

# Kith & Kin

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A postscript to *The King's Cross Fraudster: Leopold Redpath, his life + times* <sup>1</sup>

*Since this book was published, its authors have corresponded with Paul Douglas, a direct descendant of one of Leopold Redpath's uncles.<sup>2</sup> Paul has kindly shared with us the contents of various documents he had found in The National Archives<sup>3</sup> but which we had overlooked. Forming the basis for most of what follows, his offerings tell us less about Leopold himself than of his family and friends, characters who have so far played only walk-on parts in the drama of his life, but who can now step into the limelight.*

As we have established, by the time of his arrest in 1856, Leopold Redpath had used some of his ill-gotten gains to acquire a large amount of real estate, in London and scattered across southern England.<sup>4</sup> The fresh evidence shows that he had already begun to accumulate such property by 1852, halfway through his fraudulent career, when he and his wife Jessie were living at 2 Park Village West. It also suggests that, realising his frauds could not go undetected for ever, he was already making financial provision for a rainy day.

Under a legal agreement<sup>3</sup> drawn up by Leopold in November 1852, three of his properties, two in Pimlico and one in Soho,<sup>5</sup> were vested in a trust. There were four trustees: William James Redpath and Henry Syme Redpath, William Robert Earl, and a gentleman named Prosper William Henry Vink. Written in barely penetrable legalese, with many provisos as to who would outlive whom, the document laid down the terms of the trust. Its revenues were to be used for Leopold's personal benefit until his death, or (prophetically!) until such time as he might be declared bankrupt. Thereafter Jessie was to benefit; and on her demise the income would pass to the next generation, divided three ways between Eleanora Sophia Redpath, Stephen George Hammond, and (collectively) Leopold's several nephews and nieces. Perhaps we need to summarise who some of these people were.

Previously encountered, Henry Syme<sup>6</sup> and William James Redpath<sup>7</sup> were Leopold's brothers, respectively a solicitor in the City and a Comptroller of Customs; and William Earl<sup>8</sup> was their artist brother-in-law; but who was Prosper Vink? His father Wynand Vink, a merchant and a naturalised British Dutchman,<sup>9</sup> had traded between London and Holland on an export licence signed personally (and shakily) by George III.<sup>10</sup> His son Prosper, a general merchant, was some seven years older than Leopold. He may have met Leopold in the City during his ship-broking days, and he lived with his family at Stratford,<sup>11</sup> a stone's throw from Maryland Point, home to the Shermans, Jessie Redpath's parents.<sup>12</sup> Vink was to resurface on 11 December 1856 at Clerkenwell Police Court, giving evidence of a Great North Railway (GNR) share transaction in which Leopold had forged his signature.<sup>13</sup>

Stephen Hammond was the godson of the Redpaths, with whom he lived in Park Village West in 1850-52.<sup>14</sup> On obtaining his first job he moved out, at what now transpires to have been about the same time as Eleanora moved in. She, as we know, was the childless couple's adopted daughter, but the above reference to her as Eleanora Redpath, as early as 1852, is enlightening. Clearly, by this time<sup>15</sup> she had already been taken in by Leopold and Jessie and given their surname.<sup>16</sup> They had been caring for Eleanora from the age of four or five, and the later marriage<sup>17</sup> of her natural father Robert Elwin cannot have been, as we suggested, a factor in her adoption. Nor can there now be any doubt that when in late 1856 the police seized the Redpaths' later house in Chester Terrace, it was Eleanora's toys and copy-books that were confiscated by the 'vindictive' GNR.<sup>18</sup>

That Jessie had likewise lost cherished belongings is further confirmed in a letter<sup>3</sup> from her solicitor brother-in-law, Henry Syme Redpath, to the GNR's lawyers, Lawrance, Plews & Boyar. On 20 December 1856, from his office in Walbrook, he wrote:

'Gentlemen,

May I ask on the part of Mrs. L. Redpath whether there will be any objection to deliver to me on her behalf the several things mentioned on the next page. Also whether the claim of the estate on the trifling balance to the credit of her separate account at the Union Bank (about £40) is to be insisted on or whether she may draw for it. There is a second Daguerotype [*sic*] likeness of Mr. L. Redpath and as pecuniarily it is worthless perhaps there may not be any objection to its being handed to me. There is also a Desk and a Bible belonging to one of my sisters which are worthless but valued by her – I would ask if its objected to give them up – The whole of the above and below at Chester Terrace.

