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Books from the Kelmscott Press

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Colby Library Quarterly

Series I

October 1946

Number 16

BOOKS FROM THE KELMSCOTT PRESS

IN a beautifully printed book which recently came to the college library the following sentences are found: "An old engraving hangs upon my library wall. From an architectural standpoint it is ugly. . . . It . . . shows the old University Press building in . . . Cambridge . . . as it appeared . . . in 1891, . . . of which institution . . . I became the executive head four years later. . . . There are two [other] frames hanging on my library walls which represent a great deal to me. One is a photograph of William Morris; the other a leaf of the Kelmscott 'Chaucer.' If it had not been for William Morris I should not have continued in the profession of designing and building books."¹ It is fifty years since William Morris died. "That virile genius was as varied as masterly in his gifts, and as tireless in energy as any great figure of the heyday of the Italian Renaissance. Michael Angelo and Leonardo da Vinci would have hailed him brother."² After a busy career during which he had poured new life into the arts and crafts — the weaving of tapestries, the making of furniture, the printing of cotton and linen cloth, the designing of type and the making of books — Morris ended his long devotion to art on October 3, 1896. On October 3, 1946, the Colby College Library will observe this fiftieth anniversary by opening an exhibition of nearly three dozen products of his famous Kelmscott Press.

Morris's "adventure" as a printer began late in his life as

¹ William Dana Orcutt, *From My Library Walls*, New York, Longmans, Green & Co., 1945; pages 157 and 164.

² Stanley Morison and Holbrook Jackson, *A Brief Survey of Printing History and Practice*, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1923; page 18.

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a purely private and personal activity. He designed his first type in 1889, cut his "Golden" letters in 1890 (for use in *The Golden Legend*), and printed his first book in 1891. His original plan was to print twenty copies to give to his friends, but an announcement in the *Athenaeum* led to so many urgent requests for copies that he eventually printed two hundred. One of these copies of Morris's first book is now in the Colby collection — the only copy in Maine. "No other printer since printing began has ever produced such a series of books as the fifty-three which poured from the Kelmescott Press during those wonderful seven years,"³ but unfortunately they were printed in such small quantities that few American libraries have been able to acquire copies; and on this fiftieth anniversary no library in New England is able to exhibit, from its own shelves, an entire set of the fifty-three volumes. We lack twenty of them. Harvard University has all but four; among these missing four are three titles found at Colby. The copies added to our collection since our first Kelmescott report two and a half years ago include a number which are as fresh, crisp, and clean as if they had been printed yesterday. They are a delight to both hand and eye.

On Morris's fiftieth anniversary, the number of products of his Press recorded in New England libraries is as follows:

Harvard University	49	Amherst College	2
COLBY COLLEGE	33	Clark University	2
Dartmouth College	32	Haverhill Public Library	2
Yale University	22	Radcliffe College	2
Brown University	13	Bangor Public Library	1
Smith College	10	Lowell Public Library	1
Wellesley College	10	Univ. of New Hampshire	1
Williams (Chapin Library)	10	Maine State Library	1
Connecticut College	3	Mt. Holyoke College	1

The "last book printed at the Kelmescott Press" — No. 53 in the series that follows — contained *A Note* by William Morris on his aims in founding the Kelmescott Press and an annotated "List of the Books printed thereat." The list is

³ Alfred W. Pollard, *Fine Books*, London, 1912; page 305.

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here repeated, in abbreviated form, to let our Library Associates know which books are now at Colby and which are still missing. Who will give which?

1. *The Story of the Glittering Plain* by William Morris, 1891. Of the 200 copies printed, Harvard and COLBY have two.

2. *Poems by the Way* by William Morris, 1891. Of 300 printed, copies are now at Brown, Clark, Harvard, Smith, and COLBY.

3. *The Love-Lyrics and Songs of Proteus* by Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, 1892. Large initials in red. Of 300 printed, copies are at Dartmouth, Harvard, Yale, and COLBY.

4. *The Nature of Gothic* by John Ruskin, 1892. Of 500 printed, copies are at Dartmouth, Harvard, Mt. Holyoke, Wellesley, Yale, and COLBY.

5. *The Defence of Guenevere* by William Morris, 1892. Of 300 printed, Brown, Dartmouth, and Harvard have copies.

6. *A Dream of John Ball* by William Morris, 1892. Of 300 printed, Dartmouth and Harvard now have copies.

7. *The Golden Legend* by Jacobus de Voragine, translated by William Caxton, 3 vols., 1892. Of 500 printed, copies are now at Brown, Dartmouth, Harvard, Lowell City Library, Wellesley, Williams (the Chapin Library), Yale, and COLBY.

8. *The Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye* by Raoul Lefevre, translated by William Caxton, 2 vols., 1892. Of 300 printed, copies are now at Dartmouth, Harvard, Smith, Williams, and COLBY.

9. *Biblia Innocentium* by J. W. Mackail, 1892. Of the 200 copies printed, Harvard has the only one recorded in New England.

