



William Michael Rossetti, by Ford Madox Brown, 1865

THE PRE-RAPHAELITES AND THE COLBECK COLLECTION

Florence S. Boos

Norman Colbeck was a bookseller from London and southern England who was persuaded by the entreaties and friendship of William/“Dick” Fredeman to sell his collection to the University of British Columbia and to relocate there in 1967, where he spent many years in cataloging its contents. Colbeck had lived during a period in which Pre-Raphaelite authors were held in high regard as avant-garde Victorian artists and writers, and he had purchased a part of his collection from the Victorian bookseller H. Buxton Forman, who had in turn acquired the stock of F. S. Ellis, publisher and friend of both Dante Gabriel Rossetti and William Morris. Dick Fredeman was first known for his 1965 comprehensive bibliography, *Pre-Raphaelitism, A Bibliocritical Study*. I can claim to have been influenced by this, for as a graduate student I purchased its to-me relatively expensive self and pored over its new and exciting contents.

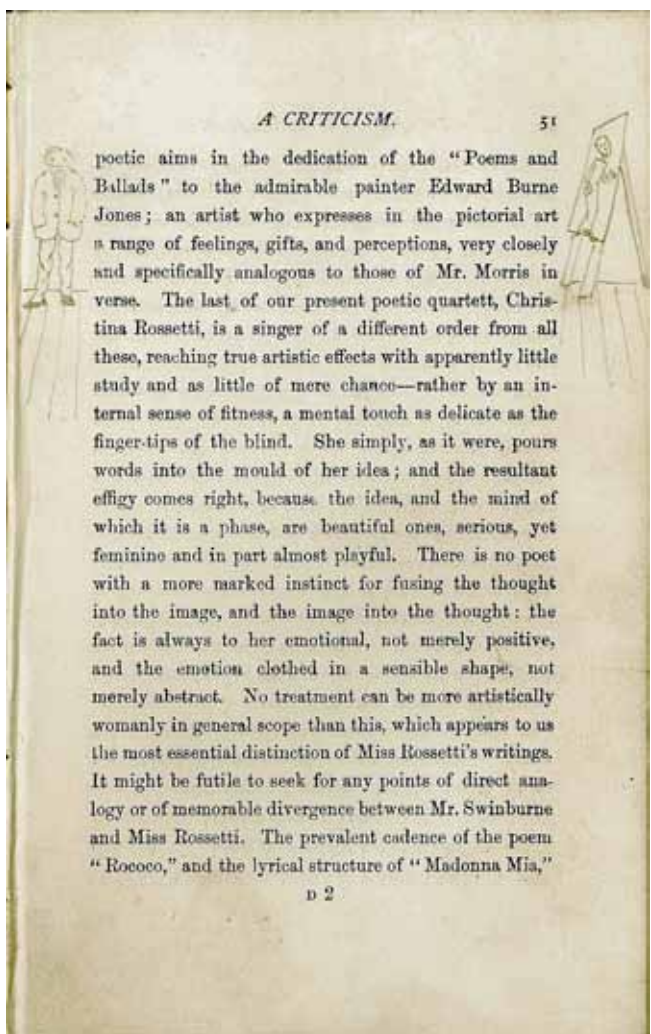
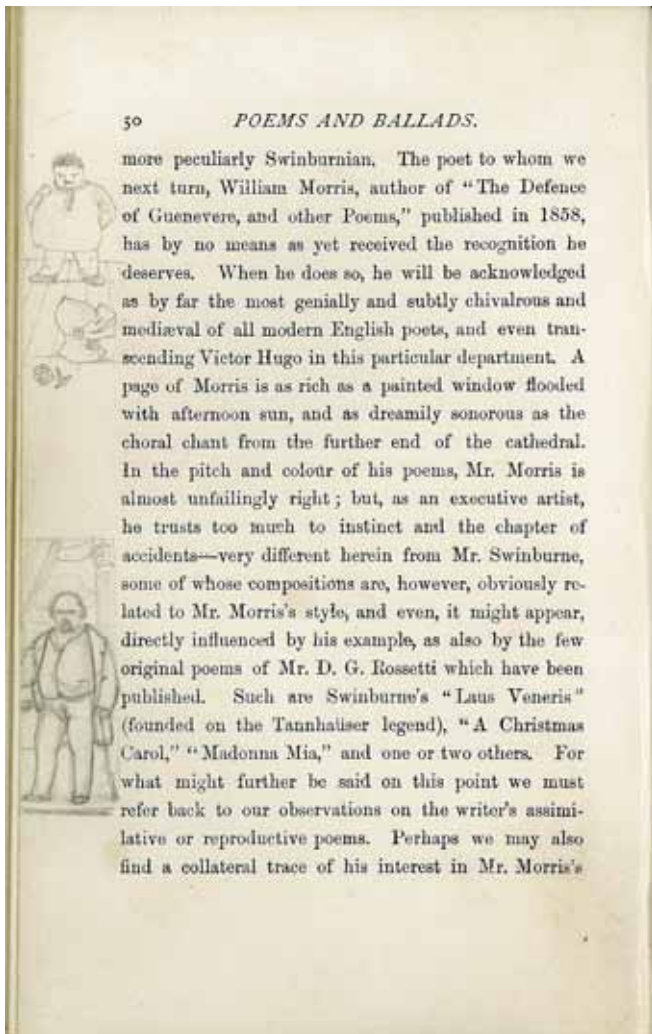
As a scholar Fredeman was somewhat atypical—not a literary critic per se, nor yet a biographer or historian—but something in between all these, a man who directed a laser-like focus on every minute detail which could be known about the lives and manuscripts of D. G. Rossetti and the Rossetti family. It might be said that he