[Overleaf:]

For Mrs. L. Redpath: Wardrobes already applied for; Daguerotype of Mr. L. Redpath; miniatures of Major and Mrs. Sherman, the father and mother of Mrs. Redpath, and also the miniature of a Lady, a friend of Mrs. Redpath.'

Besides taking possession of Leopold's houses and other property, the GNR had also been eyeing the modest sum left in Jessie's personal bank account.<sup>19</sup>

Henry's letter was forwarded by Lawrance to James Ryder Mowatt (GNR Secretary), who in turn sought the advice of Edmund Denison (GNR Chairman), posting the missive on to him at his Doncaster mansion. On 1 March 1857 Denison, now seemingly more amenable as a result of the negative publicity his company had suffered,<sup>20</sup> returned the letter to Mowatt at King's Cross, endorsed with a scribbled note: 'I think you had better deal with all these applications with a liberal hand – the value of the articles will be nothing to us – but to Redpath's relations they may be considerable.'

The lady friend portrayed in Jessie's lost miniature may well have been Jane Primrose, someone else to fall foul of the GNR. We last met her long ago, fleetingly in a footnote,<sup>21</sup> as Jane Hammond, the mother of Stephen. Jane's relationship with her son is hard to fathom. The 1841 census found her widowed, and ensconced in a Herefordshire farmhouse near her birthplace,<sup>22</sup> and five-year-old Stephen left in London,<sup>23</sup> in the care of Mary Simmons, Jessie's future employer.<sup>24</sup> Ten years later he was being 'partly brought up and educated' by his godparents, Leopold and Jessie. On the face of it, Stephen appears to have been abandoned by his mother, yet a further thirty years later, on her death in 1881,<sup>25</sup> Jane remembered in her will<sup>26</sup>

her son's three grown-up offspring.<sup>27</sup>

On 17 February 1846, at St Pancras Old Church,<sup>28</sup> Jane was remarried, to bachelor Charles Primrose, Esq., a former army officer, with a history of gambling and debt for which he had spent twelve months in prison.<sup>29</sup> To protect her own money, Jane wisely appointed two trustees, but in 1855 one of them stood down. Out of the frying-pan and into the fire, Jane (once again a widow<sup>30</sup>) chose her friend Leopold Redpath to fill the vacancy, only for him to be declared bankrupt the following year.<sup>31</sup> She applied for his trusteeship to be transferred to another friend, Charles Walker, a well-regarded (just married) Lieutenant in the Indian Navy; and thereby hangs a further complicated tale.

The Bank of England repeatedly refused to process the transfer of assets without a disclaimer signed by the assignees of Leopold's estate – to wit William Pennell (the Bankruptcy Court's Official Assignee) and Mr Mowatt (Trade Assignee for the GNR). The bank was concerned that the stocks and shares involved had been registered in the names of the two trustees, one of them Leopold (infamously expert in such matters!). When by April 1857 the disclaimer had still not materialised, a frustrated Jane Primrose petitioned the Court of Chancery for a ruling on her plight. Her opponents in court<sup>32</sup> lamely admitted they had no claim on Jane's money. The disclaimer had not been signed because of Redpath, who (now convicted and in gaol on Millbank) still adamantly refused to co-operate or say anything about his estate; and because Jane was his 'intimate friend'. In his judgement, Sir John Romilly, Master of the Rolls, said that 'what this meant' he was 'totally at a loss to conceive'. Though powerless to grant her costs, he ruled in Jane's favour and the trusteeship was duly transferred to Charles Walker.

