A PRE-RAPHAELITE
AENEID OF VIRGIL
IN THE COLLECTION
OF MRS. EDWARD
LAURENCE DOHENY
OF LOS ANGELES,
BEING AN ESSAY
IN HONOR OF THE
WILLIAM MORRIS
CENTENARY 1934 BY
ANNA COX BRINTON
OF MILLS COLLEGE

With the Compliments
of
Mrs. Edward Laurence Doheny
WILLIAM MORRIS, the CENTENARY OF WHOSE BIRTH OCCURS ON MARCH 24 OF THE PRESENT YEAR, WAS A BIBLIOPHILE WHO PLACED A WELL-MADE BOOK SECOND ONLY TO A WELL-BUILT HOUSE AMONG THE necessities for comely human life. His passion for beautiful books showed itself in the triple form of bookwriting, bookmaking and book collecting. As author he craved appropriate setting for his own poems and romances, as copyist and printer he was increasingly convinced that the literary masterpieces which have meant most and will always mean
most to mankind should "be set forth in forms suitable to their magnitude." As collector, his heart went out to the scribal glory of the middle ages and to the triumphs of the first printers. From the earlier craftsmen he learned his art of lettering and illumination, from the later he formulated his ideals of printing.

As bookmaker, Morris singled out for special honor two masters of narrative verse. The greatest of his handpenned volumes is his folio _Aeneid_, while the crown of his printer's art is the Kelmscott _Chaucer_. The unique homage which this modern romancer-craftsman paid to Virgil's romantic epic over a period of more than twenty years, is still visible in the monumental though little
known *Aeneid* inscribed and illuminated by Morris and illustrated from designs by his brother-in-art, Sir Edward Burne-Jones. This precious vellum folio now belongs to Mrs. Edward Laurence Doheny of Los Angeles. It was first exhibited in America at the dedication of the Edward L. Doheny Jr. Memorial Library at the University of Southern California in September, 1932. In a preface to the hand-list of this exhibition, Seymour de Ricci significantly juxtaposes the Morris *Virgil* with the Kelmscott *Chaucer* which was exhibited near it. The line of descent is unmistakable from the illuminated *Aeneid* of the eighteen seventies to the decorated *Canterbury Tales* of the middle nineties. With-
in two decades Morris passed from the execution of a manuscript of which Burne-Jones facetiously remarked that “it was to be wonderful and put an end to printing” to the establishment of the pioneer among modern fine presses.

Transcription and illumination was an art which William Morris mastered in mid-career. In each of the score of crafts in which he eventually outdid the craftsmen in their own skill, it was his consistent practice to select and examine examples of the best period of the craft in question, to note rigorously their virtues and defects, and, having made himself proficient by this drill, to proceed in the true method of creation to develop a new style in ac-
cord with modern requirements. He had no yearning for "art without drudgery" nor was it his aim to re-vivify something old. "I love art and I love history," he wrote, "but it is living art and living history that I love."

In his manuscripts as in his later printed books he made "a definite claim to beauty" while at the same time he insisted that "they should be easy to read and should not dazzle the eye, or trouble the intellect of the reader by eccentricity in the form of the letters." His finest lettering rivals the best mediaeval hands in charm and the best modern printing in legibility.

During his scant leisure hours between 1870 and 1875 William
Morris completed five handwritten volumes and began several more. These amounted, in all, to as many as eight hundred pages of lettering and illumination. A manuscript is always a labor of love and William Morris would rise early to lavish upon this personal pleasure such time as he could rescue from all sorts of urgent demands. Morning after morning, “not measuring the happy work in hours,” he prefaced days on which he was “up to his neck in designing papers, chintzes, and carpets” by copying favorite poems or prose romances. As each book was finished it was given away. Lady Burne-Jones was the recipient of four. This enthusiastic copying and experimentation in arrangement and
decoration which occupied William Morris in his forties was a necessary prelude to the better known and more mature bookmaking which set the permanent seal upon his fame as a craftsman in the last six years of his phenomenally energetic career.

