Guide to the Edward Burne-Jones Letters to Cormell Price

MSS.45

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Collection Overview

**REPOSITORY:** Yale Center for British Art, Rare Books and Manuscripts
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**CALL NUMBER:** MSS.45

**TITLE:** Edward Burne-Jones Letters to Cormell Price

**DATES:** 1852–1862

**PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:** .42 linear feet (1 box)

**LANGUAGE:** English

**SUMMARY:** To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: http://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/
Burne-Jones jokingly chastises Price for his last “skinny” letter and promises that “now [he]’ll be revenged” in his response. Burne-Jones describes at length how he spends his time in the River Wye area, which he says is like “Elysium.” He describes his daily routine of walking in the countryside, reading and going to the cathedral. He says in his time in the area he has “endured two” parties and complains about the questioning he receives from guests, commenting “girls are such -- hm -- hang ’em they do quiz so, and I [Burne-Jones] make such a capital subject.” Burne-Jones asks Price how he is finding reading “Fasti” but admits that he himself has begun the book. He states that, on the “urgent orders of [sic] eminent physician,” he is returning home in the next week. He asks his friend if he might see him upon his arrival at Worcester. Burne-Jones ends his letter: “I would have sent you a long illustrated letter, if you had behaved like a gentleman to me, but as it is: good bye.” In a postscript, he notes “Oh I have fallen in with such cant, but thank heavens I am still alive, aren’t (?) you glad - eating sweetmeats till you burst.”

In an additional sheet, Burne-Jones asks Price to visit Faulkner and draws for Price “an illustration to his article.” The drawing is titled “Faulkner’s Improved Sewerage” and depicts a set of many bottles and instruments connected to an underground pipe. Burne-Jones admits that he was “in a fearful state” about his writing. He tells Price that he has received a letter response from “the greatest man alive” [John Ruskin] and says that since receiving the missive he is “a reformed character, [he is] not Ted anymore” but “E.C.B Jones,” the “man who wrote to Ruskin and got an answer by return.”. He declares that he can “better draw [his] feelings” and sketches Ruskin as a saint at whose feet a figure -- perhaps Burne-Jones himself -- is prostrate. He also draws a pig, captioned “THE MAN etc. as before”. He ends by sending his good wishes to Price’s family and enquiring after the “pretty hand” which addressed the envelope of Price’s last letter.

Addressed from “Land of Caradoc, Banks of the Wye.”

**Geographic Names:**
Wye, River, Valley (Wales and England)

**Genres / Formats:**
Correspondence
Pen and ink drawings

**Names:**
Burne-Jones, Edward Coley, 1833-1898 -- Correspondence
Faulkner, Charles Joseph, 1833-1892
Price, Cormell, approximately 1836-1910 -- Correspondence
Ruskin, John, 1819-1900

Burne-Jones opens by observing that, “like Mahomet of old”, Price “finding the mountain won’t come to [him]” has “gone to the mountain” and written to Burne-Jones. He offers Price a “free pardon” for not having done so earlier. Burne-Jones
accepts Price’s congratulations on the “issue of my ‘little go’” but notes his tardiness.

Burne-Jones writes that “your condolence ... on Sewell’s leaving is pathetic” noting that it is likely that Sewell will be promoted to rector upon the incumbent’s death. This is perhaps a reference to William Sewell, a tutor at Exeter College, Oxford.

Burne-Jones affirms to Price that he has no plans to move and asks him to relay this information to “the Birmingham people through the medium of the press or in any other more convenient way.”

He asks Price to tell “him” (an unidentified man) that his “reproachful language” insulted Burne-Jones deeply and that Burne-Jones “yearns” for him and will write to him soon. He notes that he pities “Miller” and writes that “Latimer [perhaps the minister at St Paul’s, Birmingham] has my good word ... it will help him to make a stand against the uncircumcised.” Burne-Jones asks Price if he knows why Hook [i.e., Walter Farquhar Hook?] has been elected to Lincoln instead of Jackson and remarks that he could tell Price “a few truths about Hook that would make [him] sing another tune.” Burne-Jones disagrees with Price that Sewell and Gresley will be bishops, claiming that having seen “a little more of the world” than Price has been enough to “disenchant a good deal of [his] grander notions.” Burne-Jones notes that he and William Fulford, Charles Faulkner and Richard Watson Dixon talk of little besides these ecclesiastical politics.