lived in order to *be* a Rossetti, a time traveler as it were, and I don’t doubt that the inner workings of the Rossetti family were dearer to him than those of his own. Moreover he possessed a zest, even a lust, for retrieving and expatriating these manuscripts and artifacts—becoming the Lord Elgin of Rossettiana, as it were, as unflatteringly memorialized in A. S. Byatt’s *Possession* in the figure of Mortimer Cropper. It was Fredeman who in the 1960s discovered the Penkill Castle Scott-Boyd manuscripts, now also housed in the University of British Columbia Library Special Collections. These contained W. B. Scott’s gossipy letters from London to his mistress in Scotland which confided details of Rossetti’s affair with Jane Morris. More highmindedly, perhaps, from the same manuscripts Fredeman was able to sort out Rossetti’s mental state and writing habits during the period of his 1869-70 collapse and convalescence at Penkill Castle, and thus date the sequence of composition of his most important work, the 101 sonnet sequence “The House of Life.” For those who cared about Rossetti’s poetry, this sequence became at once more understandable and more poignant.

The Colbeck Collection was thus not the first which Fredeman had procured for his home university; in addition to the Penkill Papers, he had obtained from Dante’s brother William Michael’s surviving daughters and their heirs the vast and miscellaneous contents of the Angeli-Dennis Collection of items left behind at William Michael Rossetti’s death. William Rossetti (1829-1919) was in a sense Fredeman’s 19th century doppelgänger, an exhaustive recorder, collector, organizer, and preserver, in Rossetti’s case, of the letters, diaries, and memorabilia of his extended Italian family, his immediate English family, including Dante Gabriel and Christina and their writings, and his many associations gained through life as a member of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, editor, art and literary critic, friend, and friend of friends. Since the Colbeck Collection’s holdings are especially strong in Pre-Raphaelite, Rossetti, and Morris-related books and manuscripts, the



William Michael Rossetti, photograph, Julia Margaret Cameron, 1865



William Michael Rosetti - Swinburne's Poems and Ballads, 1866

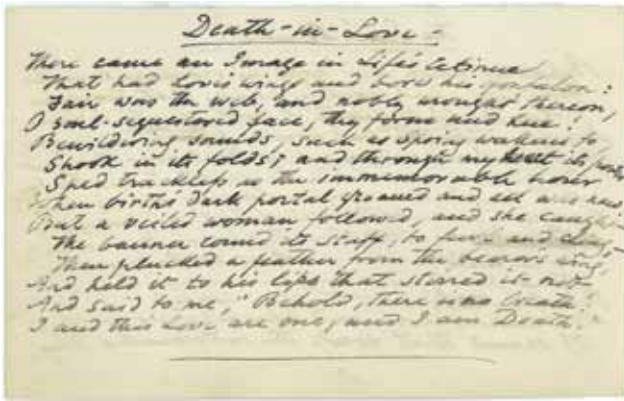
ary works, and it took some courage to write a critical treatise on Algernon Swinburne's heretical and somewhat scandalous 1866 *Poems and Ballads*. Published in the immediate wake of Swinburne's widely condemned poems, William Michael's volume was clearly intended to help a beleaguered friend and member of the wider Pre-Raphaelite circle. Moreover, in this one page opening William Michael additionally manages to praise his brother, his sister, and William Morris—the latter at a time after the latter's first volume, *The Defence of Guenevere*, had been highly criticized by reviewers, and before his 1867 *The Life and Death of Jason* had evoked praise.

Note too the page's clearly recognizable caricatures of Morris and Rossetti, along with the tiny caricature of a thin and diminished Edward Burne-Jones, very dimly traced on the left margin of the right hand page. The Colbeck catalogue does not identify the artist, but the style is recognizably that of Burne-Jones, an early pupil of Dante Rossetti with a lifelong fondness for ex-

actly such comic caricatures. And since we can see on the inside cover, "With the compliments of the author," presumably William had presented it to Edward. This single page testifies to the strong ties between five young men—Algernon, William Michael, Dante, Edward, and William—and one sister, all at the time friends who shared literary and artistic preferences.