The *Aeneid* is one of two Latin manuscripts which William Morris made, the other is an exquisitely decorated *Odes* of Horace. His biographer, the distinguished Virgilian scholar, J.W. Mackail, accords first place to the *Aeneid* among all the Morris manuscripts, both for "beauty of handwriting and splendor of ornament." The volume contains three hundred and seventy vellum pages $13\frac{5}{8}$ by $8\frac{3}{4}$ inches in
size. Morris preferred vellum that was light in weight for the same reason that he later employed comparatively thin paper for his Kelmscott books. The mirroring-through which is regular in all but the most ponderous mediaeval codices seemed to him no inherent disadvantage. This "mirroring" has by some recent critics been accounted a defect in the great Chaucer. In acknowledging the receipt of a parcel of materials Morris wrote on March 11, 1875 from London to Fairfax Murray in Rome: "The vellum seems very good though as you say rather over thin for my present needs; but I dare-say I can pick out enough middling thick for my Virgil." Years later, when further work on the manu-
script had been given up, the leaves were bound by Messrs. Leighton in brown morocco, blind tooled somewhat in the manner of a twelfth century cover.

The text, which appears to reproduce Conington’s first edition, is written with durable black ink in a vigorous and regular round Roman hand, distinguished by fine diagonal finials and elongated diagonal commas which give individuality to the page without becoming a tiresome mannerism. The lines contain no abbreviations and, in comparison with mediaeval calligraphy, few ligatures. There are to be sure, monogram diphthongs æ and œ, and a horizontal cursive link often appears between successive letters such as ex.
or um. The crossbar of a t not infrequently caps a few succeeding letters and f is regularly conjoined to l. The g is less satisfactorily executed than the other letters of the alphabet both because William Morris appears to have followed an awkward model and because he found it difficult to pen. In comparison with the same consonant in either his Golden or Troy types, the g of the Virgil manuscript is distinctly immature. As for the letter s it is not of the pattern most approved today, the transverse stroke keeping too close to the horizontal, as do also the Troy and Chaucer sibilants of the Kelmscott Press. But there is good incubabular authority for the pattern Morris used. The letters are never
crowded, there appears to be but one erasure and a minimum of correction in an unobtrusive red-brown ink. Nowhere is there any sign of cramping fatigue.

Several verses at the beginning of each of the twelve books are inscribed in square capitals, a type of letter also generously interspersed through the text, sometimes at the rate of thirty to a page, with agreeable decorative effect. Each page is headed with a formal caption, the verso with the words P. Virgilii Maronis in a fine quality of ultramarine, the recto with Aeneidos Liber and the appropriate number admirably applied in gold leaf. The routine capitals on facing pages interchange the color of the captions, that is, there
are gold capitals under the blue headings, and blue capitals under the gold headings, a device which heightens the richness of the general effect.

The double page of the open book is throughout treated as the unit of decoration whether both sides are filled with text or one is occupied with the elaborate ornament which precedes each book. For example, the rich color scheme of the first folium is harmonized with the purple end-paper while that of Book Seven is keyed to the preceding white leaf which separates the second half of the Aeneid from the first six books. The delicate harmony in white which was intended at this point is marred by the later insertion of a discordant green border.
Ornate foliate capitals now more, now less frequent, and all characteristic of a favorite type of Morris design, diversify the margins of Books Two and Three and were intended to appear throughout. The particular form and opulent color of these majuscules which sometimes measure two or more inches in height, may have been suggested by early readings among the Bodleian manuscripts or by a Gothic fifteenth century Virgil which Morris himself eventually acquired. A further decorative device which often amounts to delicate personal comment upon the poet’s meaning or emotion, remains to be mentioned. To Morris decoration was never the whole problem; meaning always retained the
primary place and conditioned the quality and disposition of ornament. As verso and recto lie open for perusal, a word or brief phrase here and there upon the two pages is seen inscribed in gold or blue, according to the prevailing color of the sequence. This visual emphasis is adjusted with nicety of pictorial balance as well as with unfailing instinct for the sense. Morris was famous for his reading-aloud and the cadence of his rich voice can almost be caught by the mind's ear as the eye travels over his vari-colored inflections.

In combination with the sumptuous lettering stands a series of half-page miniatures, marginal illustrations, and storiated capitals all
of which were designed by Sir Edward Burne-Jones. In a letter to Charles Eliot Norton in the winter of 1874, Burne-Jones alludes to his cooperation in the time-consuming enterprise. "Every Sunday morning," he says, "you may think of Morris and me together—he reads a book to me and I make drawings for a big Virgil he is writing..." These drawings are now in the Fitzwilliam Museum of Cambridge University. Lady Burne-Jones gives the rest of the story, in so far as it concerned her husband. "This went on," she says "for more than a year; it was to have been a glorious vellum manuscript with pictures painted from Edward's designs, twelve large ones and many initial letters—
and filled with ornament by Morris. All the pictures were designed, but scarce half of the *Aeneid* was written out and less colored.”

