roots of the Mountains* (1889) offered less stylized accounts of struggle against predatory invaders, and he devoted his final prose romances almost entirely to allegorical struggles and pastoral narratives of personal maturation.

One conflict, for example, in *The Well at the World's End* (1895), is the very model of a defensive struggle, rather like the 'good' defensive struggle in *Dances with Wolves* ('Better the ghosts of robbers in our fields by night, than the over-burdened hapless thrall by day, and the scourged woman, and ruined child'), though the protagonist rues the sights he has witnessed: 'The grief of the end of battle came upon him and he trembled and shook, and great tears burst from his eyes and rolled down his cheeks, and he became stark and hard faced' (19:234). Another scene, in *The Sundering Flood* (left unfinished

at Morris's death in 1896), depicted survivors 'gaunt and tattered and in evil array' who recoil with fear, and shout that 'we be foul like beasts and hungry like beasts and weary like beasts. Let the beasts pass who were once men of Brookside!' (21:230).

Morris did, however, attempt to resolve the latent political tensions between his opposition to imperial wars and commitment to revolutionary conflict in *News from Nowhere*, most particularly in 'How the Change Came' (notice the delicate choice of the word 'change'), its longest chapter, and the passages that precede and follow it, in which Old Hammond, Morris's spokesperson, offered prescient remarks about the mailed fist of mercantile power:

'When the civilized World-Market covered a country not yet in its clutches, some transparent pretext was found – the suppression of a slavery different from ... commerce; the pushing of a religion no longer believed in by its promoters; the "rescue" of some desperado or homicidal madman whose misdeeds had got him into trouble amongst the natives of the "barbarous" country – any stick in short, which would beat the dog at all.' (ch. 15:125)

These remarks recall Morris's mordant observations in the essay quoted earlier, but there is something tentative and detached by comparison about Old Hammond's account of the projected Trafalgar Square Massacre of 1952 and its extended aftermath. It often seems in these passages that Morris saw (or hoped to see) the fall of British capitalism in muted half-tones, as a sequence of events in which the people prevailed at least in part because their masters lacked all conviction – or

drew back at any rate from 'the worst':

'How do you mean,' said I [Guest, speaking for Morris]. 'What could the Government have done? I often used to think that they would be helpless in such a crisis.'

Said Old Hammond: 'Of course I don't doubt that in the long run matters would have come about as they did. But if the Government could have treated their army as a real army, and used them strategically as a general would have done, looking at the people as a mere open enemy to be shot at and dispersed wherever they turned up, they would probably have gained the victory at the time.' (ch. 17:152)

Nowhere in *Nowhere* did Guest and Hammond seem seriously to consider what might happen if 'in the long run things would [not] have come about as they did,' and the government continued to terrorize its citizens. And nowhere, *a fortiori*, did their creator seem to consider that 'the people' of Europe could readily be incited to slaughter each other for fictions of nationalist 'honour' and 'pride' in a 'Great War' – much less follow this with brutal waves of genocidal slaughter a generation later. Or follow this in turn with global recapitulations of the internal class conflicts he so well understood – conflicts which have baffled and affronted all who contemplated them, with the apparent exception of the 'major [corporate and geopolitical] players' who manipulate them.

Conclusion

How would Morris have reacted had he seen all this – had he confronted a relentlessly bland 'new world order' of ruthless domination, screened from contented 'cocknified' consumers by *unisono* choirs of media advisers and social psychologists, and armed to the point of 'mutual assured destruction' ('MAD') by 'socialists,' capitalists, and 'terrorists' alike?²³ He would, surely – like his fourteenth-century protagonist John Ball – have been stunned. But he would also, I believe, have been confirmed in his growing 'obstinate refusal' of organized violence and its infinite capacity to obliterate and corrupt.

For however ambivalent Morris's literary representations of the conflicting moral claims of *eros* and *thanatos* may have been, his essays and political actions bore witness to his conviction that social peace cannot endure without social justice, and creative freedom must sustain both. Deeply influenced by the arguments of his century's peace movements, he also broadened their analyses to encompass the unending cold war of the rich and powerful against the poor and poor in spirit.

From these movements' critiques of 'patriotism,' for example, he learned to be wary of all forms of violence and usurpation, a skepticism which eventually led him to assert that 'liberatory' and 'revolutionary' violence are contradictions in terms. And from *this* conviction, finally, he learned to embrace socialist ideals that are most clearly 'utopian' in their refusal to subordinate such means to such ends.

There was and is, finally, something deeply and stubbornly *realistic* about Morris's rejection of war and commitment to social peace. It was realistic, for example, to see – with his

doomed friend John Ball – that ‘men fight and lose the battle, and the thing that they fought for comes about in spite of their defeat, and when it comes turns out not to be what they meant, and other men have to fight for what they meant under another name’ (16:231–32).

As we commemorate Morris’s contributions to these anarcho-socialist and communist ideals, more than one hundred years after his death, we should therefore recall the sustenance he drew from this insight, and from nineteenth-century peace movements’ ideals of fellowship, as well as their aspirations to make ‘justice to [ourselves] and all others ... no more a name ... but the rule of [our] actions, [and] the passionate desire of [our lives]’ (88).

Notes

1. For general discussions of the ‘Eastern Question,’ see the *Norton History of Modern Europe*, 1206–27; Stephen Duggan, *The Eastern Question: A Study in Diplomacy*; and Mihailo D. Stojanovic, *The Great Powers and the Balkans*, 1875–1878. For Morris’s involvement with the Eastern Question, see E.P. Thompson’s *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary*, 202–25; Ruth Kinna’s *William Morris: The Art of Socialism*, 62–64; and Fiona MacCarthy’s *William Morris: A Life for Our Time*, 378–86.
2. The Greek Orthodox Church dominated in all of these areas except Albania.
3. Januarius A. MacGahan (1844–78) was an American-born journalist who later died fighting on the Russian side during the Russo-Turkish War. His articles’ combination of moral

horror and careful reportage made them highly effective. He cited a total of 60–100 villages burned and 15,000–40,000 persons killed, and remarked that ‘when, in addition to this, you have the horrid details of the vilest outrages committed upon women; the hacking to pieces of helpless children and spitting them upon bayonets; and when you have these details repeated to you by the hundred, not by Bulgarians, but by the different consuls at Philippopolis and ... even Turks themselves, you begin to feel that any further investigation is superfluous’ (18). His book was translated into Bulgarian by Theodore Delchev Dimitrvo.

4. Determined to oppose Balkan separatism and preserve the Ottoman empire, Disraeli ordered a British fleet to enter Beshika Bay and block possible Russian support for such insurgencies (or ‘liberation movements’) in 1876 (Stojanovic 66–67). He also seems briefly even to have considered ordering British ships to seize the Turkish fleet.
5. Disraeli then agreed to refrain from armed response on condition the Czar’s armies make no forays into Constantinople, Egypt, or the Suez Canal (Duggan 137). He ordered the English fleet back into Constantinople in February of 1878, and averted further conflict when the Czar promised not to occupy the city as long as British troops remained offshore (Duggan 139–40), although the Treaty of San Stefano confirmed Russian acquisitions a month later. A third secret agreement with Austria pledged to prevent the formation of any large Balkan state which might threaten the latter’s influence in southeastern Europe. When it convened, the Congress thereupon divided all Bulgaria into three parts: a Russian satellite to the north, a Turkish client called Eastern Rumelia in the centre, and a Macedonian region in the southwest which was reconsigned to Turkish rule. The accord also granted Serbia, Montenegro, and

- Romania their independence, and consolidated British control over Cyprus. Romania was forced to cede a fertile area of Bessarabia to Russia, and in return received from Bulgaria Dobruja, an area along the Black Sea formerly owned by Turkey. Austria was also guaranteed a military presence in Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as a small province sandwiched between Serbia and Montenegro.
6. Duggan, 145. 'The states of the Balkans found their high hopes all dashed to the ground. Roumania complained of the loss of Bessarabia; Servia and Montenegro, of the disposal of Bosnia and Herzegovina; and Greece, of the scant attention paid to the aspirations cherished by her people.' British reformists of almost every sort denounced Disraeli's boundary-trading and *Menschen-handel*, but the Liberal government Gladstone brought in in 1880 left Disraeli's carefully brokered deals intact. In particular, Britain invaded Egypt in 1882, where it stayed until 1956.
 7. *War!* (c.1916). See also 'The Coming War' (1913): 'Wars are no more fought, for personal reasons, still less are they occasioned by national idiosyncrasies: they are fought for markets.' Anxious lest France be destroyed by Germany, Kropotkin later supported the Allied side in the First World War, an ambivalent decision which alienated many of his fellow anarchists.
 8. He tended to undercut clear-eyed analyses of the causes of contemporary European wars with opportunist enthusiasm for any conflicts he believed might serve the cause of the 'inevitable' revolution to come. With Kropotkin and Morris, he also viewed imperialism as the forced opening of markets *manu militari* (Avineri 165): 'The need for a constantly expanding market for its products chases the bourgeoisie over the whole face of the globe. It must nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, establish connexions everywhere' (*The Communist Manifesto*).