Burne-Jones ends by confirming that he will see Price in two weeks times and sends his kind remembrances to Price’s sister and their old school friends.

Addressed from Oxford. Addressed to Price (on outer leaf) at King Edward’s School, Birmingham. With one penny stamp and wax seal.

Genres / Formats:
Correspondence

Names:
Burne-Jones, Edward Coley, 1833-1898 -- Correspondence
Dixon, Richard Watson, 1833-1900
Faulkner, Charles Joseph, 1833-1892
Fulford, William, -1897
Hook, Walter Farquhar, 1798-1875
Price, Cormell, approximately 1836-1910 -- Correspondence
Sewell, William, 1804-1874

Edward Burne-Jones letter to Cormell Price
1 folded sheet (4 pages) : autograph letter signed ; 23 x37 cm, folded to 23 x 19 cm
Burne-Jones, Edward Coley, 1833-1898

Burne-Jones congratulates Price on his “dutiful and exemplary” conduct, developed “for many years under [Burne-Jones’s] auspices.” He adds: “it gives me encouragement that the philosophical notions I have inculcated, and wh. have brought such fruits in you, will be equally productive in others.” However, so that Price is not “unduly puffed-up,” Burne-Jones goes on to jovially criticize Price’s “volatile, hurry-scurry, hyper-condensed” writing style.

Burne-Jones comments that he is glad that he and Price share a similar taste in poetry, noting that “if Tennyson affords you as many hours of unmitigated happiness -- I speak without affection here -- as he has to me, you will look with gratitude to any who helped you to appreciate him -- when I take up the works of any other poet, save Shakespeare only, I seem to have fallen from the only guide worth following far to dream-land.” He goes on at length to describe the ways in which poets capture unexpressable emotion, referencing Friedrich von Schlegel’s term “sighing after the Infinite.”
Burne-Jones notes that he has devoted hours to contemplating Tennyson’s “Tears, Idle Tears.” He answers Price’s question about Tennyson’s “Locksley Hall,” stating that the term “gleams” refers to the curlews in the poem. Burne-Jones recommends the work of the poet Alexander Smith, stating that “his writing is almost incomparable, although his aim is evidently more subjective and metaphysical.”

Burne-Jones describes a visit from his uncle. He goes on to give Price an account of their mutual friends. Burne-Jones remarks that he has been amusing himself by pouring basins of water on the crowd below the window. He warns Price that if the Chevalier Count George Jones ever tours Birmingham, he should not go to see him perform on account of his “mangling” of Shakespeare. Burne-Jones tells Price that he is relying on him to join him in founding a “Brotherhood” of which Sir Galahad is to be patron and that he has already enlisted somebody for the order.

Addressed from Oxford. Addressed to Price (on outer leaf) “to be left at Mr. Jones’,” 11 Bennetts’ Hill, Birmingham. With one penny stamp and wax seal. With cross writing, pages 1-2. Signed: “Yours, old buffer, for ever, Ted, General of the order of Sir Galahad”

Subjects:
- English poetry
- Galahad (Legendary character)

Genres / Formats:
- Correspondence

Names:
- Burne-Jones, Edward Coley, 1833-1898 -- Correspondence
- Jones, George, 1810-1879
- Price, Cormell, approximately 1836-1910 -- Correspondence
- Shakespeare, William, 1564-1616
- Smith, Alexander, 1830?-1867
- Tennyson, Alfred Tennyson, Baron, 1809-1892
Burne-Jones expresses his delight upon receiving Price’s last letter. He regrets that he cannot respond to Price’s latest request on account of being very busy. He also remarks that the subject proposed by Price is “really beyond me.” It seems that Price’s request is related to a specific poet (perhaps Tennyson, who is discussed at length in the previous letter), for Burne-Jones writes that: “I have not found a day without reading or hearing his work - it is unfair I know to other poets, for he is not a compendium of all that is beautiful, but I take a pleasure in forgetting others, and concentrating myself, for a while, on him alone.”