TWO ROSSETTI AUTOGRAPHS AND A MYSTERY:

Long before Dick Fredeman made his way to Mrs. Angeli's home in Italy, William Michael had during his lifetime carefully dispersed the bulk of his more famous siblings' artworks and literary manuscripts to English repositories, where they presumably might reinforce the latter's reputations. Thus there are only a few of Dante's poetic manuscripts in the UBC collections, sonnets from the sequence "The House of Life" preserved in the Colbeck Manuscript Archives denuded of their context.



Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *The House of Life*

"Death-in-Love," no. 48

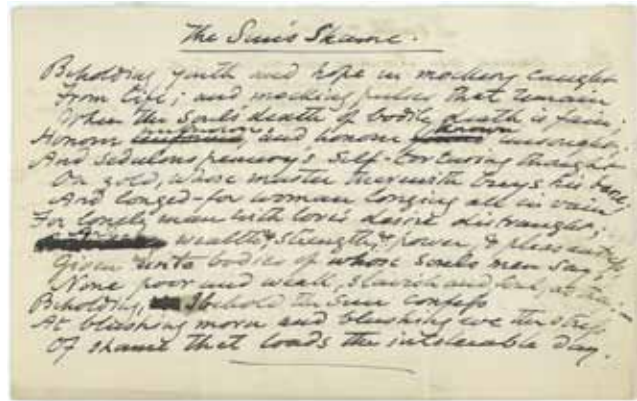
These fair copies of "Death-in-Love" and "The Sun's Shame," nos. 48 and 92 of "The House of Life," were by Fredeman's and others' dating composed in 1869. The former is a fair copy and was most likely prepared for enclosure in a letter. However he revised "The Sun's Shame," as we can see, and later altered it yet further for the published work: its somewhat awkward final lines: "Beholding, I behold the sun confess / At blushing morn and blushing eve the stress / Of shame that loads the intolerable day" are in 1870 transformed into the powerful statement: "Beholding these things, I behold no less / The blushing morn and blushing eve confess / The shame that loads the intolerable day."

Also in the Angeli-Dennis collection, listed only under the discrete title, "unidentified manuscript," 1847, may be found another poem in the youthful Dante Rossetti's hand. One must admit that the literary claims of "Ego Mater Pulchrae Delectionis, et Timoris, et Acquisitionis, et Sancta Opes" are extremely modest, but its topic is one which had appealed to the young painter of "The Girlhood of Mary Virgin," one of Dante's earliest efforts. Could this be a hitherto undiscovered original juvenile poem which even Fredeman had failed to notice? How had the indexer been certain that the poem should be dated 1847, if nothing else was known?



Dante Gabriel Rossetti, "Mater Pulchrae Delectionis"

The Rossetti Archive lists an 1847 poem, "Mater Pulchrae Delectionis,"



"The Sun's Shame," no. 92,

the sole autograph of which is housed at Duke, and which is clearly a cognate effort since several of its lines are similar. Apparently the less polished and still-unpublished Colbeck version, at 146 lines, in contrast to the Duke manuscript's 63 lines, was one of several draft poems prepared the same year for Rossetti's informal collection "Songs of the Art Catholic." Less finished than the Duke version, the Colbeck's "Ego Mater Pulchrae Delectionis" nonetheless resembles in tone Rossetti's "Ave," a celebration of Mary's girlhood included in Rossetti's 1870 *Poems*. This hitherto little-noted youthful poetic draft would thus seem to earn the modest distinction of being one of very few Rossetti drafts newly identified in recent years.

A CHRISTINA ROSSETTI MANUSCRIPT:

As mentioned, the literary manuscripts of the Rossettis were presumably sold or carefully distributed during his lifetime by William, always jealous for the reputation of his famous siblings. For this Christina Rossetti autograph we are indebted to a female network; it is found in the day book of Elizabeth Bromley Brown (1819-1846), the first wife of Dante's closest friend, the artist Ford Madox Brown. Along with Elizabeth's own poems, penned in a delicate tiny script now virtually unreadable from the fading of the ink and thus possibly forever lost, is inserted a copy of one of Christina's poems written out by Elizabeth's daughter Lucy Madox Brown (who married William Rossetti in 1874),



Christina Rossetti, "Twilight Night"

