

ROWLAND ELZEA

## Marie Stillman in the United States Two Exhibitions; 1908 and 1982

While Pre-Raphaelite influences in the United States were principally secondary rather than direct (its influence was felt most strongly with the Exhibition of 1857 and its tenets promulgated in such periodicals as the *Crayon* [1855-58] and *New Path* [1863-68]), Morris and Company executed some commissions for clients in the United States. Charles Fairfax Murray, English collector and dealer, made some brief visits to the East Coast mainly in his role as dealer in Old Master paintings and rare books for such collectors as John G. Johnson and J. Pierpont Morgan, although Collis P. Huntington had commissioned a painting from him.<sup>1</sup> The most prominent collector of Pre-Raphaelite paintings in America was, of course, Samuel Bancroft whose collection now resides in the Delaware Art Museum. Among the first or second generation Pre-Raphaelites, only Marie Spartali Stillman (1844-1927), who studied with Ford Madox Brown and who was Rossetti's model, actually spent any considerable amount of time in the United States; she was also the only one of them to do any painting while in residence.

Two exhibitions of her work were held in the United States during her lifetime. Of the first, at the studios of Curtis and Cameron in Boston in 1903, the writer knows little except that some works were sold, as were some others by the art dealers Doll and Richards, also in Boston, who represented her in 1904 following the Curtis and Cameron exhibition.

In December 1908 an exhibition of twenty-five of her paintings was held at the Oehme Galleries in New York City. Seventy-

five years later, an exhibition of eighteen gouaches, supplemented by six more and a drawing from the Delaware Art Museum collection, was held at the Museum 7 May - 13 June, 1982. The eighteen works in the latter exhibition were from the collection of the artist's great grandchildren and subsequent research has shown that some of them were included in the 1908 exhibition.

The writer became aware of this collection in 1976 through the kind offices of Mr. Mark Samuels-Lasner who was, at the time, connected with the Fogg Museum. In 1976 the entire collection was in the hands of Miss Frances Stillman, the granddaughter of Marie Stillman, in Northfield, Massachusetts. In addition to the Marie Stillman works, it included six drawings by Sir Edward Burne-Jones which had been presented to Marie on her marriage to the American painter and journalist, William James Stillman in 1871 (now, on long-term loan, Delaware Art Museum); some Spartali family portraits; portraits of Marie Stillman by Ford Madox Brown and G. F. Watts; several works by W. J. Stillman; and a drawing of Lisa Stillman by C. F. Murray (now at the Delaware Art Museum), beside the remains of a library and family photograph albums.

Miss Stillman died in 1980 and it was decided that the collection would be divided between the grandchildren of Michael Spartali Stillman (1878-1967) and his wife, Evangeline. Before the dispersal of the collection took place, the heirs, knowing of the Museum's interest in the collection, generously offered the Museum the opportunity to exhibit it. It was an opportunity not to be missed, even though the time constraints