

# Colby



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## A KELMSCOTT JUBILEE

ON March 31, 1894, the Kelmscott Press, of No. 16 Upper Mall, Hammersmith, England, issued an announcement that it had "in the press" *The Poetical Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, to be published in three octavo volumes by William Morris. Two hundred and fifty copies of each volume were printed. Volume I was published in 1894, and Volumes II and III in 1895.

On March 31, 1944, just fifty years after the first announcement of this printing, the Kelmscott *Shelley* will be exhibited in the Colby College Library, with a card announcing that, according to the evidence assembled (and presented in detail in the following pages), only in the Colby College Library can a Kelmscott *Shelley* be seen anywhere in New England.

This half-century anniversary of one of the products of the famous press established by William Morris will serve as an occasion for exhibiting, along with the *Shelley*, all the other productions of the Kelmscott Press now found in the Colby library. Of these the chief item is the magnificent *Chaucer*, which has been hailed everywhere by connoisseurs of the art of book-making as one of the great books of all time. To quote Alfred W. Pollard's remarks in *Fine Books* (London, Methuen and Co., 1912, p. 305): "No other printer since printing began has ever produced such a series of books as the fifty-three which poured from the Kelmscott Press during those wonderful seven years, and no book that has ever been printed can be compared for richness of effect with the *Chaucer* which was the crowning achievement of the Press."

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The opening of this Kelmscott exhibition was announced at a meeting of the Colby Library Associates, held in the Women's Union, at which Professors Carr, Green, McCoy, Rush, and Weber spoke of various titles in the Kelmscott list and of specific features of the books. Some of the information given by the speakers is repeated in the following pages for the benefit of Associates and other readers unable to attend the meeting in Waterville.



### WILLIAM MORRIS AND THE KELMSCOTT PRESS

“WILLIAM MORRIS influenced the art of printing as no other man in modern times influenced it. . . . By the end of the seventeenth century . . . printing as an *art* had ceased to exist. Morris . . . went back to the fifteenth-century printers for his models. His . . . first book . . . was issued in 1891, and between that date and the year of his death, 1896, including the work begun by him but finished by the executors of his estate, the product of the Kelmscott Press comprised fifty-three titles. . . .

“Kelmscott volumes are highly prized by collectors, and their value rises as the available supply lessens through the continual withdrawal of copies from the market to a final haven in the public libraries.”—John C. Oswald: *A History of Printing*, 1928, pp. 218, 276.

“I began printing books with the hope of producing some which would have a definite claim to beauty.” So wrote William Morris in *A Note on his Aims in Founding the Kelmscott Press*. He began with a study of types. “I wanted letters pure in form.” He chose the Roman type of Jenson, a great Venetian printer of the fifteenth century, and, using it as an example, Morris designed and cast three types for use at the Kelmscott Press. The “Golden” type, an English