In the course of that first eager year William Morris undertook with some misgiving to transfer the initial pencil sketch to his vellum page. He writes to Charles Fairfax Murray in Rome, “I have begun one of the Master’s pictures for the *Virgil*; I make but a sorry hand at it at first, but shall go on at it till (at the worst) I am wholly discomforted. Meantime, whether I succeed or not in the end ’twill be a long job; so I am asking you if you would do some of them.”

Eventually four hands took part in the decoration and illustration.
P. VIRGILII MARONIS

severum inter se Præmi postesque reliqui
a tergo; infelix quae se dum regna manebant
sapiens Andromache ferro incantata solebat
ad socores et atque puertum Astrapanta traherat
vaado ad summis fastigio calmineque unde
vel mani miseri jactabant irrita Tector
in præcipiti stantem summisque sub asna
eductam tectis undae omnisTroja videri
et Danaum soliæ naves et Achæi castra
aggressi ferro circum pro omnibus libamites
pinnas taboris dabant, cum ullum alia
sedibus impulimusque: ea lipsa repente rurinam
com somniæ phant bei Danaum super agmina late
incidit: ast alli subterque, nec sae se iit
ductis interca cessat genis
ESTIBLUM ante ipsum primoque in
limine Pyrrhus
asultat telis et iace cortices alicum
qualis ubi in lacem cotubet malis arumina pastus
rigida sub terea tumidae quem brima tegit
nime positis novis ovulis nitidusque juvena
librica com ohit sublato pectore terga
iuncta ad sollem et linguæ miscet ore tristis

una ingenia Periphas et equorum magister Achilles
arminis Automedon unus omnis Scyria prorsus
sustentavit teeta et quas ad culmina jactant
ipse interprimos correptum bispellam
limina per rampt possetaque a cardine vellit

46
ANEIDOS LIBER II

...utius, quique excisa nube firma cavavit

tolent e ingentem laterem di exestam

apparet dominus inas et amn longa patescat

apparent Priami et veterem penem nulla regnum

numerosque videm stantes in limine primo

... domus interior gemina miscroque tumulti

misceatur; penitusque cari plangebitibus aedes

semencis tullant; fortia aurae sidera clamor

... mun paude tectis matres ingentibus erat

impleantur; tenent postes atque oscula figem;

intuit vi patria Pythium nec datastra neque ipsa

... census suadet valent: labat arte crebro

... junta et molli procedebant carmina postes

... si vivae; rampans aditus primosque trucidant

... immisit Danaei et lata loca militis complem

... on sic apperibilibus raptis quam apud medium amis

... existopissequae existit spectoque moles

... forum in ars a foras camulo campaque peromnes

... cum subtilis armata ferens

Vidi ipsi fuerant

cast Neoptolomum geminosque in limine Aridae

vidit Hectoriam comminque nurus Priamique per aras

... sanguine foedantem quoque interrecreat ignes

... quinquaginta illi thalami superu nepotum

... barbarico postes aere spoliisque superbi

... procedebat tenent Danaei qua deficiet ignis

ORSITAN et Priami fuerint quos saepe requiras

... ubi sit capi caesar convulsique vidit...
After William Morris' initial effort to copy the Burne-Jones frontispiece in water colors, Charles Fairfax Murray undertook the miniatures. After finishing some of the more important scenes he left the rest, more than twenty years later, in various states of incompleteness. One was omitted entirely. The gilding was done by Graily Hewitt who also filled in the blue initials of the first six books and carried through the transcription of the text from near the end of Book Six where Morris had left off. In his copying of the text Mr. Hewitt continued the style of lettering of the earlier books without attempting to imitate the oblique finials and commas. His hand is firm, regular and more technic-
ally trained than that of William Morris, he pens a more modish but the spice of the Morris calligraphy is gone. After the death of William Morris, Mrs. Louise Powell added to the illuminated pages wide borders imitated from Kelmscott patterns. A reduced rendition of the floral border at the opening of Book Two appears on the title page of this brochure. When colored, as in Books Seven, Eight and Nine, these marginal patterns form the least satisfactory adjunct to the original scheme. In spite of this considerable and varied collaboration the Morris folio remains a noble and characteristic product of the heart, mind and hand of its originator.