10. *The History of Reynard the Foxe* by William Caxton, 1892. Of 300 printed, copies are now at Brown, Dartmouth, Harvard, Williams, Yale, and COLBY.

11. *The Poems of William Shakespeare*, edited by F. S. Ellis, 1893. Of 500 printed, copies are at Amherst, Dartmouth, Harvard, Haverhill Public Library, and COLBY.

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12. *News from Nowhere* by William Morris, 1893. One of the 300 copies printed is at Harvard.

13. *The Order of Chivalry*, translated by William Caxton, 1893. Only 225 copies printed; Connecticut College, Harvard, Williams, and Yale have copies.

14. *The Life of Thomas Wolsey*, by George Cavendish, 1893. Of 250 printed, copies are now at Dartmouth, Harvard, Yale, and COLBY.

15. *The History of Godefrey of Boloynes*, reprinted from Caxton's 1481 edition, 1893. Of 300 printed, copies are now at Connecticut College, Dartmouth, Harvard, Smith, and Williams.

16. *Utopia* by Sir Thomas More, 1893. Of 300 printed, copies are now at Dartmouth, Harvard, Radcliffe, and Yale.

17. *Maud* by Alfred Lord Tennyson, 1893. Of 500 printed, copies are now at Brown, Dartmouth, Harvard, Yale, and COLBY.

18. *Gothic Architecture* by William Morris, 1893. Fifteen hundred copies of this lecture were printed; copies are now at Brown, Clark, Dartmouth, Harvard, Wellesley, and COLBY.

19. *Sidonia the Sorceress* by William Meinhold, translated by Lady Wilde, 1893. Of 300 printed, Harvard, Yale, and COLBY have copies.

20. *Ballads and Narrative Poems*, and *Sonnets and Lyrical Poems*, by Dante Gabriel Rossetti, 1893. Of these two volumes 310 copies were printed; Brown, Harvard, and COLBY have copies of both volumes.

21. *The Tale of King Florus*, translated by William Morris, 1893. Of 350 printed, Harvard, Wellesley, and Yale have copies.

22. *The Story of the Glittering Plain* by William Morris, 1894. Harvard has three of the 250 copies printed.

23. *Of the Friendship of Amis and Amile*, translated by William Morris, 1894. Of 500 printed, copies are now at Amherst, Dartmouth, Harvard, Wellesley, and COLBY.

24. *The Poems of John Keats*, 1894. Morris printed 300

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copies of this book, which has been described as "the most sought after of all the smaller Kelmscott Press books." Copies at Harvard and COLBY.

25. *Atalanta in Calydon* by Algernon Charles Swinburne, 1894. Dartmouth and Harvard have two of the 250 copies printed.

26. *The Tale of the Emperor Coustans*, translated by William Morris, 1894. Of 525 printed, copies are now at Dartmouth, Harvard, Wellesley, Yale, and COLBY.

27. *The Wood beyond the World* by William Morris, 1894. Of 350 printed, Smith, Wellesley, and Yale have copies.

28. *The Book of Wisdom and Lies*, stories from Asia translated by Oliver Wardrop from the original of Sulkhan-Saba Orbeliani, 1894. Of the 250 copies printed, COLBY has the only copy recorded in New England.

29. The Poetical Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley, 3 vols., 1894-1895. Of 250 copies printed, COLBY has the only set of these three volumes recorded anywhere in New England.

30. *Psalmi Penitentiales*, 1894. These seven Penitential Psalms were edited by F. S. Ellis. Of 300 printed, copies are now at Dartmouth, Harvard, Yale, and COLBY.

31. *Epistola de Contemptu Mundi* by Frate Hieronymo da Ferrara (Savonarola), 1894. Only 150 copies were printed; copies are now at Dartmouth, Harvard, and COLBY.

32. *The Tale of Beowulf*, done out of the old English tongue by William Morris, 1895. Of 300 printed, copies are now at Dartmouth, Harvard, Williams, Yale, and COLBY.

33. *Syr Percyvulle of Gales*, after the edition by J. O. Halliwell from the Thornton MS. in the Library of Lincoln Cathedral, 1895. Of 350 printed, Dartmouth, Harvard, Yale and COLBY have copies.

34. *The Life and Death of Jason* by William Morris, 1895. Of the 200 printed, Williams and COLBY now have copies.

35. *Child Christopher* by William Morris, 2 vols., 1895. Of the 600 printed, copies are now at Brown, Connecticut College, Dartmouth, Harvard, Smith, Wellesley, Yale, and COLBY.

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36. *Hand and Soul* by Dante Gabriel Rossetti, 1895. 300 copies were printed for Way & Williams of Chicago; Harvard, the Maine State Library, University of New Hampshire, and COLBY now have copies. In addition 225 copies were printed to be "sold by William Morris"; Brown, Dartmouth and COLBY have copies. Both Colby copies are unique: the one with the Chicago imprint is the only one bound in mottled brown vellum; the one with the London imprint was bought by Mrs. Patrick Campbell and given by her to Thomas Hardy "in dear remembrance."