He congratulates Price upon his ideas, saying that they are “very laudable and worthy of all success.” Burne-Jones says he has been reading Edgar Allan Poe’s “book of horrors,” remarking that although the appeal of his work is shortlived, for the moment, Poe is “lord of the ascendant.” He recommends a number of Poe’s stories to Price.

Burne-Jones asks if Price has read Archdeacon Robert Wilberforce’s “Holy Eucharist,” describing the book as “the most controversial & truly theological work that has come out for ages.”

Burne-Jones theorizes on public opinion, claiming that “the multitude is moved by passion & feeling and not reason, therefore you must impel them by Rhetoric before you can convince them by logic” and advises Price that “it can’t do [Price] any harm to take every possible occasion to perfect [himself] in the noble art of Dialectic.” Burne-Jones states that all men argue logically by nature and that the study of Logic is simply “the science of the processes of thought.” He tells Price that in the present moment they must “think highly of [their] species, to dream of development, and the Divinity of mind” and states that man “born in free will” is “more independent than angels, for they cannot see by reason, knowing all things by intuition.”

Addressed from “Greater Coll.” Addressed to Price (on outer leaf) at Classical Department, King Edward’s School, Birmingham. With one penny stamp and wax seal.

**Subjects:**
- Rhetoric

**Genres / Formats:**
- Correspondence

**Names:**
- Burne-Jones, Edward Coley, 1833-1898 -- Correspondence
- Poe, Edgar Allan, 1809-1849
- Price, Cormell, approximately 1836-1910 -- Correspondence
- Tennyson, Alfred Tennyson, Baron, 1809-1892
- Wilberforce, Robert Isaac, 1802-1857

1853 November

8

Page 7 of 15
Burne-Jones goes on to describe ecclesiastical rows regarding a position at Exeter College or Oxford University, which possibly revolves around the Oxford Movement. (Burne-Jones writes that: "Hook by the by is to be Bishop of Oxford" which could be a reference to Walter Hook. Hook was educated at Oxford but never became bishop of the city.)

Burne-Jones concludes by describing a "profound & exhaustive" sermon by Edward Bouverie Pusey.

Addressed from "Exeter Coll." Addressed to Price (on outer leaf) at "8. Sun St. West, Birmingham." With one penny stamp and wax seal.

Genres / Formats:
Correspondence

Names:
Burne-Jones, Edward Coley, 1833-1898 -- Correspondence
Hook, Walter Farquhar, 1798-1875
Macdonald, Henry James, 1835-1891
Price, Cormell, approximately 1836-1910 -- Correspondence

Corporate Body:
University of Oxford
Edward Burne-Jones apologizes for being “forgetful” of Price and admits that he “cannot plead hard work altogether for my cause, so many nameless trifles occur all day long to break the best resolutions.” He tells Price that he has heard that he is studying hard and wishes him success in his endeavors. He encourages Price to apply for an Oxford scholarship, noting that even in failure “the practice is very good and often encouraging.” He says that this term has been his happiest yet and he has been filling his time with many good things. He admits that he has “fallen back upon my drawings and intend[s] cultivating it to some extent.”

Burne-Jones states that William Morris has taken up a lot of his time, describing him as “one of the cleverest fellows” he knows and “far more congenial in all his thoughts and likings, than anyone it has been [his] good fortune to meet with.” He believes that Morris’s art criticism is better than William Fulford’s, who was Burne-Jones’s “old ideal in such subjects.” He proclaims that Morris is “full of enthusiasm for things holy and beautiful and true” and possesses “the most exquisite perception and judgement” which has “tinged [Burne-Jones’s] whole inner being with the beauty of [Morris’s] own.” He remarks that “if it were not for his boisterous mad outbursts and freaks which break the romance [Morris] sheds [...] around him -- at least to me -- he would be a perfect hero.”

Burne-Jones asks Price to spend time with him at Easter. He says of Price’s writing piece (presumably sent in correspondence from Price) that, unless it is for a joke, it is unlikely to be profitable. He asks him why he has written blank verse, remarking that the style “is a strange fashion of young poetlings of this generation; on the principle I suppose of the age generally ‘as much as you can at the cheapest rate.’” He also questions Price’s “horticultural facts” and critiques his long preamble to the piece. He recommends that Price translates metrically from Greek lyrics, beginning with either Theocritus or the “chorus of the Dramatists.”