It is natural to contrast the oc-
tavo *Horace*, which was mainly executed by Morris himself, with the folio *Virgil* on which so many hands took part. In the preface to the eleventh volume of her father's collected works, May Morris makes this revealing observation on the *Horace* which is lying before her as she writes: "As with all lovely manuscripts each page retains forever the perfume of the happy hours spent over it and gives out happiness to the reader each time the book is opened." She goes on to draw a deft contrast between the small *Horace* and the great *Virgil* which had already passed, before her father's death, into the ownership of its principal illuminator, Charles Fairfax Murray.
"When these two volumes . . .
lie side by side the pride and splen-
dor of the folio is emphasized by
the exquisiteness of the small book.
The finished Aeneid would have been
a monumental work, but in the
mellow pages of the Horace there
lies a certain intimate charm that
renders it specially lovable . . . Of
the writing one can best indicate the
difference by saying that the Aeneid
was written with a swan-quill and
the Odes with a crow-quill."

The further work of William
Morris upon the Aeneid consisted
in the embellishment of initial let-
ters. Their "arrangement and rela-
tion to the page," writes his daugh-
ter, "the quality of color and the
handling are quite the finest of his
work. The painting is solid and luminous, the broadly designed leafage, carefully modelled and finished, is at once strong and delicate, reminding one of the finest early French Gothic sculptured ornament. He made a beautiful and dexterous use of white in finishing and also played with gold with evident enjoyment. Sometimes two colors were used—a pale silvery gold (the color of a harvest moon) beside one of richer tone, or the gold itself glazed with thin red and painted with red veins.”

The magnificent opening page of Book One with its superbly gilded border and burnished capitals on a purple ground contains the only illustration that exhibits the actual handiwork of William Morris him-
self. This is the picture over which he struggled and in which the result was not neat enough to win approval of his exacting judgment. The face of Aeneas is the only part of the design not retouched by Mr. Murray. All in all, this is the most beautiful and finished of the miniatures and worthily heads the series of twelve major episodes prefacing the several books. The collotype reproduction which heads this essay admirably conveys the linear rhythm of the composition; the exquisite color must be left to the reader's imagination. Suffice it to say that a blue mist tinged with gold is about to encompass the hero while his ageless mother who has just revealed herself no forest maiden but a god-

27
dess indeed, treads with graceful step upon a similar gold-encircled cloud. Like Titian’s soft Italian cloudlets that commingle earth and heaven in his great altar pieces this cloud beneath the goddess’ feet and the halo on her gold-touched tresses bespeak the presence of divinity. I venture the suggestion that this Aeneas is a portrait of William Morris. With it should be compared Rossetti’s Lancelot, an illustration for The Lady of Shalott, which admittedly bears Morris’ features. The Dido of Book Four is a no less characteristic delineation of Jane Burden Morris whose face is familiar from the many studies that Rossetti made of her. It was a favorite practice among the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood to use as
models among themselves the members of their own coterie.

Of the other ten half-page miniatures several are less thoroughly perfected than the first, though there is no one of them which does not linger vividly in the memory of a reader who has once scanned the book attentively. Each is selected with unfailing judgment as a key to unlock the special treasure of the book. The second book opens with Venus, young and light-encircled, leading the three human beings to whom above all others upon earth her care is due; Aeneas with old Anchises on his shoulders and little Iulus trudging beside non passibus acquis. On the left from Troy's flames leans out the mortal woman
who claims so slight a portion of their anxious thought, Aeneas’ wife, Creusa. She stretches her hand to touch the curly head of her little son. The third scene was omitted; it may have appeared too fantastic or too difficult to Mr. Murray, but we have the Burne-Jones pencil drawing which shows a stylized version of Aeneas and the harpies. Miss May Morris selected this as one of the two Virgilian designs to appear in reproduction as a part of the introduction to Volume XI of her father’s writings. These cartoons, now in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge University, then belonged to Mr. J. R. Holliday. In design, color and feeling, the Dido of Book Four epitomizes the “Brotherhood’s”
ideal of female beauty. This Pre-
Raphaelite Dido, clad in dull blue,
leans upon the sword that shall within a moment pierce her heart. The
brooding mystery of Rossetti’s best
canvasses is approached in this portrayal of the queen’s agony. Next
follows a rhythmic procession of frenzied women bearing torches to
burn the Trojan ships. The design
of their feet contains an unmistakable hint of Botticelli’s patterns. The
scene chosen to introduce Book Six
is the ecstatic sibyl leading Aeneas
to the realm of Dis. Here, as in
Book Two, ultramarine predominates with high lights done in white.
Mainly owing to lack of finish the
sibyl is the less satisfactory figure of
the two. In Book Seven the willowy
young princess, Lavinia, clad in filmy white with altar-fire circling about her moves through a stately purple colonnade. This exquisite miniature which should have been intimately united to the uninscribed white vellum page preceding is marred by its border. Book Eight is headed by an unfinished water color of Venus presenting the armor to Aeneas. Nine shows Iris calling Turnus to arms. On comparison with the original pencil sketch, it is obvious that the delicacy of Burne-Jones' touch could only have been imitated by Mr. Murray, had more time been devoted to this noble but exacting venture. That he was qualified to reproduce even the most illusory nuance is amply attested by the marginal Juno
of page two and by the Cassandra capital. Book Ten opens with the single combat of Aeneas and Mezentius. Though the rearing horse, Rhoebus, is imperfectly designed, there is power and rage of battle in the scene. The illustrations for Eleven and Twelve are far from finished. They show Aeneas setting up a trophy decked with arms and fighting his last battle with Turnus in the presence of the ill-omened bird which here appears more like an eagle than like the als parva of the text.

