

## WILLIAM MORRIS'S "OUR COUNTRY RIGHT OR WRONG": A CRITICAL EDITION

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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) (see sections cited below). 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 expressions of faith in quickly abandoned Liberal promises later may 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 Britain's '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."