Date from postmark. The letter is dated by Burne-Jones: “March (?) 1854.”

Addressed from “Exeter Coll.” Addressed to Price (on outer leaf) at “Classical Department, King Edward’s School, Birmingham.” With one penny stamp and wax seal. With cross writing on pages 2 -3.

Genres / Formats:
Correspondence

Subjects:
Poetry

Names:
Burne-Jones, Edward Coley, 1833-1898 -- Correspondence
Fulford, William, -1897
Morris, William, 1834-1896
Price, Cormell, approximately 1836-1910 -- Correspondence

Corporate Body:
University of Oxford
Edward Burne-Jones letter to Cornell Price

1 folded sheet (4 pages) : autograph letter ; 19 x 23 cm, folded to 19 x 12 cm

Burne-Jones asks why Price has not yet sent the “MS,” presumably a piece for The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine. He tells him that Burne-Jones’s aunt has been Price’s “champion all along,” transcribing a humorous conversation he had with her at breakfast the previous day, in which Burne-Jones describes Price as a “reprobate” and “a dissolute little creature” while “Auntie” defends him as a “dear little fellow.” Burne-Jones says he does not want to hurry Price over the magazine but that they should “make a work of it, and not a mere pastime.” Burne-Jones instructs Price to send his piece to him.

He laments a previous issue’s article on Charles Kingsley, saying that although the group plans to amend the piece in future copies of the article, it has “already done us a great deal of harm, especially in the Universities.” He notes that Harry MacDonald has sent a “very severe letter” to Wilfred Heeley about the matter.

Burne-Jones states that William Morris (referred to here as “Topsy”) has passed on editorship powers to William Fulford, remarking that the move “will be a good thing for all of us, and a great relief to Topsy.” He describes a dinner he had with Morris and MacDonald at Brompton which he says was “like old times.” Burne-Jones gleefully comments that he will “get an awful showing up in the Guardian … for that wretched affair on Kingsley.” He ends by telling Price about an upcoming boxing match (?), which he says will be followed by a “general challenge to Universal Pigdom, for the championship -- odds, Ten to one, on the side of Truth and, O.C.M.”

Addressed from “Camberwell.”
Edward Burne-Jones begins the letter with the following declaration: "Mr Jones begs respectfully to inform the public that he executes pictures of the most chaste and unique description upon the most reasonable terms." He then lists prices for a variety of types of drawings, including "love scenes, executed in bold style, indian ink" (5 shillings) and "full length caricature" (2 shillings and sixpence). He goes on to announce that he is "desirous of forming classes for the reading of Ruskin." Burne-Jones says that if Price were in London, he would see the streets "placarded" with such announcements before he gives up the joke, commenting "no you wouldn't, what lies I tell."

Burne-Jones says he is "desolate" because William Fulford has "gone to Hill’s" for a few days. He says that he has taken a 12-mile walk in the rain and plans to "write letters and be miserable" for the rest of the day or "go and join the mob in Hyde Park." He asks Price to write to him often and to encourage Charlie Faulkner and "Dickides" (Richard Watson Dixon?) to do the same.

Burne-Jones says he has received a note from "Topsy" (William Morris) recommending that he see Arthur Hughes's *April Love*. Burne-Jones says he plans to visit the Royal Academy the following morning to see it. He asks Price to give Morris his love. Burne-Jones offers his love to "all the set" and sketches a heart surrounded by their names (Willie, Harry, Dickides, Hatch, Charlie, Puckle, Oakley and Guest) so that Price "forget[s] none." Sketch measures 5 x 7 cm.

Addressed from "13 Sloane Terrace, Sloane St, Chelsea." In the top left hand corner of the letter, Burne-Jones has sketched a hand with its index finger pointing right, towards his Sloane Terrace address. Sketch measures 2 x 5 cm.
Edward Burne-Jones says that he owes Price more apologies than he has time to write at present. He tells Price he has taken rooms at Old House, Ship Street in Oxford and asks that Price tells him which train he will take to Oxford so that Burne-Jones can meet him.