9. Letter from Sir Mountstuart Elphinstone Grant Duff MP to the Crown Princess Victoria, 1 February 1879, printed in 'A Meeting with Karl Marx,' *Times Literary Supplement*, 15 July 1949, quoted in Wheen 362. Marx's views on the Franco-Prussian War were notoriously problematic. He supported the Paris Commune, with private reservations, and defended its execution of 64 hostages (including the Archbishop of Paris), then favoured Bismark's advance when he thought the outcome might favour the German workers' movement, and drew back finally when Germany's aims became more clearly aggressive and acquisitive. (See McLellan 388–401, 438–39, and Tonnies 72–75.)
10. Martin Caedel (1987) introduced the terms 'pacifists' and 'pacific-ists' for this distinction.
11. These included John Bright, a leader of the 'Manchester School of Economics,' whose opposition to foreign military adventure influenced British foreign policy during the third quarter of the century. Henry Richard, who served as chairman of the Peace Society from 1848 to 1885, recorded that Cobden had said to him, 'You know that as a public man I can't take your high Christian ground in discussing these questions. But don't you ever give that up – it is the strength and safety of your position' (*Peace Society Letter Book*, Richard to Revd. J. H. Pattison, 24 April 1872, quoted in Laity 57). For a biography of Richard, see C.S. Miall (1889).
12. In the 1860s the Peace Society opposed radical enthusiasm for Garibaldi's promotion of 'one last war' against the Pope, as well as aid for the cause of Polish nationalism and support for the United States against secessionists during the Civil War (Laity 24).
13. Laity, 15. These were William Lovett, Henry Vincent, Arthur O'Neill, and Robert Lowery. The Chartist poet Thomas

Cooper was also a peace-movement supporter, as was Bronterre O'Brien.

14. Laity, 38–39. The British Peace Society, eager to promote its aims by all possible means, helped subsidize the distribution of an address to the International Working Men's Association which enjoined workers not to take sides in wars between military dynasties, but unite instead against such wars (Laity 39). Sentiment divided after France became a republic, and the International's call for military intervention on the side of France fractured this tenuous unity.
15. Laity, 46–47, 60–61. The Workman's Peace Association organized a conference in Paris in September 1875, and distributed 10,000 copies of an address to European workers which proclaimed that 'Europe groans beneath the weight of her military and naval preparations.... Where bayonets abound even universal suffrage can be stultified. So thorough indeed, is the militaryism [sic] of today, that we can only supplant it by devising another method of settling disputes.... Behind arbitration there is peace, and behind peace there is liberty' (*The Arbitrator*, September 1875, in Laity 61).
16. Another anti-bellucist movement called for international law reform, a precursor of movements for international arbitration and a League of Nations. The Peace Society and Workman's Peace Association supported this campaign, which led to passage of a Parliamentary motion by Henry Richard to establish a permanent system of international arbitration. Unfortunately, the resulting Association for the Reform and Codification of the Law of Nations (founded in 1873) degenerated into an organization to promote the regularization of laws governing international commerce.
17. 'Jingo' was a corrupted form of 'Jesus.'
18. Thompson, 217–18. An outdoor Hyde Park demonstration

organized by a working-men's committee led by Charles Bradlaugh on 24 February 1877 attracted a crowd variously estimated at between 60,000 and 500,000 people. Another huge and well-publicized meeting in Memorial Hall in Farringdon Street in April 1878 brought together (among others) 462 delegates from trades unions throughout the U.K. A petition campaign by Ursula Bright (Jacob Bright's wife and co-founder of the Women's Peace Association) had gathered 230,000 signatures for a 'Declaration Against War' (Laity 73–75), and the Labour Representation League collected 15,000 signatures for a similar petition (Thompson 224). Laity points out, however, that tensions in working-class anti-war movements of the period strained radical convictions that 'the people' were inherently peace-loving (76).

19. Morris viewed the Crimean War as an unjust war and a cause of current problems, though at this stage – and in ways that may have echoed the sentiments of his youth – he still considered it a well-intended mistake (*AWS* 2:484).
20. Part of 'Communism, i.e. Property' appears in *Artist, Writer, Socialist* vol. 2, 345–53.
21. *Journalism*, ed. Salmon, 77, from *Commonweal*, 2.18 (May 1886): 50. In 1884 Morris expressed his anger at the British takeover in Egypt in an article in *Justice*: 'The truth is that our entire action in Egypt has been shaped by a gang of international loan-mongers from the first outbreak of the soldiery under Arabi until now. The contention that the safety of the Suez Canal was in danger was a mere subterfuge' (*Justice*, 9 February 1884: 4; in *Political Writings*, ed. Salmon, 10).

In the same year Morris summarized the current disappointments of a Liberal administration in an appeal 'To Genuine Radicals': 'In spite of Irish Coercion Acts, wars against freedom in South Africa and Egypt, emigration swindles,

Cobden Club dinners, and the ceaseless hypocrisy of a bogus monarchy, there still exists a Radical party in this country' (*Justice*, 12 July 1884: 4; in *Political Writings* 47).

- In 1885 he reviewed the causes of war for *Commonweal* readers: 'There is competition always, and sometimes open war, among the nations of the civilised world for their share of the world-market' (*Commonweal* 1.1 (February 1885): 1; in *Journalism* 4). This is suggestive of his well-known description of capitalist wars in *News from Nowhere*, ch. 15: 'The appetite of the World-Market grew with what it fed on: the countries within the ring of 'civilisation' (that is, organised misery) were glutted with the abortions of the market, and force and fraud were used unsparingly to 'open up' countries *outside* that pale.'
22. In 1892 six Walsall anarchists were tried for making bombs, on the evidence of an agent provocateur. In an atmosphere of public fury against continental anarchism, and on the basis of slender evidence and confessions extorted through lies, three of them were sentenced to ten years in prison and a fourth to five years. When *Commonweal* carried an article suggesting that the sentencing judge should be assassinated, Charles Mowbray and David Nicoll were tried for incitement to murder, and the latter was sentenced to eighteen months in prison. See John Quail, ch. 6, 'The Walsall Anarchists.'
23. At this point he inserted the qualification, 'unless indeed the reactionaries were to refuse the decision of the ballot-box and try the matter by arms; which after all I am pretty sure they could not attempt by the time things had gone so far as that' (*AWS*, 2:351). Especially sad is the irony of Guest's passing remark about 'an explosive called dynamite ... of little use as a material for war in the way that was expected' (153).

Works Cited

- Armstrong, Isobel. *Victorian Poetry: Poetry, Poetics, Politics*. London: Routledge, 1993.
- Avineri, Shlomo. *The Social and Political Thought of Karl Marx*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1968.
- Caedel, Martin. *Thinking About War and Peace*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1987.
- Duggan, Stephen. *The Eastern Question: A Study in Diplomacy*. New York: Columbia, 1902.
- Dymond, Jonathan. *An Inquiry into the Accordancy of War with the Principles of Christianity*. London: Longmans and Co., Harvey and Darton, 1823.
- . *Essays on the Principles of Morality*. 2 vols. London: Hamilton, Adams and Co., 1829.
- Gladstone, William E. *Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East*. London: John Murray, 1876.
- Kelvin, Norman, ed. *The Collected Letters of William Morris*. Vol. 1. Princeton UP, 1984.
- Kinna, Ruth. *William Morris: The Art of Socialism*. Cardiff: U of Wales, 2000.
- Laity, Paul. *The British Peace Movement, 1870-1914*. Oxford UP, 2001.
- MacCarthy, Fiona. *William Morris: A Life for Our Time*. London: Faber and Faber, 1994.
- MacGahan, Januarius A. *The Turkish Atrocities in Bulgaria*. Geneva, 1876.
- McLellan, David. *Karl Marx: His Life and Thought*. New York: Harper and Row, 1973.
- Miall, C.S. *Henry Richard M. P.* London, 1889.
- Morris, William. *The Collected Works of William Morris*. Ed. May Morris. 24 vols. London: Longmans, Green, 1910-15.

- . *The Earthly Paradise*. Ed. Florence Boos. 2 vols. New York: Routledge, 2001.
- . *Journalism: Contributions to Commonweal, 1885–89*. Ed. Nicholas Salmon. Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 1996.
- . *News from Nowhere*, ed. Clive Wilmer. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1998.
- . *Political Writings: Contributions to Justice and Commonweal, 1883–1890*. Ed. Nicholas Salmon. Bristol: Thoemmes, 1994.
- . 'Unjust War: To the Working-men of England.' Philip Henderson, ed., *The Letters of William Morris to His Family and Friends*, London: Longmans, 1950, Appendix II, 388–89.
- . *Unpublished Lectures of William Morris*, Ed. Eugene LeMire, Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1969.
- . *William Morris: Artist, Writer, Socialist*. Ed. May Morris. 2 vols. Oxford: Blackwell, 1936.
- Quail, John. *The Slow-Burning Fuse: A History of the Lost British Anarchists*. London: Paladin, 1978.
- Salmon, Nicholas with Derek Baker. *The William Morris Chronology*. Bristol: Thoemmes, 1996.
- Sonn, Richard. *Anarchism*. New York: Twayne, 1992.
- Stojanovic, Mihailo D. *The Great Powers and the Balkans, 1875–1878*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1968.
- Taylor, A.J.P. *The Trouble Makers*. London: Hamish Hamilton, 1957.
- Thomas, Paul. *Karl Marx and the Anarchists*. New York: Routledge, 1980.
- Thompson, E. P. *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary*. New York: Pantheon, 1977.
- Tonnies, Ferdinand. *Karl Marx: His Life and Teachings*. East Lansing: Michigan State UP, 1974.
- When, Francis. *Karl Marx: A Life*. New York: Norton, 1999.

INTRODUCTION TO THE TEXT

Florence S. Boos

WILLIAM MORRIS apparently intended this manuscript (British Library Add. MSS. 45,334, ff. 51–76) for presentation to an audience of Liberal critics of Benjamin Disraeli's foreign policy, and signed it 'W. M. Jan 30th 1880 • 2:30 a. m. • Kelmscott House • Upper Mall Hammersmith.' His daughter, May Morris, later printed about a third of it in her two-volume retrospective *William Morris: Artist, Writer, Socialist* (2:52–62). The two texts are identified in the notes as [BL] and [MM].

In its original form, 'Our Country Right or Wrong' anticipated aspects of more formal political essays such as 'Monopoly' or 'How We Live and How We Might Live,' but Morris never revised it for publication in his lifetime—in part perhaps because the Congress of Berlin in 1878 rendered imminent European conflict less likely, and in part because his early expressions of faith in quickly abandoned Liberal promises may later have seemed to him naive.