But that was not the end of the story. When in 1863 Walker inconveniently died intestate,<sup>33</sup> his (by then estranged) wife Ada took no part in his funeral, and Jane Primrose was left to pay for his grave at Kensal Green.<sup>34</sup> When Ada<sup>35</sup> also refused to administer her late husband's estate, the GNR apparently muscled in. In 1865 probate was somewhat oddly granted, on their behalf, to none other than their former Secretary, James Ryder Mowatt – this seven years after the company had sacked him!<sup>36</sup>

Jane Primrose evidently remained a close Redpath family friend. When in 1871 Jessie and Eleanora visited Charlotte Harrison at Elm Croft in Burpham<sup>37</sup> – soon to be their own home too<sup>38</sup> – the census showed that Jane was there with them. In her will<sup>26</sup> she left a minor legacy of £200 to 'Jessie Redpath ... of Burpham, Sussex' – further proof, if any were needed, that the pseudonymous 'Mrs Monro' of that village was indeed Leopold's wife.

Over two decades earlier, another case involving the Redpaths had been referred to the Court of Chancery. When, in 1857, Mr Marsh had auctioned off the bulk of Leopold's real estate<sup>39</sup> for the benefit of the GNR, the Soho and Pimlico properties bound up in his 'trust' had been excluded from the sale. In late 1859, however, Pennell and Mowatt submitted a printed 'Bill of Complaint' to the court,<sup>3</sup> citing thirteen defendants: the four trustees and all of the trust's potential beneficiaries, including Jessie; Stephen Hammond; 'Eleanora Sophia Sumner, otherwise Redpath', then just twelve; and Leopold's nieces and nephews, including Henry Adeney Redpath, the eleven-year-old future rector of St Dunstan-in-the-East,<sup>40</sup> and his sister Jessie Jane, only six.

The plaintiffs argued that the 1852 agreement had been 'fraudulent' and so was

null and void; they insisted that the properties were part of Leopold's estate and demanded they be handed over. Possibly to avoid the endless litigation for which Chancery was notorious, and famously satirised by Dickens in *Bleak House*, the two sides opted for an out-of-court settlement. On 11 June 1860 they reached a 'compromise' agreement,<sup>3</sup> whereby in return for a payment of £1,333 16s 8d the trustees would surrender the title deeds of the properties to Pennell; and this they did, enabling Mr Marsh to sell off their freeholds on 26 July [1].

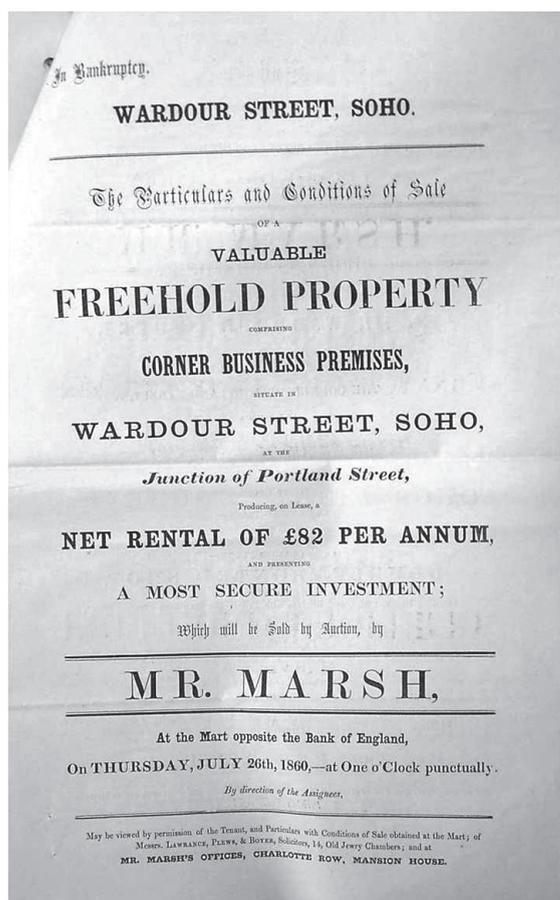
It had also been discovered that Jessie owned some valuable shares, four in the Devon Great Consols Mining Company<sup>41</sup> and one in the West Middlesex Water Company (the water supplier to Chester Terrace). Jessie was to sell these shares, keeping £666 13s 4d from the proceeds and handing the balance over to the assignees. Her own portion, perhaps worth £45,000 today, would leave her far from penniless, but without extra income or help from friends or family, hard pressed to find the £200 a year she sent to Leopold in Australia.<sup>37</sup>