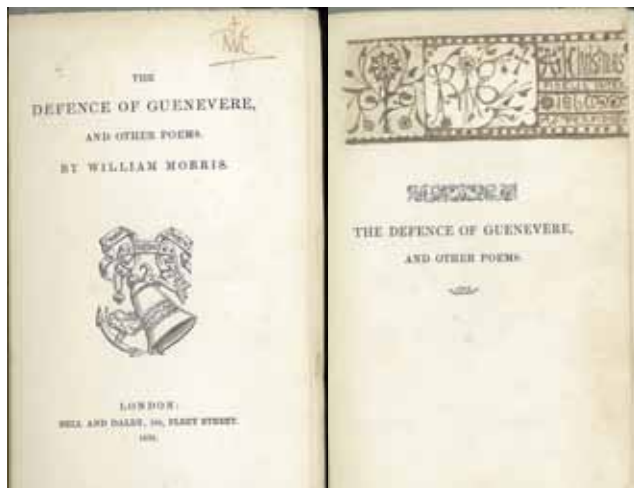
followed by an autograph copy of “Twilight Night” by Christina, presumably written out as a gift by the poet.

Elizabeth died of tuberculosis in 1846 at the age of 27 when Christina was 17, and the poem would seem to be from a later time (it was first published in the *Argosy* in 1866). So more likely the orphaned Lucy may have retained her mother’s day book and poems, and her placement of a poem by her present or future sister-in-law next to the verses of her dead mother was a mark of high respect. Once again this is a fair copy written out as a keepsake, a testimony to the strengthening of sentimental ties through poetry and evidence that those in her personal circle prized Christina’s efforts.

WILLIAM MORRIS’S *DEFENCE OF GUENEVERE*

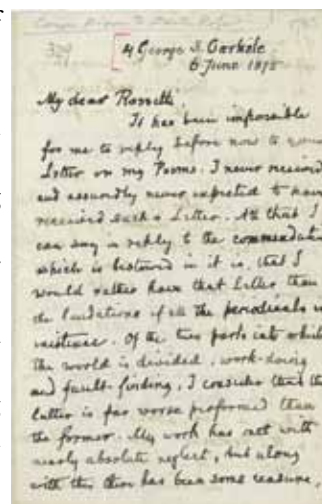
Although *The Defence of Guenevere* is one of Morris’s literary works most admired by 20th and 21st century critics, at the time of its appearance it was severely attacked by reviewers for its medieval themes and what seemed its abrupt style.

It is interesting to see that the owner of this first edition must have thought differently, for he has inscribed his personalized initials with care, both on the flyleaf and within. Since Morris sold few copies of the book, who could this devoted owner be? When I saw the initials R. W. E.—or G.? or B?— I felt surely this must be an error for R. W. D. Richard Watson Dixon was indeed Morris’s friend, a member of the group which issued *The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine*, a brief co-tenant with Edward Burne-Jones and Morris of an apartment in Red Lion Square, and the author of a detailed memoir of Morris’s Oxford days in which he praised what were in his view the young Morris’s completely new and original early poems.



Defence of Guenevere, 1858, title page; design 1860

The inscriber of these initials must have been artistically inclined, and Dixon, like Edward Burne-Jones and Morris, had briefly taken painting lessons from D. G. Rossetti. Moreover the initialer seems religious—note the little crosses—but in a High Church style, current at the time. Among the Oxford Brotherhood Dixon was the first to take orders, and it was he who officiated at the wedding of Jane Burden and William

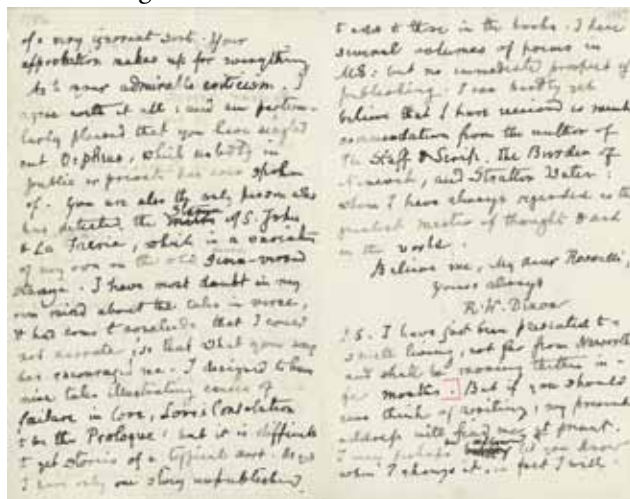


Richard Watson Dixon, letter to Dante Gabriel Rossetti

Morris. So it all fits—except that third initial—and a search through the list of Morris’s reviewers and friends reveals no R. W. E. Could Dixon, like Charles Gabriel Dante Rossetti, have had a third given name?

So the identity of the owner is still uncertain. Letters from R. W. Dixon to Rossetti, however, appear in the Angeli-Dennis Collection, written to send Rossetti a copy of his newly published 1861 *Historical Odes*, and later, to express his gratification at Rossetti’s praise:

All that I can say in reply to the commendation which is bestowed in it is, that I would rather have that letter than the laudations of all the periodicals in existence.... I can hardly yet believe that I have received so much commendation from the author of *The Staff & Script*, *The Burden of Nineveh*, and *Stratton Water*, whom I have always regarded as the greatest master of thought & art in the world.