Naive or not, Morris's colloquial periods and imbricated clauses drew on years of narrative poetic composition, and one can find eidetic analogues of them in the pages and templates of his Kelmscott Press designs. They abounded in the pointed questions and personal allusions of his *Commonweal* editorials and 'Notes on Passing Events,' and twenty-first-

century dissidents may also find flashes of insight in Morris's mordant remarks about 'preemptive' imperialist wars.

A few textual remarks: I have retained the manuscript's folio pagination, regularized Morris's inscriptions of the expression 'National Vain-glory,' noted some other departures from his original spelling and punctuation, and distinguished explanatory annotations from textual emendations by adding an asterisk to the footnote number for each of the latter. I am indebted to Donna Parsons for the initial transcription of Morris's autograph, and to Sean de Vega for identification of the 'Bremen bomber.'

The following passages from Morris's manuscript were not included in May Morris's *Artist Writer Socialist* and appear therefore in book form for the first time in this edition:

- folio 51 (Looking down the columns ... for its stupidity.);
 52 (Yes, that is National Vain-glory ... natural and hereditary enemy);
 53 (Well, it was France ... desires for advancement.);
 55-57 all;
 58 (some of us to have sat ... what it will grow to?);
 (And what is the cost ... how get to think about it?);
 59 (Yes, yes, how we wrap ... it really means:);
 (But what other ... the actors in it.);
 60 (Now if people say ... to pinch and peel.);
 62 all;
 63 (amiable passion, ... throat of the nation.);
 64 (I say this ... gun has been fired.);
 65 all
 66 (bade them get us ... use those words);

- (or on Lord Beaconsfield ... Lord Salisbury.)
 (No, we cannot even plead ... our own forgetfulness);
 67 (Well, you at least ... learn from misfortune);
 (We are a great ... was the petty folly);
 68 (we played off on ourselves.);
 (Now mind if I dwell ... get rid of that.)
 69 (Meantime our respectable, ... about that civilization.);
 70-74 all;
 75 (fellows must be ... to do the same.)

OUR COUNTRY RIGHT OR WRONG

William Morris

[51] LOOKING DOWN the columns of a newspaper the other day I saw an advertisement of certain songs, and among the titles of them I noted this one: 'Our country, right or wrong.'¹ This set me a thinking, for though the words were harmless in themselves, or indeed might be interpreted to mean a noble sentiment, yet I cannot help thinking that what they did mean was something neither noble or even harmless: I don't think I am wrong in supposing them to have been taken as the motto² of a banner, as it were: the banner of a tribe clamorous once, now somewhat subdued by force of circumstances,³ but which may as circumstances change become clamorous once again, and unless they are well looked after dangerous also: that tribe has been called the tribe of the Jingos.⁴

Now if that be so, those words are the cry of a false patriotism, and I do not think I shall waste your time if I say a few words to warn you to be on your guard now and for ever against this sentiment and what comes of it: for you know how dangerous an enemy is a vice disguised as a virtue; and this particular disguised vice must be called a wolf in sheep[']s clothing for its danger rather than an ass in a lion's skin for its stupidity.

I should say then that when stripped of its borrowed gear false patriotism becomes National Vain-glory, which is both

begotten of ignorance and begets it: a legacy of the injustice of past times, it breeds injustice in us in the present that we may be unjustly dealt with in the future: it gabbles of the valour of our forefathers, while it is busy in undoing the deeds that their valiant lives accomplished: it prates of the interests of our country, while it is laying the train⁵ of events which will ruin the fortunes, and break the hearts of the citizens: it scolds at wise men and honest men for what it calls a policy of isolation, while itself it would have nothing to do with foreign nations except for their ruin and ours: [52] its great office is for ever to cry out for war without knowing what war means: all other nations, it deems[,] pay the price of war; but we never do, and never can pay it, and never shall. The price of war – a heavy price is that; confusion and reaction at the best, ruin at the worst.

Yes, that is National Vain-glory: we, as well as other nations, have suffered heavily enough from it before now: but perhaps some of us had got into our heads the idea that this folly was of late years so much abated among ourselves, that it would scarcely do more in our time than help after dinner orators to a few stock phrases which one sits and listens to with one[']s tongue in one's cheek: we know better now: we have found out the power of phrases, even when they do not seem to mean much, when they are used to tickle the longing for excitement and self[-]glorification of thoughtless people: we have found these phrases of little meaning turn into actions that have shamed us all without rebuke from the British nation.

We have found out, in short, that it is still possible to convince John Bull that he must have an enemy abroad whether the Fates will have it so or not: once he had got to think that

France and her people had been created to fulfill that office, to satisfy that necessity: and it really ought to encourage us to remember that, dead and buried as *that* folly is today, it has been vigorously alive (or seemed so) long after our beards were grown – nay[,] after some of them were turning grey: well in spite of warmongers & fools, who more than once in our lifetimes would have set us by the ears, France can no longer be looked upon as our natural and hereditary enemy; so Russia must serve our turn: our nearest neighbour having so grossly disappointed us, I suppose we have now tak[en]⁶ the huff with the Fates, and so nothing further off will serve our turn but the furthest. [O]n my word I think that is as good a reason as any I have heard put forward in favour of the new choice of a natural and hereditary enemy.

[53] Well, it was France yesterday, it is Russia today that must serve National Vain-glory for a bogie to hang sham hatred and fear upon, and whoever can guess what or who it is to be tomorrow is a conjuror indeed; but I fear indeed that the bogie will be invented: I fear that there will always be plenty of excuses for a cry to thrust ourselves into positions where neither Nature nor our own real desires ever called us; and it is our duty who think we love our country as well as the best, to get ready to turn the light of day on every new bogie that is thrust forward, to keep fast hold of Nature's hand and to look steadily to [our] own real welfare and our just desires for advancement.

For after all[,] what is our country? is it that part of Earth's surface that geographers call the British islands, or the knot of officials that diplomatists call England? or is it not rather the great mass of the lives of all the men[,]⁷ women and children

of our race; their hopes and fears and aspirations that we perforce share, their joys and sorrows that we know more of than of other peoples' joys & sorrows? Yes, this is the country that we love; this is what we must serve lifelong if our own lives are to be the lives of men; yet for all that it is a familiar thing, and not some mysterious unapproachable altar of an unseen God: and so, meseems, we are as much bound to rebuke it when it is wrong, as to cheer it when it is right, since we ourselves, whether we will or no, must share its shame as well as its glory.

To serve our country? Yes[,] that is as plain duty to my mind for each man as to maintain his own family, though doubtless it is a duty much forgotten now a days: but what service can we do worth the having if we shut our eyes and tie up our hands, as our Jingo friends would have us do.

Those lives of our countrymen, and ourselves are what they are by dint of the influences of many past centuries[:] [54] it is that which has made the mass cohere, has made it our country: those influences are various enough, there is light and there is darkness among them: both have been busy in making the England of today: they have made the English character forcible certainly, but, as with all great nations, dangerous also by very virtue of that force: there is always a danger to great nations of some of their best qualities becoming overmasterful, and urging them first to make slaves of other nations & then of themselves: such dangers nature will in the end deliver the world from: but woe be to that country that does not look to it in time to guard against them by the forethought of her own citizens: if any tendencies to our natural force becoming maleficent are not checked by ourselves, they will burst out full-blown some day, and will have to be smothered by men

not of our race and nation; and what widespread ruin will come with that we may perhaps imagine.

Surely, therefore, real patriotism bids us to be keen-eyed to note whether at any time the public opinion of our country sways towards justice or injustice, and to resist both in ourselves and in others blind and ignorant impulses that drive men on to grasp at phantoms of gain and glory created long ago by follies dead or half dead. Those impulses, indeed, the legacy of past sloth[,] cowardice and compromise among us[,] will stir whenever occasion serves; and one could scarcely dare to think of the danger with which they are rife, of the revenge which they might pull down on our heads, if one did not remember that at each re-awakening of them there are to be found more and more of those true patriots, who are ready to brave opprobrium by resisting the windy lies, that on such occasions become, as it were part of the public creed, and who will insist on seeing men and things as they are, not as National Vain-glory has bidden them to be.

[55] Such patriots as this the first word of the motto we liberals inscribe on our banner specially calls on us to be: it bids us in difficult times, in such times as these, instead of bawling out, 'Our country, right or wrong!' to cry rather, 'May the right prevail!' and to act strenuously to bring no less than this to pass. But if any one should cast in our teeth that in longing for the right to prevail, we are longing for the confusion or defeat of our own country; if in short men chide us, that we do not wish to see our country bring a crime to a successful issue: I can only say, that it is a hard word to have to utter that our country is on the wrong side if even for a while; and yet that if it be so, we as good patriots should choose for the country we

love the speedier revenge of check and foil on a wrongful course, rather than that longer delayed and more terrible revenge that comes at last to a long victorious land satiate with glory[,] violence and injustice, long after the victors have forgotten not only why they grasped and conquered, but even almost where and when: rather shame, repentance and fresh hope springing from it in our days, than shame without repentance, and ruin without hope in the days of our children's children[.]

Now you see, I think it is not without reason that we put that word Peace first in the motto of our party⁸: in these days indeed, and to us the heirs of such sore struggles for freedom and civilization, to us, who have learned, or ought to have learned, so much from history and many troubles, it means more, surely[,] than mere ease and comfort to ourselves: patience & industry, forbearance & goodwill, justice at home and abroad; these things I seem to read in that word peace: on the other hand, to us and in these days[,] those three letters, war, mean much more than the death of a few men, the loss of a few millions of money, much more than a mere struggle with no consequences but the immediate and obvious ones. Yet I am not saying that all wars are [56] necessarily and positively indefensible at all times of the world and to every people. There have been peoples, whose life for years has been constant fighting for freedom; the Greeks of the last generation, the Poles, the Montenegrins⁹ of our own time will give us examples of these without further seeking: now you may scold at them as you please, call them cheats, brigands, anarchists, what you will; yet prejudice must have knocked a good deal of manhood out of you, if you do not feel some exultation at the

triumphs of such peoples, some real sorrow at their overthrows: you must admit, that whatever they may be, they have at least an ineradicable love of freedom. I should be sorry indeed even to seem to class together the hero Garibaldi with the scoundrel Napoleon.

