

A MEETING WITH MR. ROSSETTI

Some years ago, maybe as many as seven, a friend and colleague at Goldsmiths' College, knowing of my interest in the Pre-Raphaelites and Mr. Blake, generously gave to me a small manuscript notebook he had picked up, seeing that it was of some interest, the names of Rossetti, Blake, Kingsley, appearing here and there -- but never after a first inspection finding time to sit down and decipher it. I too neglected for too long this task; but when four or five years ago I did apply myself, I was rewarded with a threefold account: of a search for Blake, twenty years dead; another search for Kingsley, in his rectory at Eversleigh -- more successful than the first; and an encounter, such as calls for a Beattie or a Gray to set in suitable verse, with a forest-dwelling solitary. From all this it is my intention in time to elicit modest presentations of the concerns of a middle-aged, devout, socially concerned, art-loving corn chandler who has come to be, for me, a friend who might any day knock on my door to show me his latest triumphant purchase of a Blake print. For now, let him knock on your door too as ANON, who has left us so many poignant memorials of his concerns and quiet passage -- and will again.

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One of those who went to the Butts Sale of 1852, and bought from it a number of drawings by Blake, was an art-loving member of the Society of Friends: who knows how such a man came to know of Blake? perhaps it was at the Butts Sale that he first became aware of the poet-artist, for he was already a collector, had bought from Sir Robert Peel's sale, and from Samuel Rogers', and was also, modestly, a patron of living artists. Whether it was in the auction room that Blake was revealed to him or not, he came to have such a passion for his work that by 1863, when Gilchrist's famous *Life* came out, lovingly completed by the Rossetti brothers and Mrs. Gilchrist, he had one of the biggest collections of Blake drawings of the day.

In the course of his search for Blake, he made the acquaintance of Dante Gabriel Rossetti, and indeed of Gilchrist. He had himself, diffidently, for he was a tradesman, not learned, thought of writing a book about Blake -- an intention which he gave up with some relief when he heard that Gilchrist was resuming his purpose to do just that. In 1860, ... "I received a note from the