Richard Watson Dixon, letter to Dante Gabriel Rossetti, ff. 2-3

After Oxford Dixon had moved to northern England and thus seen little of his former associates, and he recounts a later visit with Morris and Burne Jones at Naworth Castle, noting, perhaps regretfully, that all the friends had altered in the meantime.

Morris inscribed copies of his manuscripts and books to his close friend Georgiana Burne-Jones, and after her death her children donated many of these to the library of the Fitzwilliam Museum. This inscribed copy of Morris's prose romance *The Roots of the Mountains* is thus a rarity, and the honeysuckle design fabric cover was an experiment used only for *Roots*. Morris must not have greatly liked the results, for the fabric cover was never used again, though others have found it quite attractive.



WILLIAM MORRIS AND ALFRED LINNELL

Morris spent much of the last 12 years of his life, from 1884-96, campaigning on behalf of the newly emergent Socialist movement. A modern commentator, Nicholas Salmon, has claimed that during this period he may have been Britain's most active political propagandist, as leader of the Socialist League from 1885-89 and indefatigable lecturer to audiences in London, the north country, and Scotland (Salmon, ed., Morris, *Political Writings*, xlviii) A constant problem for Socialists of the period was that of repeated attacks by the police, who harassed and arrested their outdoor speakers, fined and imprisoned the latter, and on occasion, clubbed and killed protesters. Morris himself wished the Socialist League to concentrate on persuasion rather than mass protests, but League members also loyally supported meetings called by their more assertive sister-organization, the Socialist Democratic Federation. As a result, on 20 November 1887 Morris and his fellow Socialists of all persuasions were present at the event which would be later named "Bloody Sunday."

The SDF and the Irish National League had called a meeting in Trafalgar Square to protest a recent harsh Coercion Bill against the Irish as well as the government's failure to provide unemployment relief. At the

event the police, supplemented by members of the army, charged on the upwards of 10,000 unarmed protesters, wounding more than 200 and arresting 400. The next week the protesters reconvened to assert the right of assembly, and in the ensuing charge the police, now supplemented by newly hired "special constables," fatally wounded a bystander, Alfred Linnell, a young clerk who may not himself have been engaged in the protest. Thousands gathered for Linnell's funeral, at which Morris spoke, appealing for solidarity, "Let us feel that he is our brother." He also composed a poem to be sung on the occasion:

Here lies the sign that we shall break our prison;
Amidst the storm he won a prisoner's rest;
But in the cloudy dawn the sun arisen
Brings us our day of work to win the best.
Not one, not one, nor thousands must they slay,
But one and all if they would dusk the day. (st. 4)

The cover design of this 8 page pamphlet by Walter Crane is often reproduced, but its contents are less well-known, perhaps because few historians have been able to see its interior. The Colbeck Collection's copy makes grim reading: the police had not bothered to assist Linnell as he lay wounded and in pain, the chief of police had forbidden the newspapers to mention the incident, and the hospital had denied to his relatives that he had been admitted. At his death Linnell was hastily buried by officials who claimed that his body had received no injuries from an attack, whereas a later court-mandated autopsy revealed deep bruises. Moreover it seems clear that—even after the attack—under less hostile treatment Linnell would have survived. Unfortunately this 1887 account of police brutality and attempted coverup seems all too familiar.

CRIME ALERT! WHITE COLLAR FORGERY!

Mr. Colbeck was an honest and scrupulous man, and his catalogue is the work of a true booklover with good literary knowledge and an excellent capacity to organize masses of detail. Unfortunately, as mentioned earlier, he had purchased some of his collection from H. Buxton Forman on the latter's retirement. Forman was also a British bookseller and William Morris bibliographer, who had served as the accomplice of one of the turn-of-the-century's best known literary forgers, Thomas J. Wise, whose deceptions were first exposed by John Carter and Graham Pollard in their 1934 *An Inquiry into the Nature of Certain Nineteenth Century Pamphlets*. Perhaps because Buxton-Forman was a Mor-

(ALFRED LINNELL.)