37. *Poems* by Robert Herrick, 1896. Of 250 printed, Dartmouth, Harvard, and Yale have copies.

38. *Poems* by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 1896. Of 300 printed, Dartmouth and Harvard have copies.

39. *The Well at the World's End* by William Morris, 1896. Of 350 printed, Harvard, Smith, and Yale have copies.

40. *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, 1896. The *magnum opus* of the Kelmscott Press; 425 copies were printed on paper and 13 on vellum. In presenting one of the vellum copies to Harvard, Henry Arthur Jones called it "the loving handiwork of the greatest man I have known." There are copies at Dartmouth, Harvard, Wellesley, Williams, Yale, and COLBY.

41. *The Earthly Paradise* by William Morris, 8 vols., 1896-1897. Of 225 printed, copies are now in the Bangor Public Library and at Harvard, Radcliffe, and Smith.

42. *Laudes Beatae Mariae Virginis*, 1896. Printed in three colors, this was the last book published by Morris. Of 250 printed, copies are now at Dartmouth, Harvard, Wellesley, Yale, and COLBY.

43. *The Floure and the Leafe* by Sir Thomas Clanvowe, 1896. Of 300 printed, copies are now at Brown, Dartmouth, Harvard, Yale, and COLBY.

44. *The Shepherdes Calendar* by Edmund Spenser, 1896. Of the 225 copies printed, one is now at Harvard.

45. *The Water of the Wondrous Isles* by William Morris,

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1897. Of 250 printed, copies are now at Dartmouth, Harvard, and Smith.

46. Froissart's *Chronicles*, 1897; trial pages of a projected edition, the completion of which was made impossible by Morris's death. Of 160 copies printed, Harvard has the only one recorded in a New England library.

47. *Sire Degrevaunt*, edited by F. S. Ellis, 1897. Of 350 printed, copies are now at Brown, Dartmouth, Harvard, the Haverhill Public Library, and COLBY.

48. *Syr Ysambrace*, edited by F. S. Ellis, 1897. Of 350 printed, copies are now at Brown, Harvard, and COLBY.

49. *Some German Woodcuts of the Fifteenth Century*, 1898. Of 225 printed, copies are now at Dartmouth, Harvard, Williams, and COLBY.

50. *The Story of Sigurd the Volsung* by William Morris, 1898. Only 160 copies printed; Harvard has one.

51. *The Sundering Flood* by William Morris, 1898. Of 300 printed, copies are now at Brown, Dartmouth, Harvard, Smith, and Yale.

52. *Love is Enough* by William Morris, with two wood-engravings designed by Sir Edward Burne-Jones, 1898. Printed in three colors, limp vellum binding, with three green silk ties. Of 300 printed, Harvard and COLBY have copies.

53. *A Note* by William Morris on his Aims in founding the Kelmscott Press, together with a Short Description of the Press by S. C. Cockerell, 1898. Of 525 copies printed, Dartmouth, Harvard, Smith, Williams, and COLBY now have copies.

Let us close this anniversary report with a quotation. "Why is it that the Kelmscott Books mark the beginning of the modern revival of fine printing, for such is unquestionably the case? . . . [Because] they are things of great beauty and the work of a decorative artist of unparalleled genius. As such they will always be prized by the collectors and amateurs of fine bookmaking." ⁴ Morris led printers

⁴ Douglas C. McMurtrie, *The Book*, New York, 1937; page 460.

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back to the fundamental principles of fine craftsmanship. Today, fifty years after his death, he still lives in the work of printers who have learned to improve upon Morris's books but who found their first artistic inspiration in the products of the Kelmscott Press.



HARDY IN AMERICA, BY CARL J. WEBER

BY DONALD SMALLEY *

ONE can easily divide *Hardy in America* into two parts. The first part should still be labeled *Hardy in America*; the second may well read *Weber on America*. The two books thus arrived at are about equally valuable, but they have separate uses. The first, after a thoughtful reading, will find an honored place on the shelf marked "reference"; the second will soon be dog-eared and thumb-marked and perhaps slightly scorched in the course of impassioned arguments. It may be lost by frequent lending. Otherwise it will eventually be wedged between Stuart Pratt Sherman's *On Contemporary Literature* and Bernard DeVoto's *The Literary Fallacy*.

The first ten chapters of Weber's new book carry out the promise of his preface to tell "the story of Thomas Hardy and his American readers." Throughout this section one is aware — though seldom oppressively — of the thoroughness of the author's researches and the wealth of fresh material that he has accumulated upon what, at first thought, seems to be a fairly narrow subject. Actually the subject is not narrow. Hardy has commanded a surprisingly large audience in the United States, and this account of his American readers from 1873 onward presents and interprets a highly

* Professor Smalley, who writes this review of the first book published by the Colby College Press, is a member of the English staff at Indiana University.