The determination of the GNR to lay their hands on every scrap of the fraudster's estate only equalled that shown by some of Leopold's entourage in an

earlier bid to thwart them. Unreported in the press were deeds of derring-do worthy of an adventure novel. On 24 November 1856, ten days after Leopold's arrest, GNR police inspector Thomas Williams<sup>42</sup> wrote a report<sup>3</sup> for Mr Mowatt:

'I have ascertained that on Thursday 14th inst. a box containing plate, linen and other valuables was removed from Redpath's house at Weybridge [2] and deposited in the gardner's [*sic*] tool house; from thence it was taken to a public house in the village, thence down the river to Shepperton<sup>43</sup> where it was put in the Fisherman's father's out house; it was afterwards moved across the river to a cart which was in waiting and in which it was taken to 7a Seymour Mews, Portland Square [*sic*]<sup>44</sup>, the residence of the father of the footman; from this place it was fetched by Poynter the lady's maid and by her conveyed to 4 Ulster Place the residence of Mr Elwin.

There was also removed on the same day another box containing jewelry which was buried in the fisherman's father's garden at Shepperton and afterwards taken by Poynter to Mr



[1] Sale of the freehold of 111 Wardour Street, 26 July 1860.<sup>3</sup>

'Portland Street' has since been renamed D'Arblay Street.

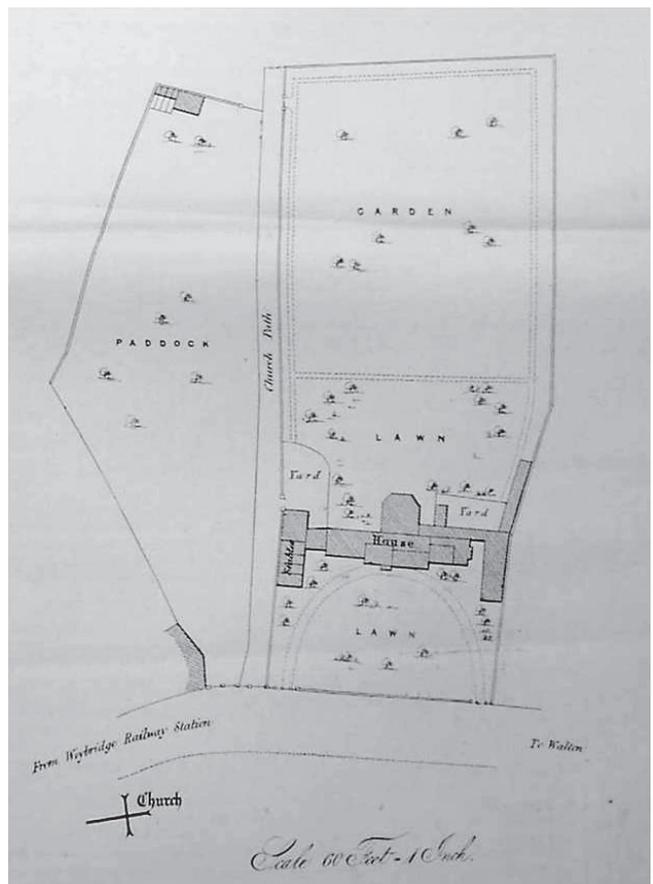
Elwin's house. The footman [George Wright] and Poynter receiving their instructions as to the removal of these boxes from Mr Elwin.'