ON SUNDAY AFTERNOON, November 20th, 1887, when the specials were in the Square, and a great indignation meeting was being held in Hyde Park, Alfred Linnell, law-writer, walked down after dinner to Northumberland-avenue to see what was going on in the Square. When he got there he found a considerable crowd had assembled, through whom the mounted police were plunging in the fashion with which London is now so familiar. According to the *Times* of November 21, he, with those among whom he found himself, indignant at the recklessness with which the police were riding over the people, hooted the mounted constables. They resented it in their usual fashion, riding their restive, bean-full horses into the crowd at the same time that the foot police drove the people away. There was a rush as for life, and in the rush Linnell fell. In a moment the police cavalry were upon him, and the charger of one of the constables trampled him as he lay, smashing his thigh bone beneath the horse's hoof. Then they rode on, leaving Linnell writhing on the ground. There was a police ambulance in the Square, but no attempt was made to succour the poor wretch whom they had done to death at the base of Charles Stuart's statue. He lay there for some minutes. In his agony it seemed hours. At last some compassionate bystanders raised him in their arms and carried him as tenderly as they could to Charing-cross Hospital. Of all those who saw him fall that day only one has come forward. Here is his narrative :—

24, Stanley-street, New-cross, S.E.,
December 9, 1887.

Sir,—I beg to make the following statement :—
On Sunday, the 20th ult., I went to Trafalgar-square in the afternoon, and very soon I found myself in the middle of a comparatively large crowd. I can positively say that the crowd was orderly, and kept "moving on." While in this state of motion we were suddenly charged by the police—not the mounted constables—who made a sudden rush, with a view, I presume, of clearing the pavement. Being a comparative stranger in London, I cannot *exactly* state where this took place; but I have a distinct recollection that it was at the corner of a street which had a slight incline. Such, I believe, is Northumberland-avenue.

While thus rushing along we noticed a man down on the pavement. Three or four of us succeeded

in turning the direction of the crowd to the side, and picked the poor fellow up. I cannot say whether he was knocked down in the rush or not. There we found him. He was evidently in great pain, his only words being, "I'm a dead man, I'm a dead man." Four of us picked him up and carried him to the Charing-cross Hospital, that being the nearest. At every step we took he groaned piteously, complaining of his thigh. Please bear this in mind—at the present moment I cannot swear positively, although I have every reason to believe, that he was the late Mr. Alfred Linnell. I believe that the injured person was he because (1) he complained of great pain in his thigh, which coincides with the injuries which Mr. Linnell received; (2) I believe him to be the more seriously hurt of the two who were attended at Charing-cross Hospital on that day.—I am, Sir, yours truly,

W. EDWIN DAVIES.

The following letter, which bears directly on the question of the conduct of the police at the time when Alfred Linnell was killed, has been addressed to the sister of the deceased :—

Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and
Joiners, Bow Branch,
December 11, 1887.

I do positively declare that undue force was used by the police in Northumberland-avenue on the 20th of November. I saw the patrols make wild charges on the people, both in the road and on the pavement. I thought they were trying to imitate the heroes of Balaclava, six mounted police rushing backwards and forwards to and from Trafalgar-square to a line of foot police drawn across the bottom of the Avenue; the result of this wilful charge being that people were knocked about recklessly, and those that ran in front or were compelled to run in front of these custodians of the law were met by this line of policemen at the bottom of the Avenue, and as the people came up to them these men struck out right and left and hit the people wickedly. I saw one knocked down insensible from a full butt punch in the face by one of the police. I assisted him in a cab. I wanted to go to the hospital with him, but was prevented by the preservers of order, saying at the same time, "'Tis a pity it hasn't killed the b——." I ventured a remark of disapproval, when I was politely told, "You'll damned

soon get served the same if you are not off." I wanted to get this man's number, when I was set upon by half-a-dozen police, the result being that I came away with extreme disgust for such protectors of law and order. I swear that this is the plain, unvarnished truth.

W. GREEN, Secretary

17, Fairfield-road, Bow.

P.S.—I ought to add that these wild charges were enthusiastically applauded by the occupants of the verandahs of one of the hotels.

In one of these "wild charges" there appears to be little doubt Alfred Linnell fell, and when he fell the police rode over him, fracturing his thigh.

Alfred Linnell was no popular hero. He was in no sense an ideal man. He was poor. He had been at one time somewhat unsteady, and after his wife's death he left his two children, a girl of ten and a boy of twelve, to the care of a brother-in-law, who, having four children of his own, was obliged to send the little Linnells to the workhouse school of the Holborn Union at Mitcham. There the boy had recently died. Linnell was in uncertain work, and he had many troubles. Nevertheless, poor wretch though he was, he could not be said to have deserved, even if taken at the worst, capital punishment by slow torture. But that was his fate.