Nor can I fail to understand that things may take such a turn even in fully civilized and settled countries, governed by men of their own blood, that actual physical force would have to be used by the rational people of such countries against the irrational: an example again will show better what I mean: take the case of what might have happened in France the other day if Macmahon had allowed himself to be used by the reactionists to the utmost: the great mass of the nation was determined on freedom and republican institutions¹⁰: the executive and a knot of partizans were merely acting as obstacles to the well-understood will of the nation; but they had or seemed to have the army at their backs, and if they had carried their madness but a little further, they would have carried it into crime; and that crime would have actually forced the reasonable and orderly part of France into mere necessary war. Furthermore I can conceive of some country, a member of Civilization, going crazy and being such a danger to its neighbours, that it would require coercion from the other members of the civilized world; only I should say in this case the craziness should be very undoubted, the danger very clear before any other state had a call to move in the matter. [57] But cases of these kinds of war are not common: with the first kind we ourselves happily can have nothing to do as principals: such wars grow out of outstanding wrong and anarchy become at last unbearable: they belong indeed properly to earlier stages

of the world's history, to times when peoples were slowly toiling out of barbarism. With all that, even these long-fought wars of liberation, much as we may sympathize with those who battle for the right in them, are even they unmixed gain, even among the rough populations among whom they are carried on, even when fought by newly born or newly reborn nations?

Look you, when any such war has been brought to a happy end, when, for example the Montenegrins have gained their well[-]deserved freedom, do we not pause in anxious expectation, & ask, what will they do next? They have learned war, can they learn any thing else: our hope is strong that they can, since we can hardly think that it is for nothing that their children are born longing for freedom; but if they cannot, how will they have disappointed our hope; what a woeful, what a poor dull ending it will be to a tale so fairly begun; how will they seem to have been fighting in a land of shadows for nothing! So, you see, it is by their fitness for peace and not for war that we must judge them in the long run: we look to them to make peace out of war.

As to those other kinds of necessary war[,] what is there to say? Who doubts the loss and confusion they bring about? The same injustice that individuals have to bear, the things done in haste that have to be undone at leisure, the slowly earned gains that have to be thrust into the fire of rough & hasty violence. Did we not feel as if we could once again breathe freely when we heard th[at] Macmahon had demitted in those threatening days of France¹¹; though indeed that would have been a war in which we should have had such sympathy for one side at least, that it would have been hard for



Marshal Patrice MacMahon, French monarchist President during the Second Empire. His dismissal of the National Assembly caused a constitutional crisis in 1877 (Mary King Waddington, *My First Years as a French Woman*, New York: Scribners, 1914).



M Jules Grévy reading Marshal MacMahon's letter of resignation to the French Chamber of Deputies, *L'Illustration*, 8 Feb, 1879.

[58] some of us to have sat quietly here at home, if it had gone on as we feared it might, and France had been wrapped in civil war.

Or again was there nothing to be mended after that mighty struggle across the Atlantic, though it ended in a gain so prodigious for the whole human race that we have scarcely realized it yet or what it will grow to?

Whatever the gain and whatever the loss may be of even a necessary war[,] it is obvious that we ought most seriously to count the cost of it; if we do not we shall one of these days be entering with light hearts on some war or other, which before it is over will make the whole world heavy-hearted enough.

And what is the cost, or how shall we reckon it; how get to think about it? Well, as for me, I suppose I am somewhat of an egotist: for what happens to me when I think of the relative gains of peace and war is, that I can't get out of my head thoughts of how I should like it myself if real war were here in the land; and what if it were a war in the cause of which I (and a great part of my fellow citizens) took no particular interest? How should I like it: I, a man of peace, a craftsman, with a wife and children to take care of: a man with longings to bring certain things to pass, which would please me, & as I think benefit my fellows; in short with what people call worthy ambitions and a pleasant life: I can't help thinking what confusion actual war present in the land, in London and its suburbs[,] would make of all this! What a face I should pull for instance when I came back to my house after it had been occupied by our own troops for a morning! What words I should use as I hunted for my M.S.S. & drawings among the ruins of my furniture: how I should cry out at having to begin life over again at 46 because of the stupid whim of a half-educated subaltern. And yet such a thing as this would be [59] such a trifle amidst the great tragedy, that no one could so much as say, I'm

sorry for you.

Yes, yes, how we wrap up facts in meaningless phrases till we forget most often what the facts are that they represent, and thus deaden ourselves to terrible realities. Take to pieces for instance a very common sort of phrase that is used in despatches of battles, and let us note what it really means: 'the enem[y's]¹² skirmishers annoyed us a little as we advanced.' There's for you a phrase that does not stick in your memory two minutes as you read your newspaper in the morning train: if you had been among the 'annoyed,' a life-time would not wipe it out from your memory: an army-surgeon would interpret the words for you best perhaps, yet we as we sit here can imagine it all pretty well if we try:

Say 3 men shot stone dead: no great harm to them perhaps: but how would your hearts have been frozen with horror if you had seen that done in the New Road¹³ this afternoon, or if their bodies with the ragged holes in them through which the life had ebbed away had been brought into the place where you were at work and resting, and laid among the familiar things of common life: or was there no one waiting for them to come home again?

But what other annoyance would there be: a man with his wrist shattered: a skilful right hand destroyed maybe: another shot through both legs – a wretched cripple henceforth[,] he had better never been born he thinks often afterwards: a dozen such or worse; or tortured with mangling wounds (I remember a doctor once horrifying me with describing some of our last scientific inventions in that line, & I shall never forget it) [,] with hurts that will perhaps finish them off in a week or month of careless (necessarily careless) hospital treatment, or

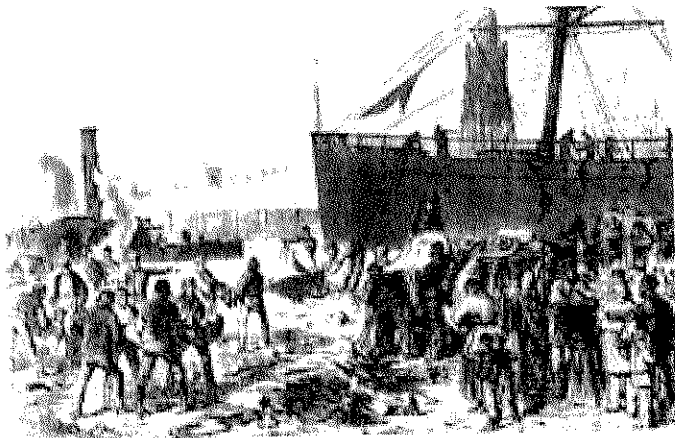
will at any rate and at the best leave them much less than the men they were and ought to be.

And this is an annoyance only, which no man thinks of but the actors in it. [60] Now if people say, as they do, such talk as this is but of commonplace truisms: all men know that such things happen, and think of them seriously; but they are so brave that they are content to risk them; or so wise that in their forethought they will buy advantages to their country at the price of these horrors befalling their friends[,] relations and countrymen generally: if people say that I answer, It is not true: people do *not* think of such things:

'Half ignorant they turn an easy wheel,
That sets sharp racks at work to pinch and peel.'¹⁴

Men's imaginations do not reach very far in conceiving of the evils that are not likely to happen to themselves: let me give you an illustration:

Of course you remember that man who tried to blow [up] a ship with a dynamite¹⁵ which was ingeniously timed to act when the doomed craft was in mid-ocean, but which exploded somehow as she lay by the quays at Bremen and amongst others wounded the author of the plot himself: now would you not have said that such a man was utterly remorseless, senseless – no man in short? Yet mark what happened, and how he claimed his share in our common humanity; he had schemed & carried out his horrible crime as a matter of business: he thought he should make money of it, and did not think of anything else: well he was carried to the hospital, and tended there amidst his victims, and when he heard their groans as he was lying amidst their misery, a dreadful lurid

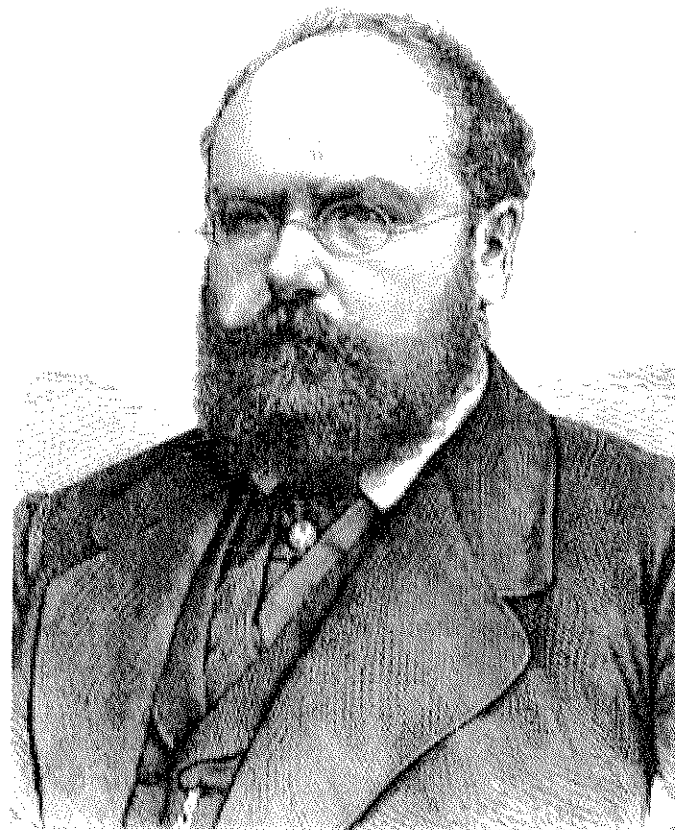


The *S.S. Mosel*, blown up by dynamite in December 1875. In the resulting explosion 81 people were killed and about 200 wounded.

light broke in upon him; his own anguish and despair taught him what he had done, what results¹⁶ he had schemed for in his ignorance, and he tore his wounds open, and died in Judas-like remorse.