Burne-Jones goes on to give Price details about gaining entry to New College, remarking that on Sunday morning it is hosting a private party and admission will not be possible. He recommends that Price asks the sub-warden -- rather than the chaplain or one of the Fellows -- for tickets if his party is more than two.

Burne-Jones asks his friend not to think him too unkind for responding to two letters from Price with such a short reply. He asks Price what he means by “Cupids less ? -- a secret, eh? -- we must get it out of you.” He ends by asking Price to remember him kindly to his sisters and assuring Price that he thinks he stands “a very good chance.”

Addressed from “Exeter Coll.” Addressed to Price (on outer leaf) at “8 Sun St. West, Birmingham.” With one penny stamp and wax seal.

_Burne-Jones, Edward Coley, 1833-1898_ -- Correspondence
_Price, Cormell, approximately 1836-1910_ -- Correspondence

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Edward Burne-Jones sends his best wishes for Price’s recovery from a bout of illness, remarking that he “daren’t tell Auntie about it, or she’d be hurrying off to nurse [Price].” He asks if Price could stay in Birmingham for the first three days of the following week as Burne-Jones will be visiting his father and would like to see Price, commenting that “it seems generations past since [they] had one of those dear evenings.”

Burne-Jones says that he is happier than he has ever been which he follows with the observation that “Art does seem so precious to one, so inexpressibly lovely.” He says he is much less lonely now that William Fulford has returned, saying that few people ever visit his rooms, noting that “Fred” only comes in for breakfast from time to time and that “Harry” Macdonald “prefers the company of ladies, so [Burne-Jones] seldom see[s] him.” Burne-Jones says he does not enjoy dinner, as he has to walk to a “chop-house, which smells of never-ending ever-wasting joints” and where other customers “monopolise the papers.”

Addressed from “13 Sloane Terrace.”

_Burne-Jones, Edward Coley, 1833-1898_ -- Correspondence
_Fulford, William, -1897_
Burne-Jones says he has been a “villain” in his lack of correspondence with Price and says that the rest of the day will be given over to writing him letters, remarking that although the letter will only take half an hour to write, “the exertion will completely do for [him].” He asks if Price is “lonely out there” and says he has encouraged William Morris to write to him and will try to get “everyone” to do the same. He says they will all be so glad when Price comes back.

Burne-Jones has been doing “heaps of work” but admits that when the summer days get hot, he will not work as much. He tells Price that Charles Faulkner will be moving from Oxford to London this month. He says that “there has been such a fire here in London” [referring to the Tooley Street Fire], stating that one could see it from thirty miles away.

Burne-Jones asks Price if he has heard of the “Co.” (Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co.), stating it has been founded by himself, “Topsy” (William Morris), Marshall, Brown, Webb and Rossetti. He tells Price that they produce “stained glass, furniture, jewelry, decorations and pictures,” noting that they have many commissions already.

Burne-Jones describes the ordeal of a friend (probably Elizabeth Siddal) whose baby was stillborn, commenting that the mother is physically better but mourns for her child. Burne-Jones gives an account of his and Price’s mutual friends, remarking that Ford Madox Brown is “fat and cheery” and that he sees Richard Watson Dixon about once a year. Burne-Jones does not approve of Dixon’s marriage to Maria Sturgeon, the widow of William Thomson of Haddingtonshire, describing Sturgeon as “an old dry coquettish hag.”

On page four, Burne-Jones admits that the first three pages of the letter were written three months ago. He asks Price to forgive him his silence and says he had a dream where Price would not speak to him because he had not written in so long. He says that not much has happened in the intervening period but that he has run into trouble in the wake of Thomas Edward Plint’s death, as Burne-Jones owed him £550. He comments that Elizabeth Barrett Browning has died, describing her as “the cleverest woman alive.” Burne-Jones says that there have more murders and fires in London, putting the spate down to “that bloody comet,” a reference to the Great Comet of 1861. Burne-Jones tells Price that he and his wife (Georgiana MacDonald) are expecting a baby but pleads with Price not to tell anyone “for fear it should be a monster.” He gives further account of there mutual friends, telling Price that Charlie Faulkner has moved to London to work as a civil engineer, that Rossetti has “done a most wonderful picture,” that Alice Prinsep is to “marry a rich cove” and that Val Prinsep has returned from Italy, “leaving many broken hearts.”