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The marginal designs and embellished capitals are no less interesting than the larger pictures. They often convey a vivid and touching suggestion in their slightly tinted or merely pencilled lines. Cassandra up-
lifts her eyes to heaven, Pyrrhus falls dead at the feet of his aged sire, Helen clings close to Vesta’s shrine, hiding in the sacred dwelling. While these figures show none of the “happy inadverence” of mediaeval illustrators who often drew the human form, as Morris said, with “boldest incapacity” yet their happy “balance between record and magic” provides a no less stimulative comment upon the poetic theme.

The style of Burne-Jones is perhaps better suited to book illustration than to independent painting. To quote a contemporary critic, the Pre-Raphaelites “put into a picture, say of a church, all that could be noticed by the architect, by the worshipper, by the dreamer, and by the
person looking about the floor for pins." Book illustration and decoration may properly admit minuteness and this natural characteristic of miniature need not necessarily detract from the beautifying of a page and the elucidation of its narrative. It has been aptly remarked of Burne-Jones that "his slightest sketch always beautified a page — there were no failures — no erasures — never was he seen to scribble." "Above all he had "the crowning gift" as James Russell Lowell expressed it, "of making an old story as new as if nobody had ever told it before."

Morris' verse translation of the Aeneid was a direct outcome of his Virgil manuscript. He had lived so truly in the realm of Virgilian ro-
mance that “he must needs strike out some of its numbers.” He threw himself whole heartedly into the new labor and his work as copyist was crowded from the scene, though Professor Mackail says that “even some fifteen years later” he remembers seeing him turn over the sheets and “talk of finishing it.” In her Memorials of Sir Edward Burne-Jones, Lady Burne-Jones writes, “There were many things to prevent the completion of the scheme, amongst others the temptation Morris felt whilst following the Latin to turn the great poem into English verse—which he did.” Morris himself wrote to Fairfax Murray that the manuscript was lagging “not because I shouldn’t like to be at it, but be-
cause I am doing something else with Virgil, to wit, doing him into English verse." Within the year 1875 Messrs. Ellis and White published the first edition.

It is unlikely that William Morris’ Victorian version of the Aeneid in English heptameters will become or remain a favorite rendering of Virgil’s epic. But his manuscript will always remain a distinguished member of the long line of illustrated Aeneids which began a millennium and a half ago with the “capital manuscripts” of Rome.

In honor of the Morris centenary Mrs. Edward Laurence Doheny is including her sumptuous Virgil among the Morris bibliographical items to be exhibited in the Art
Gallery of Mills College, California.
Between the first editions of Morris' works which were printed by commercial publishing houses and the output of his own Kelmscott Press stands this significant work, in which were set and solved the problems of the printer who revolutionized his art. Vellum, ink, spacing, the placing of capitals, the adjustment of margins, the uniting of text and illustration were here considered in their relation to the ideal book. William Morris as an individual repeated in his own career the experience of the European world four hundred years earlier. From the penman's art he moved forward to the printed page recapitulating the process which made the first printing a
standard for all time. As the incunabulists attained superior results through the effort to equal scribal excellence so Morris developed his *Golden*, *Troy* and *Chaucer* types along lines on which he had already reached a high standard in his manuscripts.

Today his *Virgil* possesses the unique fascination of the older, more individual art. It reaches the heart as no multiplied press work can do. The reader is less near to the versatile genius of William Morris in turning the triumphant pages of his Kelmscott *Chaucer* than in poring over the illuminated leaves of the Pre-Raphaelite *Aeneid*.
A PRE-RAPHAELITE AENEID
WAS PRINTED FOR
MRS. EDWARD LAURENCE
DOHENY by WARD RITCHIE
IN THE MONTH OF MARCH
NINETEEN HUNDRED AND
THIRTY-FOUR IN LOS AN-
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NUMBER 45

Estelle Doheny

Anna Cox Bidwell

Ward Ritchie