That is a strange story, and I bear it ever in my mind, as the very type of the blind folly that besets mankind, & makes so many lives hopelessly toilsome and unhappy.

I do believe that the great crimes of nations, as of individual men[,] have been caused [by] stupidity chiefly, not [61] by malice. Therefore, I say, enlighten the minds of men on war; let them understand all that it means; let them see its worst details uncloaked by conventional words; let them know what they are doing by it: in other times, or in other countries, it came home more to every man: every man then might¹⁷ have



Alexander Keith, Jr., alias William King Thomas, the 'Bremen Bomber,' placed dynamite on the steamship *Mosel*, killing 81 people and wounding about 200 in the resulting explosion.

to catch up his weapons and run down to¹⁸ the battle[,] offering at least his own body to be hacked and mangled: that

is past now, & well passed; for doubtless such scenes recurring often made men callous to the evils they lived amongst: but we who live amidst happier days[,] how base it is of us if we let the carelessness of ignorant contentment take the place of that callousness of habit; and by no other way can we avoid that baseness but by every man *getting to feel himself responsible* for any war that the country wages: I say men are not generally malicious or ill-natured or even hard-hearted, and once let a man know what war is and feel that he himself must share the shame of every war his country wages unjustly, and then see if he will cry out for glory, or want to make a deadly quarrel of every chance wind of ill-feeling that may drift from nation to nation.

If we do not see to this, we are thoughtless fools with all that that word means, and amongst other things it means cowards: but if we get to live with our minds really enlightened on the certain loss of even necessary war, and our consciences clear from the craving after *glory*; then if the day should ever come when irrepressible *justice*, or the hard need of self defence drives us into this portentous and monstrous plague of mankind, we should then cleave our way through it with the well-assured hope of coming to better days beyond it; of its leaving no revenge behind to fall upon us at some indefinite time: perhaps in the very days when we should be going fairly and smoothly on the path of progress, and were conscientiously trying to do our best.

[62] Let me put the matter before you once again thus: All wars that are not merely wanton take place when matters are so bad, when the strain has become so unbearable, that the patience of patient men is exhausted; when even wise men are

brought to such a pass, that they can see no remedy save in destruction: they who have been hitherto laboriously heaping up good things for the use of men, are now driven to devote themselves to destroy the health[,] the wealth and the lives of men: instead of spending their lives in striving to make their neighbours live happier and more reasonably, they must now spend them in ruining & killing the[ir] next-door neighbours. That is just and necessary war.

Surely, Sirs, it must have been but seldom in the world's history that things have been so bad as positively to drive worthy and thoughtful people into such straits as this.

In good sober truth not often: just and necessary wars are not so common as that. In how many wars I wonder has the right been clear on either side – to standers by, or even to the combatants two years after the war is over. And in how many[,] when at first there did seem to be clear right on one side[,] has not the right been sorely obscured before the end of it.

Stupid prejudice and greed have been at the bottom of most of those that have been fought by the will of the people even[.] As to those set on foot wholly in the interests of the kings and potentates of the world, I don't think we common people can enter enough into the feelings of such august persons as to be able to understand them: so we will e'en leave them alone for a while.

But apart from the necessities and family quarrels of Potentates – which are not our business – I say that the wars of civilization have mostly been set on foot by two powers, greed and National Vain-glory: you see it [is] chiefly the latter most mischievous & stupid vice which I have been combatting. As to the first, greed of gain, it is certainly not a very [63] amiable

passion, or one that we would wish to see pandered to, since we understand clearly that national morality both springs up from and reacts upon individual morality, and is in fact the very bond of decent society; yet I know that as that society is at present constituted it would be unreasonable to scold over much at either individuals or nations for pushing their fortunes to the utmost, so long as they do it without too much lying or too much overbearing, so long as they show a little respect for the rights of the weak as well as those of the strong; the question is rather, does the greed of gain lead to real gain?

It is not uncommon, and is a very instructive spectacle to see a man growing richer and richer day by day, and unhappier & unhappier therewith: and we know the reason why when we come to think of it: it is because he has not advanced all parts of himself together: some parts of his mind & his soul are left long behind in their earlier poverty: nay, worse off than then, because they have lost hope, while the advancing parts of him go on toiling with huge apparent energy and mechanical excitement, that they may come at last to – nowhere –

Yes, Sirs, and as it is with greedy men, so shall it be with greedy nations: for, look you, that lust of gain by external violence cannot carry a whole people with it; for it would be too transparent a lie to pretend that the whole people could really share in the gains, and nobody intends that they shall, & people in general cannot fail to understand *that*: so that when some opium-selling, or Turkish bond holder sowing war, or some piece of land-filching is planned, the pill of greed must of necessity be gilded with flimsy stuff about the advancement of civilization, the spread of the beneficent influence of the Anglo-Saxon Race, and the like, before it will go down the

throat of the nation.

National Vain-glory, in fact, must be appealed to, before any set of men in this country can get us to start them off [64] in the quest of gain by foreign conquest or foreign embroilment: people at large do instinctively feel that a war in which one side at all events cannot appeal to the highest principles of truth and justice, is a scandal to the world, a ruinous blow to the hopes of humanity. I know that it is unhappily true, that over and over again we have allowed ourselves to be satisfied, to be gulled, by wretched travesties of justice, and, I am ashamed as I say it, seldom more grossly than in the luckless year we have just passed through: and yet, since I do not believe it altogether or chiefly hypocrisy that has made our nation so gullible, but rather want of interest in the subject, want of thought – ignorance in fact – there seems to me no lack of hope that this may be greatly changed, nay is changing now, and that in [the] future it will be very difficult for any class or set of men in the country to jockey us either into a big unjust disastrous war, or a little unjust disgraceful war.

I say this because I cannot hide from myself or you, that whatever slips there may be in our constitution, that might lead under possible circumstances to dead-lock and confusion between the people and the executive, it is really, & always must be, the people that makes war: even a thoroughly despotic prince must screw some enthusiasm or appearance of it out of his people before he can venture to face a serious struggle: and with us the sov[e]reign power and its advisers could no more dare to go to war except under certain conditions than a man who couldn't swim would dare to jump into 12 ft water. If we and they are so unlucky or so thoughtless that they

have a whim for an unnecessary war (think what *unnecessary* war means!) they must venture to carry their whim through either because they think the war they aim at will be so small and easy that we shall not notice it, or because they think that with the help of the noisiest part of the population of all classes they can just push us into one so big that we must join in heartily when the first gun has been fired.

[65] Now I say that if the nation, if we, if any of us are contented to accept those conditions from carelessness on the one hand, or from dread of being considered unpatriotic on the other, we shall have little wars leading to big wars, and big wars leaving us their legacy of little wars, lies and revenge breeding lies and revenge in endless succession, till we shall become the paupers and slaves we shall richly deserve to be because of our sloth and cowardice[.]

There is no escaping from the inference; the last 6 years have taught us the lesson too well: the theory has been that we put Lord Beaconsfield and his tail into office in '74 because we wanted to 'rest and be thankful'²⁰: I can only say that if [we] are thankful for that rest we are thankful for small mercies indeed: and I for one do not agree with that theory, but believe rather that a vague desire for military glory had bitten us about that time: even from the first, I think, the shadow of that desire lay cold over the parliament then chosen, and paralyzed all usefulness in it: the parliament we then chose felt quite sure of our approbation so long as they neglected our business to attend to our – pleasure, I suppose I must call it.

Well even for this six years of such 'pleasure' in prospect and in fact we have surely paid quite dear enough: enough of pressing questions have been left to take care of themselves, and

grow awkwarder and awkwarder to answer: enough of vague fears have been let loose upon industry & commerce: enough of vague threats of undoing the work of our fathers have been scattered about, to take root in the hearts of narrow-minded men, & bear fruit bitter enough both now and in the future: enough of all this has been done to show us how speedy reaction might become, if we could be got for a really long time (six years is not long luckily) to withdraw our attention from what some people call 'parish affairs': that is[.] from our own affairs.

Luckily however, those who took us at our word when we [66] bade them get us into trouble, saw their advantage even too clearly, and, being over eager to find us in a serious reaction, have hurried the matter, and frightened many of us awake, who might otherwise have slept till the noise was well over all our heads; so that we may hope we have indeed learned our lesson, & that before long we shall set the clock agoing which has been stopped for the past 6 years.

I say *us* and *we*, & shall continue to use those words: it is unfair to lay the blame of the dreadful deeds of the past year, of the anxious toil of two years ago on the Tory House of Commons or on Lord Beaconsfield, and his ardent friend, admirer, & follower Lord Salisbury.²¹ Lord Beaconsfield and his tail rule England at present? Too true – but why? Who made the House of Commons a Tory one? Who made the Tory brain, that sham shifty Ulysses, king over us? Who made that queer whimsical fancy a terrible reality to Greek, Bulgarian & Servian[.] to Zulu and Affghan: – and to English widows and orphans too for that matter?

It was ourselves, Sirs, Ourselves.