It was the 20th of November, in the afternoon of Sunday, that he was carried groaning in his agony across the turbulent eddying flood of human life that surged around the Square, to the place where he was to die. He gave the name of Reynolds instead of that of Linnell. It was a name by which he used to be known when a boy. A little fellow who had been playing in front of the Hospital went home and told his aunt that he had seen a poor man carried in from the Square with his leg smashed. "Dear me," she said, "to think that even children cannot be about nowadays without seeing such things!" She little knew that the poor man was her own brother. Days passed, and no one went near Linnell but an old companion who had worked with him. He seemed to be getting on all right, and hoped to recover. After nearly a week had passed the son of this visitor meeting his sister casually in the street told her that something had happened to her brother, and that he was lying injured at Charing-cross Hospital. Wild with alarm she hastened there, only to be told that there was no such person in the hospital. She persisted, but the name Reynolds misled them. They were sure he was not in the hospital, although a law writer who was maimed on the 20th of November in the Square might have been close enough for his identification. From Charing Cross she went to seek him at Westminster, and from Westminster to

St. Thomas's. On her way to St. Thomas's a policeman told her that if her brother had been hurt in the Square he must be at Charing-cross. She did not cross the river, but went away relieved, feeling sure that the story about her brother was false. Some days afterwards she met her old informant. "You have been having a game with me," said she; "my brother's not in the hospital." "He is," was the reply; "he is in the Albert Edward Ward, under Sister Ellen." His sister hastened back to the hospital. At first she was again assured that it was a mistake, but she persisted, and at last she and her daughter were admitted to see him.

He lay in bed suffering sorely from his thigh. After the first greeting was over, they asked how the accident occurred. He replied that he was walking up the Avenue to the Square to see what was going on, and that the mounted police rode at them. The crowd ran, he fell, and a mounted constable rode over him as he lay in the street. The horse kicked him, he said, on his leg, making a bad bruise below the knee, and when riding over broke his thigh. The bone was protruding through the skin, and the pain was intense.

He said he was kindly treated by the nurse, and that he was allowed to have lemonade, brandy-and-water, or beer as he pleased, but beer he could not touch. The fracture of the thigh was very severe. After the bone had been set, the thigh had to be opened and a piece of bone taken out.

It was on a Wednesday that they saw him last. He said the doctor had told him he would be well again in a month. He talked kindly to his women-folk. "Come closer, closer to me," he said. "It does me good to feel you beside me," and propping himself as best he could he put one arm round the neck of his sister and the other round that of his niece. He talked a little, and then his voice faltered and broke. "I don't know what I shall do," he said, as the tears filled his eyes. "I am in such pain." "Don't worry," said his sister, soothing him as best she could, "there's a dear; you will soon be well again now."

So they thought that Wednesday afternoon, and when they bade him good-bye no one dreamed that it was for ever. Ada, his niece, promised to come back on Friday. She kept her word; but when she arrived she was too late. It was about five minutes to four on Friday afternoon when he breathed his last. No word was sent to his relatives, no intimation was given his friends. On Wednesday he was expected to recover. On Friday he lay dead. He had died alone. His boy at Harwich, his girl at Mitcham, had never been communicated with. His sister, who lived within a stone's throw, was not sent for. Neither did they take his deposition

ris bibliographer, or because Morris had just died in 1896, several of Wise and Forman's dishonest creations were fraudulent "editions" ascribed to Morris. Here is one, identified by Colbeck:



Such "editions" often offer telltale signs that they might not be as claimed. The choice of materials can seem odd, as in this case. Would Morris have wanted or needed special private printings of disparate and random items from his writings? And why were the sole copies of these putative "editions" those sold by Buxton-Forman? Works published earlier in Morris's career

would have circulated long enough so that someone else surely would have seen them. Thus it was safer to forge copies of something written later which might plausibly have still remained unknown, and Morris's recent death made him an especially convenient victim. And whereas the Rossetti poets had the ever-vigilant William still alive to protect their legacies, Morris's widow Jane and daughter May would have been largely innocent of the book market. It would take further research to prove or disprove the authenticity of some other alleged Morris pamphlets or editions in the Colbeck Collection, but this booklet is not the sole instance in which a small edition struck me as suspicious, though it is the only one which Colbeck recognized as such.

MATHILDE BLIND

An important feature of the Colbeck collection is its excellent coverage of women poets, then emerging into prominence in the late Victorian and early modern period—Augusta Webster, Amy Levy, Mary Coleridge, Emily Hickey, Rosamond Marriott Watson, Rosa Newmarch, Ruth Pitter and many others. One of the most substantive of these writers was Mathilde Blind (1841-96), a poet of scientific and feminist themes. Blind was closely associated with the Rossetti circle, especially William Michael and Ford Madox Brown, and her published sonnet sequences reflect the influence of Dante Rossetti's "The House of Life."

Blind was born in Germany and emigrated to England at the age of 11 with her mother Frederike and stepfather, the former German revolutionary Karl Blind. She studied art with Ford Madox Brown, and her letters in the Angeli-Dennis collection to William—whose

edition of Shelley she had reviewed and who reviewed favorably her epic poem on the Highland Clearances, *The Heather on Fire*—are warm and personal. The Colbeck Collection contains a copy of her 1891 *Dramas in Miniature*, presented "to my dear friend Harold Rathbone" with an as-yet unpublished autograph sonnet, "In Memory of the St. Gotthard Pass, August 1891."