So, the fisherman employed to take Leopold out on fishing trips<sup>45</sup> eventually put his punt to a less leisurely purpose. While he remains anonymous, we can now put names to two of the Redpaths' other (overpaid) servants. Jessie's loyal lady's maid was very likely a young native of Marylebone, aged about 24 and rejoicing under the name of Jessie Poynter.<sup>46</sup>

Though the source of Inspector Williams' information is unknown, his report contained one most unfortunate error: 14 November 1856 was a Friday, so we cannot be sure which day he meant. Was the operation a pre-emptive strike on the Thursday, on instructions from Leopold in one of his telegrams from Paris,<sup>47</sup> or a panic measure as a result of his arrest<sup>48</sup> on the following day? If the latter, the skulduggery might well have occurred under the very nose of Superintendent Loxton, who visited Weybridge on the Friday afternoon.<sup>49</sup>

No.4 Ulster Place, Regent's Park, was the house where Leopold was apprehended and where Jessie later took refuge, and the home of Eleanor's father, Robert Elwin, now employed as a clerk in the GNR Secretary's office. We do not know how Mr Mowatt reacted to the news of his own clerk's role in the escape, though Elwin was soon to leave the GNR's employ for a post on another railway,<sup>50</sup> possibly given a decent reference to be rid of him.

As for Jessie, her own lady's maid's complicity in the affair suggests that she must have been aware of what was going on. Was the 'virtuous lady' not as lily-white as contemporary journalists supposed? And if so, had she likewise known of Leopold's embezzlements? After all, she can scarcely have failed to spot the mismatch between her husband's salary and their opulent lifestyle. Perhaps we shall never know: many are the questions raised in our story of the King's Cross fraudster's life and still waiting to be answered.



[2] 'Re Leopold Redpath: plan of an estate at Weybridge, Surrey', from Mr Marsh's sale particulars.<sup>3</sup> Note that the track separating the paddock from the house and garden, known to locals as Magog Lane,<sup>45</sup> is here labelled 'Church Path'.