No, we cannot even plead that we didn't know any better than our government that Sir Bartle Frere²² was about the land-filching business in S. Africa till it had become a war of which the very soldiers are heartily ashamed: we cannot plead that we could not guess that any man who was trusted by us with the tremendous office of Governor General of India would sily shame us through lies & treachery in the hapless city of Cabul,²³ that we might at last have the honour and glory of performing a great act of generosity, the *pardoning* of men who have fought against us in open battle in defence of their native country – and their own necks: All that has happened is but the natural & necessary consequence of our own folly, our own forgetfulness. [67] Well, you at least will not forget the state of feeling that was abroad at and about the time of the general election of '74: and I beg you never to forget it, but to remind our party and the great mass of the electors of it and what came of it, facing the disgraceful facts with courage, so that we may at least learn from misfortune.

We had a great statesman leading us then: he had led us through a time of unexampled progress: I defy anyone to state that the nation generally did not heartily approve the important measures that were passed in that parliament under Mr. Gladstone['s] leadership – these²⁴ things were not done in a corner – Has anyone pretended that after those measures were passed, Mr. Gladstone changed his principles, the principles on which those measures were based, the principles that were professed in '68²⁵. Did we pretend to think that we were going to be governed in a different way[,] to be led in another direction to that in which we had declared by our votes in '68 we wished to be governed & led[?]

You know we pretended no such thing, yet in '74 Mr. Gladstone would no longer suit us, nor would his principles[.] And why? apparently because we were wearied with prosperity, and wanted to see what the other thing would be like.

Just think of a crew of mariners sailing happily with a fair wind under a captain & officers whom they trust and with whom nothing has gone wrong hitherto; think of them saying: nothing is going on, it is dull, and then turning to,²⁶ pitching captain and officers overboard, and choosing instead of them some country-bumpkin passengers headed by a stock jobber to sail their ship for them; and then down they sit all hands, get drunk, and whistle for a gale – the gale they'll get without much whistling I imagine. That's what we were like in '74.

We are a great nation, and sometimes think ourselves even greater than we are perhaps: but that was the petty folly [68] we played off on ourselves.

We were wearied of doing right, wearied of prudence, wearied of setting our house in order, and so we fell to fooling for our pastime: there was the disgrace, believe me; what has happened since has been but the visible token of our treachery to ourselves – a pity only that when a great nation goes astray others are involved in its punishment!

Peace, Retrenchment, Reform, modest words indeed and unromantic, but we know well, we had proved it, that these were necessary to us if we were to lead the van of civilization, if we were to fulfill the promise of our country's youth to

– Rise on stepping stones
Of our dead selves to higher things;²⁷

Yet I say such bewilderment had come over us that we found Reform dull, retrenchment mean, and peace inglorious: we had ready to hand men and a man who could easily mend all this for us, and give us amusement: we put him in his present place to do it: has he given us less than we bargained for? How do you like the merriment, the generosity, the glory for which we craved?

Now mind if I dwell at all upon this past disgrace, it is because I want to stir up hope in you and myself for the future: it is true that we cannot get rid of the consequences of past folly, nay who can say what we shall yet have to pay for it: but the folly itself[,] we may get rid of that.

In the mood in which we were weary of prudence we made for our amusement a strange sort of monsters out of some commonplace, and, I daresay, rather decent men, and called them our rulers; we made them ridiculous to the world and ruinous to ourselves too if it should last: but it need not last; we can unmake their monstership, & restore them to themselves: let us do it, though it will be hard work; and let us when it is done not forget our former folly lest we repeat it, and thereby ruin many a hope & break many a heart.

Do not above all let the change of rulers come about by the [69] mere swing of the pendulum, and because we have now in turn grown tired of them, but let thoughtfulness & principle make the change: let them be our leaders henceforward.

Meanwhile our respectable, but misled & misleading Tory government will with the help of adversity have taught us something. They have given us a glimpse of the terrible abyss into which we might, if we went quite mad, cast all our gains of the last 3 centuries: they have gone so far even as to show us

that we might once more bring artificial starvation on the great mass of our population for the benefit of this, that or the other class: they have taught us that we must watch carefully as our fathers did, lest the letter of our constitution should be strained till our sov[e]reign power becomes a danger to us and to itself: and in short they have showed us the machinery of a trap baited with the wretched carrion called National Vain-glory: a trap for catching us and holding us fast in one place; lest we should go on too fast and do to them and to ourselves all sorts of dreadful things, I know not what – live happily great and small perhaps.

It is indeed a hopeful sign of things bettering since '74 that we have been only partly caught – a bit of our tails, as it were[,] still fast in the teeth: if they had had their machinery ready sooner I believe in good earnest we should have gone headlong into the midst of it: for once more (excuse me for singing that burden again) I can't forget what a thrill of exultation went through the country when the mountains were in labour, & produced that wretched little mouse of the Suez Canal shares²⁸: after that, you know England was to take her place again amidst the Councils of Europe.

England[']s place – what is England[']s place? To carry civilization through the world? Yes indeed the world must be civilized, and I doubt not that England will have a large share in bringing about that civilization. [70]

And yet, since I have heard of wine with no grape-juice in it, and cotton-cloth that is mostly barytes²⁹; and silk that is two thirds sumach, and knives whose edges break or turn up if you try to cut anything harder than butter with them[,] and many another triumph of Commerce in these days, I begin to



Cetewayo (also Cetshwayo), valiant leader of the Zulu against British troops (C. T. Binns, *The Last Zulu King: The Life and Death of Cetshwayo*, London: Longmans, 1963).

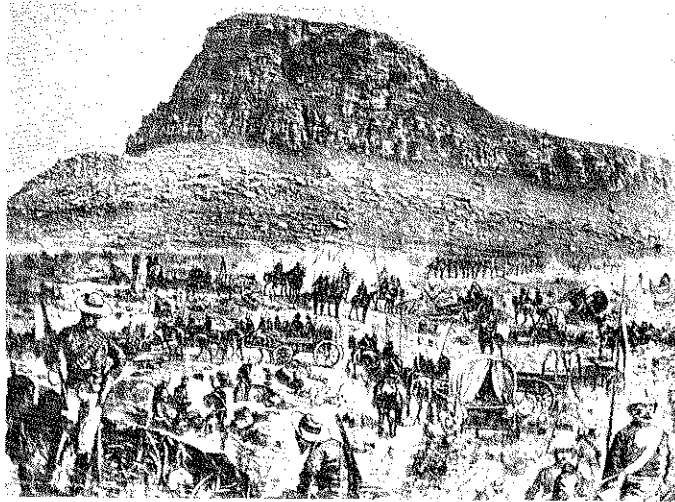
doubt if civilization itself may not be sometimes so much adulterated as scarcely to be worth the carrying – anyhow it

cannot be worth much, when it is necessary to kill a man in order to make him accept it.

Doubtless our once dreaded foe, poor Cetewayo,³⁰ has learned so much of the blessings of civilization within the last year, that it is hardly worth while to bring him over here to complete the lesson; otherwise we might show him in London some strange things: might he not say: 'poor devils! They treated me ill enough certainly, but I can forgive them since I have seen what a dog[']s life so many of their people lead at home! no wonder it maddens them.'

In short civilization has this in common with charity, (from which apparently it otherwise differs much) that it begins, or should begin at home: our first duty is to our own people, who to my mind are (all classes of them) by no means so well civilized as they should be: for instance it was common to hear apparently educated people the other day gravely insisting on the necessity for the utter destruction of Cabul as a matter of revenge: if I am not mistaken one of those not very edifying publications called Society Journals was busy over this; probably the only serious thing it had printed for months. [P]ray is such senseless stupidity aping wickedness a product of civilization, or a relic of barbarism?

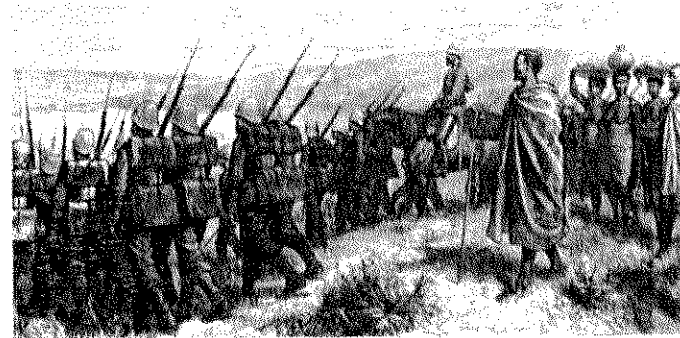
Nay that is a little thing[,] for it has to do only with a few comparatively: this is neither the time nor the place to go into the matters that one cannot choose but think of when one touches on such a subject, but well you know how the heart faints when we think of all the evils of the complicated society of this huge city, this densely peopled country, nor dare anyone deny that England's place is above all things to show the [71] world her people one and all free[,] thoughtful[,] just &



The British camp after the battle of Insandlwana, in which British troops armed with guns were routed by Zulu tribesmen with spears defending their land, 1879. (C. T. Binns, *The Warrior People: Zulu Origins, Customs, and Witchcraft*, Cape Town : H. Timmins, 1974),

happy. That is her duty and her glory.