Mathilde Blind, portrait, Harold Rathbone, National Portrait Gallery

Ill health in her later years had prompted Blind's journeys to Italy and Switzerland, site of St. Gotthard's Pass. The sonnet sequence of her 1893 volume, *Songs and Sonnets*, poeticizes a period of loneliness and despair at the world's many injustices, suddenly lightened by witnessing an image of hope: the bursting forth of light over a cloud-shrouded mountain.

So does the face of this scarred mountain height
Relax its stony frown, while slow uprolled
Invidious mists are changed to veiling gold.
Wild peaks still fluctuate between dark and bright,
But when the sun laughs at them, as of old,
They kiss high heaven in all embracing light.



Mathilde Blind, photograph, c. 1870



Mathilde Blind, *Dramas in Miniature*, Frontispiece, Ford Madox Brown, 1891

But who was Harold Rathbone, her “dear friend”? An artist and member of the literary and philanthropic Liverpool Quaker Rathbone family, Harold (1858-1929) had painted Mathilde’s portrait two years earlier in 1889, when he would have been 31 years of age. The Angeli-Dennis collection contains his letter to William Michael written after the poet’s death, requesting that William prompt the director of the National Gallery to include his portrait of Blind in their collection, and suggesting that William Michael might wish to affirm “the literary genius of our friend.” Presumably the ever-helpful William did so, for although Blind was also painted by both Ford Madox Brown and Lucy Madox Brown, Rathbone’s portrait of Blind in tasteful aesthetic dress remains her official image in the Gallery.

MICHAEL FIELD

Michael Field was the penname of Katherine Bradley (1846-1914) and Edith Cooper (1862-1913), an aunt-niece lesbian couple who lived and wrote together, issuing more than 30 volumes of poems and poetic dramas from the 1870s until their deaths in 1914 and 1913 respectively. Their poems on paintings show the influ-

ence of Dante Rossetti’s poetic meditations on artworks, their love sonnets exhibit a similar Petrarchan structure to his, and with characteristic boldness, their sonnet “To Christina Rossetti” accuses the earlier poet of cowardice in her rejection of sensual love. The Fields’ unorthodox lifestyle may have contributed to the neglect of their works until the resurgence of feminism in the 1970s returned them explosively to literary notice. Many would now argue that, along with Oscar Wilde, the Fields were the most significant poets of the fin de siècle.

One of their last works, *Whym Chow: Flame of Love* (1914), is distinctive as the sole poetic sequence in English which celebrates love for a dog, in this case, the Fields’ recently deceased chow. The sequence is couched in the languages of courtly love and religion, a fusion of Catholicism and paganism, as the poet appeals to Whym, now deified, to lead the lovers into a heavenly afterlife. Those familiar with nineteenth century elegies will recognize the diction and metaphors of the sequence, and dog lovers may find the poets’ shared canine-worship quite defensible, but few will be surprised that this quite unconventional poem arouses mixed responses. It is however a perennial favorite with my students, two of whom have delivered conference presenta-

tions on the subject. To one of these, in fact, I am indebted for the suggestion that the soft brown leather cover of the volume's limited edition is intended to suggest Whym's golden/russet hair.

The series begins its invocation with an expression of loss and concludes with a prayer that their little friend may mediate for them the waters of eternal life:



Ask and it shall be given thee—
Then I ask
One little spring may well up in my heart
To everlasting life. It is Thy task
God of the Waters that impulsive start
In Love's domain, to keep perpetual
Their care of life, their circling font at brim,
Nor to let drowth-delighting waves grow dull,
Unbreathed on by the winds from rim to rim.
God of the Living Waters, at Thy hand
I ask my little Chow's upwelling love
In liberal current ever. Thy command
Removing cruel thirst now and above.

I myself became more reconciled to this sequence when I grasped that it was written, perhaps largely by Katherine, when she was herself fatally ill, and as she mourned Edith's approaching death and the demise of their lives and relationship. And in this day of ecological consciousness, after innumerable romantic poems devoted to human-human attachments, it seems fair to acknowledge the appropriateness of a poetic sequence on human-animal love.

As I've tried to show, the Colbeck and its related collections still contain many surprises, some of wider cultural import and others merely interesting, and more such will doubtless be uncovered as the collections are further catalogued or digitized and researchers with different perspectives peruse their contents. It is gratifying that so much Pre-Raphaelite, Victorian, and early twentieth-century British material has traveled 9,000 miles to the western edge of North America, with only the Huntington Library in Southern California housing Pacific Rim collections of equal quality.

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Katherine Harris Bradley & Edith Emma Cooper



Colophon, Eragny Press,
Whym Chow, Flame of Love, 1914