## NOTES

1. David A Hayes & Marian Kamlish, *The King's Cross Fraudster: Leopold Redpath, his life & times* (Camden History Society, 2013); hereinafter *KXF*.
2. Paul was the compiler of the online family tree of his mother Margery ([www.minervatraining.com/margery/ft/pafg07.htm](http://www.minervatraining.com/margery/ft/pafg07.htm)). His great-great-great-great-grandfather was Christopher James Redpath (b. 1776), a brother of Leopold's father James, and the father of Christopher James Redpath (1801-1872), Leopold's iron-founding cousin (*KXF*, p 57, n 10).
3. The National Archives, part of RAIL 236/425; images supplied by Paul Douglas.
4. *KXF*, p 114, n 3.
5. Leopold owned the freehold of two 'desirable residences' at 87 Upper Ebury Street and 14a Burton Street in Pimlico; and 'business premises' at 111 Wardour Street, Soho. No. 111 was a corner shop (cf. Leopold's butcher's shop in Cowes, IOW). His Soho tenant was an undertaker, Henry France (*Post Office London Directory*, 1852), descended from W France of Pall Mall, who as 'Upholder to the King' had organised the state funeral of Lord Nelson. The family firm, A France & Son still thrives, based in Lamb's Conduit Street, Holborn ([www.afranceandson.wordpress.com/history](http://www.afranceandson.wordpress.com/history)).
6. *KXF*, p 32, n 1; p 57, n 4; p 58, n 11; p 86, n 3.
7. *KXF*, p 27, n 23; p 86 n 3.
8. *KXF*, p 86, n 4; p 174, nn 2, 3.
9. Wynand Adriaen de Gruyter Vink (c.1767-1843), naturalised in 1796 and living in the Minories (Aldgate), was a Freeman of the City of London and a member of the Worshipful Company of Girdlers; cf. Leopold's membership of the Spectacle Makers' Company (*KXF*, p 20).
10. Kent History & Library Centre: EK-U1453/O34/5.
11. Born in Aldgate c.1809, Prosper Vink lived in The Grove at Stratford, where all his five children were born (Census, 1841 & 1851). On his death in 1866, his effects amounted to under £100 (Probate, 3 Sep 1872).
12. *KXF*, p 27, n 27.
13. *The Times*, 12 Dec 1856. Vink had by now moved with his family to 12 Rodney Terrace, Mile End Road.
14. *KXF*, p 37.
15. A year earlier Eleonora still lived with her mother, policeman's daughter Sophia Sumner, at Hendon police station (Census, 1851; *KXF*, p 174, n 10).
16. Prior to the Adoption of Children Act (1926), adoption was an informal affair.
17. *KXF*, p 171.
18. *KXF*, p 108.
19. Leopold's account with the Union Bank of London had been frozen (*KXF*, p 82).
20. *KXF*, p 126.
21. *KXF*, p 32, n 4.
22. As a lodger or guest at Vineyard Farm, near Ledbury, the town of Jane's birth.
23. At 6 Ulster Place, Regent's Park (*KXF*, p 28).
24. At 3 Cumberland Place, Regent's Park as lady's companion (*ibid*).
25. Aged 76, on 3 Apr 1881, at 76 Cornwall Road, Westbourne Park (Probate, 27 Apr 1881).
26. Will made 23 Mar 1881; sole executor: George Robert Green of 1 Lawn Road, Haverstock Hill (a retired architect, Census 1881). Recorded as 'under £6,000', Jane's personal estate might be worth over £½ million today ([www.measuringworth.com](http://www.measuringworth.com), using RPI).

27. The grandchildren, Hannah, Richard and George Hammond, we last encountered as youngsters, living in Margate with their widowed mother Jane. Their father Stephen Hammond had died young, aged 32, in 1869 (*KXF*, p 174, n 13).
28. London Marriages & Banns (ancestry.com).
29. Charles Primrose, a Lieutenant in the 36th Regiment of Foot, had sold his commission in 1837 to help pay his debts (*The Times*, 28 Jun & 24 Jul 1838).
30. Charles died at Blackheath, aged 45 after 3 years of marriage.
31. *KXF*, p 105.
32. On 16-20 Apr 1857 (Report on Cases in Chancery (1858), p 590ff).
33. Walker died, aged 38, in a lodging-house off Edgware Road (Probate, 16 Sep 1865). The letter of administration described him bluntly as a 'bastard without child'. Born in 1824, he had been baptised at St Marylebone only in 1840, his father unnamed and his mother, Ann Walker, a domestic servant (of Ulster Place!).
34. Register of All Souls' Cemetery, Kensal Green.
35. The widowed Ada Walker promptly married John Winpenny Peters, the wealthy owner of The Grange, a large house in Kilburn, which she inherited on his death in 1882. She subsequently became the lover of the so-called Marquis de Leuville, a poet and adventurer once called 'the greatest charlatan of his age'. His story is told in an e-book by local historians Dick Weindling and Marianne Colloms – *The Marquis de Leuville, a Victorian Fraud?* (History Press, 2012) – in which Leopold and Jane Primrose play a cameo role. We are most grateful to its authors for their generous supply of additional information and pointers to other relevant sources.
36. *KXF*, p 127. The GNR's seemingly bizarre claim to Walker's estate would make sense if Leopold (true to form) had lent him money that was never repaid.
37. *KXF*, p 172.
38. Now positively identified as the residence near the parish church known today as Burpham House. The other suggested property, nearby Burpham Lodge (*KXF*, p 176, n 30), can be eliminated as, unlike the former Elm Croft, it has never been renamed.
39. *KXF*, p 114, n 4.
40. *KXF*, p 177. Also William Syme Redpath, Henry Adeney's brother; and Eleanor Anne and Emily Mary Jackson, the daughters of Leopold's sister Eleanor (*KXF*, p 86, n 4).
41. Owners of a copper mine near Tavistock. (See additional note overleaf).
42. Returned from his futile trip to Paris in pursuit of the fugitive Leopold (n 47).
43. The village of Shepperton lay on the (then) Middlesex bank of a meander in the Thames, under two miles downstream of its confluence with the Wey. The onward journey by cart to Marylebone would have been of nearly 20 miles.
44. There is no Portland Square in London; Seymour Mews (Marylebone) was, and is, adjacent to *Portman* Square.
45. *KXF*, p 72.
46. As 'Jessy Poynter' in the 1851 census, she was a nursery maid in an 8-servant household in Sussex Place, Marylebone. As 'Jessie Pointer' in 1861, she was lady's maid to Charlotte, the German-born wife of Alexander Woodford, Lieutenant Governor of the Chelsea Hospital.
47. *KXF*, p 84.
48. *KXF*, p 86.
49. *KXF*, p 88.
50. *KXF*, p 171 & p 175, n 15.