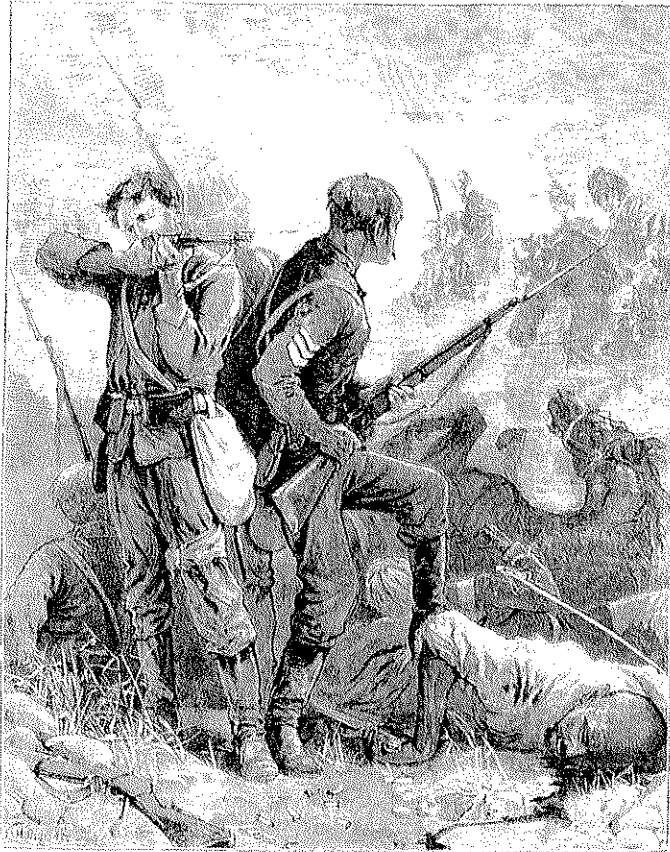
And how have our representative government helped her to perform that duty, to earn that glory? it is no slander to say that their help has been scarcely worth having. I don't say that it is their fault but it is much their misfortune – and ours: I do not say that the gentlemen who make up the government don't wish prosperity to all classes of the community; only they do not understand, & with their principles cannot understand what the great mass of the people really need, what a



Cetewayo brought in as a captive to Sir Garnet Wolsey's camp, 1879 (C. T. Binns, *The Warrior People: Zulu Origins, Customs, and Witchcraft*, Cape Town : H. Timmins, 1974),

great number of them are constantly crying out for: they very likely, who actually deal with affairs, would if they could, do more: but remember the mass of Stupidity that they represent, and that will not let them move if they would: stupidity, and the selfish fear of democracy that is bred of it is, I say, what they represent: they have to be afraid of us, & being afraid of us, they cannot understand us, and failing to understand us, they must necessarily fail in their duty; which is bad: But what is worse is that in order to keep office[,] which is necessary for their conception of our welfare, so that they may stave off democracy, they are obliged to make a pretence of fulfilling their duty.

What are they to do? The world is moving: that is hateful to them, and yet if they do not make a show of moving with it,



The 55th Regiment at Maiwand, a disastrous defeat for the British in the Anglo-Afghan War.



Afghans firing at British invaders at Sangar, January 1880.

out they go, and it will move a deal faster then: they can't do what they would, and they won't do what they should, and yet they must do something, or else – out they go: so heavy are

abuses to the nation that has once begun to move on the path of progress; so intolerable are our wrongs when we have once found out that they can be righted[.]

What must they do? Again I say[.] they must find a foreign enemy a rival; if in fact the enemy is not so much an enemy as a customer, so much the worse for the facts: some country must be made an enemy of which people in general can know nothing; they themselves (our rulers) get almost to believe in the humbug; well enough at all events to [72] be able to speak fiercely on the subject: National Vain-glory is kindled, and millions are made to believe, or to pretend to believe that, for instance, a country with crippled finances, a discontented population, amongst whom wild changes are brewing, a huge unwieldy thinly populated territory, and an enormous corrupt official body is a serious and increasing danger to the richest and most settled country in the world. I think it will seem almost incredible in time to come that such an attempt could have been made on the credulity of a great nation: at all events I believe that history will put down the matter to its right cause, an attempt to amuse the people with dramatic events abroad, while the drag is being put on democracy at home.³¹

I repeat that I do not accuse all or most members of the Tory government of consciously meaning this; but sure I am that unconsciously at least the idea has ever been stirring in their minds: it must have been; for practically it is the policy of the great Tory party since that party has in these latter days been driven to its shifts; and it always will be its policy till that party is extinguished by the general enlightenment of the people of all classes.

Well[,] enlightenment even as far as it has gone did this for us, that the greater attempt failed, owing to the good sense, and I will add the morality of what was at least the better part of the nation, though it may not have been the larger: having failed, still something had to be done, and where was there a shadow of excuse for doing anything: India would do it seemed: people at home don't bother their heads what becomes of the rights and wrongs of a set of barbarians: and if an attack were made on Affghanistan it would look like an attack on Russia, without being so dangerous or costly[,] even if it really rather furthered her ambition than not: it could be slipped into without notice almost, and would be sure to be successful – *brilliantly* successful it might be called without any extra expense: –

So to work we went at making a scientific frontier, which it seems is [73] the modern name for carrying fire & the sword (say murder & fire-raising) among a people who have done us no shadow of a wrong.

On my word I cannot explain the Affghan war³² otherwise than thus: if ever war was waged for war[']s sake that has been – that democracy might be checked in England: I can only say of it further, that the end proposed was ruinous folly, and the means employed villainous injustice.

But meantime, and setting aside the shame and disgrace of our present little wars, how have we been faring at home? As people must fare who irresolutely chase the phantom of military glory about the world; only lucky if we can give up the chase in time to look to our own house before it catches fire.

At our own doors is a curious specimen of the blessings of conquest: when I hear people scolding at those who should be

our fellow citizens of Ireland as monsters of ingratitude and the very fools of anarchy, I feel inclined to wish that some man of accurate knowledge and acknowledged rectitude and impartiality would draw up a plain account of all our dealings with Ireland from Strongbow's time³³ to Beaconsfield[']s – for the use of Englishmen: it would not be either short or pleasant reading I fear; but it might teach us that it is not very wonderful if they find it hard to forget, though we forget, and that we may well try to give them further opportunities to forgive us, and they at the very least may well claim a patient hearing of, & just dealing with their grievances.

Is our own country-side[,] in spite of its beauties & pleasures[,] too pleasant a place for an intelligent man to live in, if he be neither a game preserver or a game keeper: pheasants are beautiful creatures & good to eat; but I wish there wasn't a head of them left in the country.³⁴

Five years ago, nay a year ago when the election was further off, and we were still rejoicing in Peace with Honour,³⁵ [74] what do you think a Tory M.P. would have said to a bill that struck a blow at entail³⁶ and land-hunger? and now (if the ministry lasts as long) he will have to vote for it it seems, comforting himself, I suppose, with hoping that it is so drawn that it will not work: well I must say I didn't think that we were as strong as that.

But I think we, and not the Tory tail to which he belongs[,] had better educate him on the subject of the anomalies in our Parliamentary representation: and then perhaps he will one day see that the state need not patronize religion in the form of a heavily endowed body of majestic status which it is a mere farce to call any longer the Church of England, but whose

existence in that form, & under that patronage casts a slur upon all who belong to other religious bodies, bidding them and their members consider themselves outside of the pale of respectability. But while he and his are in power do we not still tremble for the small modicum of national education that has been granted us,³⁷ while every man of us who respects himself has to fight tooth and nail against the grossest stupidity and injustice in the district in which he lives to keep it uninjured.

I have named really but a few of the questions that our government ought to help us with; as to most of them & many more the clock has stopped for six years; when will the hands move forward again[?]

The government must make them move, but what government I won't say, for I don't believe in the miracle of sudden conversions in the seventh year of existence: and as I said before I think those who are now in have done all we asked them to do, & can do no more; and I hope that we have got our wits back and shall keep them & shall no longer need a conjuror to swallow swords & to jump backward over his chair for us[.]

For the rest, if we can't have the absolutely best man at our head, let us at least have the best we can get; and he and his [75] fellows must be such men as look forward with hope not backward with regret; that at least, and yet that will be enough if they understand withal that they need not manufacture enemies of England's glory on the banks of the Neva,³⁸ or the highlands of Affghanistan, when there are plenty of them between the narrow seas.³⁹

But what England's glory is, and what all political action should tend towards in the long run, if politics are not to be a

mere game to be played at, I will tell you my idea of that, & see if it square with yours :

[I]f it does not, and you think me a crochetter (as the phrase goes)[,] well I understand clearly that my crochett has no chance of being heard till Peace, retrenchment, & reform are abroad, and that I intend at the coming election to vote for any good man & true who will help me to those, and to let my crochett bide its time; and to any others of you who are, like me, crochetteers⁴⁰[,] I give the advice to do the same.

I think of a country where every man has work enough to do, and no one has too much: where no man has to work himself stupid in order to be just able to live: where on the contrary it will be easy for a man to live if he will but work, impossible if he will not (that is a necessary corollary): where every man's work would be pleasant to himself and helpful to his neighbour; and then his leisure from bread-earning⁴¹ work (of which he ought to have plenty) would be thoughtful and rational: for you understand he would be thoroughly educated, whatever his condition might be: such a man as this, (and there should be but very few else among us) would never fail in self-respect; he would live honourably, and as happily as national external circumstances would allow him, and would help others to do likewise: you may be sure he would take good care to have his due share in the government of his country and would know all about its dealings with other countries: justice to himself & all others would be no mere name to him, but the rule of all his actions, the passionate desire of his life – What King, what potentate, what power could prevent such a man from [76] both taking and giving his due?

Well, some people today would think that dull, would prefer more gambling in life so to say; more contrast of condition,

of thought[,] of aspiration: it seems to them right, nay a law of nature, that many people should be boiled down as it were body and soul for the sake of one glorious one: in short they cannot do without slaves: nay they would themselves rather be slaves than free men without them – it would save so much trouble.

Would it? Well, I don't know: in the long run I think not: but then, you see, such men don't trouble themselves about the long run; or they would understand that ignorant & unhappy people are dangerous people; that they desire ignorantly, hate ignorantly, revenge themselves ignorantly, and not unseldom confuse in one ruin those who have wronged them with those who indolently refused to right them, and those that could not right them though they strove sorely.

For my part, Sirs, so that we may have no strife in the land save what may be carried on with the printing-press & the ballot-box, I say let us take the trouble – any trouble to live like free men. And now, look you, it is some 6 years that I have scarcely felt like a free man, and that lies heavily upon me; and in spite of all my good wishes for your welfare I hope it does upon you also, & upon all those whose principles bind them to Peace, Retrenchment, and Reform.

For in that case I know it will not be long before we shall all be free again, and shall see the England that we love once more moving on the forward path, and with a clear conscience shall be able to cry, May the Right prevail!