Burne-Jones gives Price his new address in Great Russell Street, commenting that his studio there is much better than his last. Burne-Jones apologizes profusely for not writing and sends love to Price from both himself and Georgiana. He talks of his plans to take her to Italy, if the baby is well enough to be left. He says he will not be able to get home to Birmingham until Christmas. Burne-Jones talks of his desire to move his father closer to London as he is growing old. He reflects upon fatherhood, writing “it’s very dull to be a dad, and having a son cutting about & enjoying himself ... I shall hate it when I’m a dad.”
Correspondence

Names:
Brown, Ford Madox, 1821-1893
Burne-Jones, Edward Coley, 1833-1898 -- Correspondence
Burne-Jones, Georgiana, Lady, 1840-1920
Dixon, Richard Watson, 1833-1900
Faulkner, Charles Joseph, 1833-1892
Morris, William, 1834-1896
Price, Cormell, approximately 1836-1910 -- Correspondence
Rossetti, Dante Gabriel, 1828-1882
Siddall, Elizabeth

Corporate Body:
Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Company

b. 1, f. 15
Edward Burne-Jones letter to Cormell Price
1 folded sheet (4 pages) : autograph letter, signed ; 21 x 27 cm, folded to 21 x 14 cm
Burne-Jones, Edward Coley, 1833-1898

1862 February 23

Burne-Jones thanks Price for his last letter, commenting that it has been passed around and shared with “all who want [Price] back.” He pleads with Price to move back to Britain, offering Price a room in his home until he can find something permanent. He tells Price his family are spending three months in Venice from May and that Price could have their home in London to himself.

Burne-Jones tells Price that Elizabeth Siddall has died and that Rossetti is “smashed for the time.” He says it is his aunt’s birthday and that she is grateful for Price’s letter. Burne-Jones reports that his wife and son are well, describing his son as “the fattest boy ... known to Art or nature.” He proceeds with a lengthy describe of his son, of whom his parents are “very proud.” He tells Price that Jane Burden Morris, wife of William Morris, is expecting twins.

Burne-Jones says that George Price Boyce is in Cairo and that Hughes (Arthur?) had become father to twins, when last Burne-Jones heard from him. He also describes their friends “Dickides” (Richard Watson Dixon?), Val Prinsep, Ford Madox Brown, William Fulford and Charles Faulkner. Burne-Jones pleads again with Price to come back to live near them all, and describes the excellent location of their house in London to encourage Price to reside there. He describes the seduction techniques employed by their friend William Fulford, who “develop[s] [women] into adoration of him and leaves them to pine.”

Burne-Jones ends by encouraging Price to come back and giving Price Burne-Jones’s infant son’s “fat little dumpy slobbery love.”

Addressed from “62 Great Russell St.”

Genres / Formats:
Correspondence

Names:
Brown, Ford Madox, 1821-1893
Burne-Jones, Edward Coley, 1833-1898 -- Correspondence
Dixon, Richard Watson, 1833-1900
Faulkner, Charles Joseph, 1833-1892
Fulford, William, 1897
Price, Cormell, approximately 1836-1910 -- Correspondence
Rossetti, Dante Gabriel, 1828-1882
Siddall, Elizabeth
Edward Burne-Jones letter to Cormell Price

1 sheet (1 page) : autograph letter, signed ; 21 x 13 cm
Burne-Jones, Edward Coley, 1833-1898

“Dearest Crom, I won’t write at length; you may never get this -- we shall be in
Venice I hope in a week to stop there for nearly a month, direct poste restante. I
do do hope we shall meet this year. Love from Georgie. Most affectionately yours,
Ned.”

Addressed from “Milan.”

Genres / Formats:
Correspondence

Names:
Burne-Jones, Edward Coley, 1833-1898 -- Correspondence
Price, Cormell, approximately 1836-1910 -- Correspondence