## ADDITIONAL NOTE

Readers may wonder how the 1860 sale of Jessie Redpath's apparently meagre shareholding in the Devonshire mine (p 4) could have been so lucrative.

The Devon Great Consols Mining Co. had been established in 1845 after large deposits of copper were discovered in the Tamar valley, near Tavistock, on land owned by the Duke of Bedford. The firm's founders had been the father and two uncles of William Morris (of wallpaper fame). One of the mine's several workings was named 'Wheal Emma' after Morris's mother, and his uncle Thomas became the company's representative on site. On his coming of age in 1855, Morris had inherited thirteen shares in the company, of which he, too, was later to serve as a director.

Described as 'the richest in Europe', the extensive copper mine, with its own railway, was initially highly profitable. Investors were hugely enthusiastic, and £1 shares had been changing hands in 1847 for £800, hence their high value. Morris's own dividends of over £700 p.a. helped fund his early artistic and business endeavours, including the formation in 1861, in Red Lion Square, Holborn, of his celebrated 'Firm', later Morris & Co.

By contrast, the Devonshire mineworkers' conditions were atrocious. Miners earned £4 a month, the young women employed to break the ore into pieces about one shilling (5p) a day, and the children from 4d to 8d (1½p to 3½p). Trudging several miles to and from the mine each day, the working families often lived in a single room, sleeping in beds occupied around the clock by family members working different eight-hour shifts. Though many of them suffered from arsenic-related illnesses, Morris was scathing of reports (even then) on the element's dangers to health, and infamously used arsenic-based pigments in his wallpapers.

There is no evidence that Morris ever visited the Devonshire mine. The future 'visionary socialist' (*ODNB*) seems to have turned a blind eye to the human misery contributing to his wealth, and to the environmental damage caused (for which the Duke of Bedford demanded compensation, while continuing to enjoy the royalties he was paid).

Jessie's four shares in the mine equated to almost one third of Morris's own holding. The philanthropic Leopold and his wife were doubtless ignorant of, and equally indifferent to, the human cost of their income, some of which would have found its way into his charitable donations. Ironically, and with poetic justice, by the time Jessie's shares were sold, Leopold himself had undergone two spells of involuntary hard labour, one of them on Portland (*KXF*, pp 136-140), at another West Country mineral working!

Main source: Jackie Latham, 'Thomas Morris, Resident Director of the Devon Great Consols' (*Journal of William Morris Studies*, 14.3 (2001), pp 41-46); <http://www.morrissociety.org/publications/JWMS/W01.14.3.Latham.pdf>