W.M. Jan 30th 1880

2:30 a. m.

Kelmescott House Upper Mall Hammersmith

Notes

1. This was the original title of an American song by George Pope Morris, first performed in New York in 1861. The song managed to avoid all mention of slavery or emancipation in its summons to the Union cause, in the doggerel of the second stanza, for example:

It is the duty of us all,
To check rebellion's sway!
To rally at the nation's call,
And we that voice obey!
We like a band of brothers go,
A hostile league to break!
To rout a spoilt encumber't foe,
And what is ours retake!

Then come ye hardy Volunteers,
Around our standard throng!
And pledge man's hope of coming years,
Our country, right or wrong!

Chorus:
Our country, right or wrong,
Inspires the burden of our song!
It was the glory of our sires,
Our country, right or wrong!

2. *motto*] mottoe [BL]
3. The 1878 Congress of Berlin's repartition of the Balkans temporarily obviated war in the region as an instrument of British mercantile interests.
4. *Jingos*] Jingoos [BL]. Political senses of this word apparently derive from the refrain of a ditty sung by proponents of British engagement in the Russo-Turkish War (1877-78): 'We don't

want to fight, but, by Jingo, if we do, We've got the ships, we've got the men, and got the money, too!' The word itself seems to have been one of the language's many corruptions of 'Jesus.'

5. *train*] trail [MM]
6. *tak[en]*] taking [BL]; *tak[en] the huff with*] taken offence at
7. *men, women*] men and women [MM]
8. *Peace, Retrenchment, and Reform*] A well-known slogan of Gladstone's Liberal Party.
9. Serbia and Montenegro declared war against Turkey in 1876, and their soldiers subsequently defeated much larger Turkish forces in battles extensively reported in the British press. Gladstone praised the Montenegrin insurgents in a *Nineteenth Century* article in 1877, and eulogized them in Parliament as 'a bunch of heroes such as the world has rarely seen.' Tennyson's poetic characterization of the Montenegrins as a 'race of mightier mountaineers' appeared in the same issue of the *Nineteenth Century*, and the Congress of Berlin included a provision for Montenegrin independence subject to Austrian control over the port of Bar.
10. Maréchal (Marshal) Patrice MacMahon, French general and monarchist President during the Second Empire, made a vain effort to thwart a Republican electoral victory when he dismissed the National Assembly in May of 1877.
11. MacMahon resigned ('demitted,' *démisiona*) the presidency in 1879.
12. *enemy's*] enemies [BL]
13. Morris may have referred to a central London artery south and east of Regent's Park, now known as 'Marylebone.'
14. Morris's allusion to aristocratic exploitation is a quotation from Keats's 'Isabella; or, the Pot of Basil' (stanza 16).
15. *blow a ship*] blow up a ship [MM]; A failed capitalist and

would-be insurance swindler – not an anarchist revolutionary – seems to have been the first multiple dynamite-murderer. Alexander Keith, Jr., alias William King Thomas, an American merchant burdened by gambling debts, consigned a heavily insured barrel of dynamite labelled ‘caviar’ for shipment on the North-German Lloyd steamer *Mosel* in December 1875. A prematurely tripped trigger-mechanism killed 81 people and gravely injured 200 more as the ship lay in the Bremerhaven docks, but Thomas’s apparent intention had been to kill its full complement of 800 passengers and 200 crew-members without a trace in the North Atlantic. He attempted suicide before his ‘perfect crime’ was exposed, but survived four days of intermittent interrogation before he muttered ‘Pech gehabt’ (‘Bad luck’) and died (Susanne Wiborg, *Die Zeit*, 52 [2002]).

16. *results*] result [MM]
17. *then might*] might then [MM]
18. *run down to*] run to [MM]
19. *the[ir]*] they [MM]
20. Morris wryly alludes to the title of William Wordsworth’s 1831 poem, ‘Rest and Be Thankful! At the Head of Glencoe.’
21. Robert Gascoyne-Cecil (1830–1903), Third Marquess of Salisbury, served as Disraeli’s Foreign Secretary and Britain’s chief negotiator at the Congress of Berlin in 1878, and the Queen awarded him the Order of the Garter for his public and secret undertakings before and during the Congress. During three subsequent terms of office as Conservative prime minister, Salisbury’s advocacy of Disraelian ‘peace with honour’ led him to block Irish Home Rule, co-broker the partition of Africa, and preside in his last tenure over British entrance into the Boer War.
22. Governor of Bombay, member of the India Council and later

- Governor of the Cape Colony in southern Africa, Sir Henry Bartle Edward Frere may have been best known for a war he precipitated when he tried to seize Zulu territory in 1879. When waves of Zulu warriors armed only with spears charged into British gunfire and overwhelmed their opponents at the battle of Insandlhwana, the striking nature of this charge stunned British public opinion long after British troops defeated their enemies later that year. See note 30 below on ‘Cetewayo.’
23. Kabul in Afghanistan. See note 32 on the origins of the ‘Second Anglo-Afghan War.’
 24. *these*] those [MM]
 25. ‘68] 1868 [MM]
 26. *to*] too [BL]
 27. Morris quotes this well-known passage from Tennyson’s *In Memoriam* (section 1.3–4).
 28. Disraeli had heavily invested British currency in such shares.
 29. Barium sulphate, a low-grade ore, was often sold as a powder.
 30. Cetewayo (or Cetshwayo), the absolute Zulu monarch whose warriors had annihilated their British opponents at the battle of Insandlhwana in 1879, pled the cause of his people in person as a captive before Queen Victoria. He led them against the British one more time after Her Majesty did not keep her promises, and he died in 1884.
 31. Parliament had recently passed a series of ‘coercion acts’ ostensibly designed to repress Irish radicalism, then sharpened them as Morris anticipated it would in the 1880s.
 32. In response to the Afghanistani ruler Amir Sher Ali Khan’s denial of entry to Britain’s envoy General Sir Neville Chamberlain in 1879, Her Majesty’s government attacked Afghanistan in force, and an army commanded by Ayub Khan defeated British troops at Maiwand and besieged the British garrison at

- Kandahar. Ten thousand British soldiers marched from Kabul to break the siege and end the 'Second Anglo-Afghan War' in 1880.
33. Richard Fitz Gilbert de Clare, Earl of Pembroke and Lord of Leinster, was a twelfth-century warrior and warlord noted for his skill with the longbow. He harrowed Ireland with the Lord of Leinster, Dermot MacMurchada, and seized Dublin as well as much of southeastern Ireland in 1170. Henry II later appointed him the king's personal representative in Ireland in reward for these and other military services.
 34. Morris refers to 19th-century destruction of farmland to create game preserves.
 35. Disraeli's government employed this slogan to characterize its gains at the Congress of Berlin.
 36. An 1880 bill severely weakened 'entail' ('life-tenancy' with 'fee-tail'), a law which had permitted testators to will 'contingent remainders' of large landed estates to unborn descendants (usually grandsons).
 37. For the first time in Great Britain's history, the Education Acts of 1870 (England) and 1872 (Scotland) mandated basic instruction for children up to the age of 13.
 38. This Russian river traverses St. Petersburg.
 39. Here at home.
 40. Malcontents.
 41. *bread-earning*] bread earning [MM]

WILLIAM MORRIS SOCIETY

THE PURPOSE OF THE William Morris Society is to make the life, work and ideas of Morris better known to the world of today.

Morris's many-sidedness and the variety of activities in which he engaged bring together in the Society those who are interested in him as a poet, designer, craftsman, printer, cultural critic, pioneer socialist, romance writer and idealist, or who admire his robust and generous personality, his extraordinary vitality, his creative concentration, and his courage. Morris worked to bring about a state of affairs in which all might enjoy the potential richness of human life.

Through its *Newsletter* the Society provides up-to-date information on topics of interest to its members; it arranges talks, meetings, exhibitions, visits and conferences, and encourages the re-publication of his works and the continuing manufacture of his textile and wallpaper designs.

The Society, which promotes an annual Kelmscott Lecture, publishes studies of Morris and his associates, including its *Journal*, which is sent out twice a year exclusively to members.

Further information about the Society can be obtained from the Hon. Sec., The William Morris Society, Kelmscott House, 26 Upper Mall, London W6 9TA.

E-mail: william.morris@care4free.net

The William Morris Homepage:
<http://www.morrissociety.org>

The William Morris Archive:
<http://marxists.org/archive/morris/works>
(Please note this site is an independent venture.)

The Morris On-line Edition
<http://morrisedition.lib.uiowa.edu>

Sponsored by the William Morris Society.

both ~~giving~~ taking and giving his due? Well, some people today would think that dull, would prefer more gambling in life. So to say, more contrast of condition, of height of aspiration: it seems to them right, may a law of nature, that many people should be booted down as it were body and soul for the sake of one glorious one: in short they cannot do, ~~without~~ slaves: may they would themselves rather be slaves than free men without them - it would save so much trouble.

Would it? Well, I don't know: in the long run I think not: but then, you see, such men don't trouble themselves about the long run; or they would understand that ignorant & unhappy people are dangerous people; that they desire ignorance, hate ignorance, avenge themselves ignorantly, and not infrequently in one ruin those who have wronged them with those who indolently refused to right them, and those that could not right them though they strove sorely.

All for my part, Sirs, so that we may have no strife in the land save what may be carried on with the printing press & the ballot-box, I say let us take the trouble - any trouble to live like free men. And now look you, it is some 6 years that I have scarcely felt like a free man, and that lies heavily upon me; and in spite of all my good wishes for your welfare I hope it does upon you also, & upon all those whose principles bind them to Peace, Retrenchment, and Reform.

For in that case I know it will not be long before we shall all be free again, and shall see the England that we love once more moving on the forward path, and with a clear conscience shall be able to cry, "May the Right prevail!"

W.M. Jan 30th 1880

2.30 A.M.

Kings College, Upper Mall
Hammermill