

**U DX53**

**Letters by Walter Crane**

**1895-1910**

**Biographical Background:**

Walter Crane was born in Liverpool on 15 August 1845, the second son of Thomas Crane, a portrait painter and miniaturist. He was a fluent follower of the newer art movements and he studied the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, and was a diligent student of the renowned artist and critic John Ruskin. A set of coloured page designs to illustrate Tennyson's "Lady of Shalott" gained the approval of wood-engraver William James Linton to whom Walter Crane was apprenticed for three years from 1859. As a wood-engraver he had opportunity to study the contemporary artists whose work passed through his hands including Dante Gabriel Rossetti and John Everett Millais, as well as Sir John Tenniel the illustrator for *Alice in Wonderland*. He studied the techniques of Japanese colour-prints and imitated the look in a series of toy books published in the 1860s.

From the early 1880s, initially under Morris's influence, Crane was closely associated with the Socialist movement. He did as much as Morris himself to bring art into the daily life of all classes. He devoted considerable attention to designs for textiles and wallpapers, and to house decoration; but he also used his art for the direct advancement of the Socialist cause. For a long time he provided the weekly cartoons for the Socialist organs *Justice*, *The Commonweal* and *The Clarion*. Many of these were collected as *Cartoons for the Cause* published in 1896. He devoted much time and energy to the work of the Art Workers Guild, and to the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society, founded by him in 1888. He was also a Vice President of the Healthy and Artistic Dress Union, whose aim was to promote the loose-fitting clothing, in opposition to "stiffness, tightness and weight" and Crane illustrated a pamphlet entitled 'How to Dress Without a Corset'.

Although not an anarchist, Crane did contribute to several libertarian publishers, including Liberty Press and Freedom Press. Following the Haymarket bombing in May 1886, Crane made several trips to America where he spoke in defence of the eight anarchists accused of murder. Walter Crane died on 14 March 1915 in Horsham Hospital, West Sussex.

**Custodial history:** Found in a book, Jan 1960

**Description:** Two small incidental items of correspondence from Walter Crane to John Lane at Bodley Head [publishers].

**Extent:** 2 items

**Related material:**

Dictionary of Labour Biography [Ref U DLB/6/18-19]

John Ruskin [Ref U DP7-15]

Material relating to the Rational Dress Movement [Ref U DX113]

Other repositories:

The Whitworth Art Gallery and John Rylands University Library in Manchester hold material relating to Walter Crane

**Access conditions:**

Access will be granted to any accredited reader

Hull History Centre: Letters by Walter Crane

- |          |   |             |
|----------|---|-------------|
| U DX53/1 | Postcard: Walter Crane, 13 Holland Street (Church Street), Kensington, to John Lane, Bodley Head<br>Apologises saying he has only come across his card upon his return from Manchester. Looks to arrange a meeting later that week.<br>1 item | 16 Jun 1895 |
| U DX53/2 | Letter: Walter Crane, 13 Holland Street (Church Street), Kensington, to John Lane, Bodley Head<br>Replying to a previous letter he says he will look at the picture and give his opinion if John Lane brings it to show him.<br>1 item        | 18 May 1910 |