ladies were riding through the forest, they met a very old man
who said that he had been a king many years before, and that his
castle had stood on the very spot where they now were. The sword
that this man carried is described in great detail:

Right great it was: the scabbard thin
was fashioned of a serpent's skin,
In every scale a stone of worth:
Of tooth of sea-lion of the north
The cross was, and the blood-boat stone
that heals the hurt the blade hath done
Hung down therefrom in silken purée:
The ruddy kin of Niblung's curse
O'er tresses of a sea-wife's hair
Was wrapped about the handle fair;
And last a marvellous sapphire stone
Amidst of the great pomme! shone,
A blue flame in the forest green.

The old king recalled the night when the castle was burned, and
related that his grandmother then

"passed
Betwixt the speen's spears the last
Of all the women, wrapping round
This sword the gift of Odin's hand."

He showed the sword to Arthur, Guenevere, and Lancelot, and ex-
claimed,

"When as the sun arising wan
In the black sky when Heimdall's horn
Screams out and the last day is born,
This blade to eyes of men shall be
On that dread day I shall not see-

then he took Guenevere's hand and laid it upon the hilt, saying,

"Hold this, O Queen,
Thine hand is where God's hands have been,
For this is Tyrfigik: who knows when
His blade was forged? Blike ere men
Had dwelling on the middle earth.
At least a man's life is it worth
To draw it out once: so behold

1. Collected works, XXIV, 320.
2. Ibid., XXIV, 323.
3. Loc. cit.
These peace-strings wrought of pearl and gold
The scabbard to the cross that bind
Lest a rash hand and heart made blind
Should draw it forth unwittingly.

A little later in the poem the grandson of the old king began to
relate a story told to him by his grandmother of the days of old;
at that time, he said,

there were folk who had to tell
Of lyngworms lying on the fell,
And fearful things by lake and fen;
And manlike shapes that were not men.
Then fay-folk roamed the woods at noon,
And on the grave-mounds in the moon
Paint gleamed the flickering treasure-flame.

Just as the young man's tale is becoming interesting, the poem
breaks off, uncompleted.

It is impossible to ascertain definitely the source of the in-
formation regarding Tyrfing that Morris reveals in the first four
of these quotations. The fullest account of the long history of
this famous sword is of course found in the Hervarar saga ok Heldeks
konunga. However, this saga had not been translated into English
by 1870 - in fact, has not yet been turned into English. Moreover,
there is no record that Morris read it in the original, though he
may possibly have done so at this time. It was included in the vol-
ume of the Fornaldar Sögur Nordrlanda which he seems to have used
for his rendering of the Völsunga saga, and he had other edi-
tions of the work in his library at his death. However, for the
knowledge he shows of Tyrfing, it is not necessary to assume that
he had read the Hervarar saga, for there were other sources of infor-

1. Collected works, XXIV, 323.
2. Ibid., XXIV, 325
mation, in English, available at the time. Thus, as Frank E. Farley points out in his discussion of the poem "The Waking of Angantyr" in his Scandinavian Influences in the English Romantic Movement, Scott gave a brief abstract of the saga-story concerning the Forging of Tyrfing and the curse of the dwarfs in his essay "On the Fairies of Popular Superstition" in his Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border, first published in 1802. Moreover, in 1842 William Herbert in his notes to "The Combat of Hialmar and Oddur with Angantyr and his Eleven Brothers" in his Horae Scandicae translated Chapters II, and III of the Hervarar saga - the chapters which describe the origin of the sword. Finally, William Taylor retold the whole story of the making of Tyrfing and the battle on Samsey, with many additions and alterations, in his Tales of Yore in 1810. The first of these accounts Morris had almost certainly read, and there is reason to believe that he knew Herbert's work also; with the last book it is somewhat less likely that he was acquainted. I should also like

1. Studies and Notes in Philology and Literature, IX (1903), 44-45.
5. As I have already pointed out, Morris even as a boy admired and read Scott avidly (see above, pp. 1-2).
6. It is fairly safe to assume that Morris was familiar with the works of Herbert, for an edition of Herbert's Helga was found in his library at his death (see below, p. 1007).
7. I should like to point out here that in his study Farley also calls attention to the fact that the poem "The Waking of Angantyr," which was included in the Hervarar saga, had at an early date attracted the attention of English antiquaries, and that during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries eight translations or adaptations of the poem appeared in England (see Farley, op. cit., pp. 44-58). Some of these Morris may very likely have known, especially the version included in Percy's Five Pieces of Runic Poetry, this rendering later appearing also in Percy's translation of Mallet's L'introduction a l'histoire de Danemark et des Antiquités (Edinburgh, 1809), II, 289-303. However, these renderings and adaptations could not have been Morris's sole source of information about Tyrfing, for although many of them are provided with short introductions relating briefly the early history
to point out that the story of Tyrfling is told briefly in Thomas Keightley's *Fairy Mythology*, a work which Morris may very well have known.

However, although Morris must have been drawing upon the saga itself or upon one of these other works for his knowledge of Tyrfling-if he was indebted to a written source- , he did not in certain respects follow these accounts in his description of the sword. Thus in the first passage quoted above, Morris says that the scabbard was made "of a serpent's skin" and that the hilt was formed of the "tooth of sea-lion"; but the saga, Scott, and Herbert describe the sheath and hilt as being of gold, and Taylor omits any reference to these details. Morris further says that the blade was provided with a "blood-boot stone," that a sapphire was set in the pommel, and that "peace-strings" bound the hilt to the scabbard; none of these facts are mentioned in any of these four accounts. Of course, Morris may very likely have read the story several years before he wrote the poem, and so he may have forgotten the details in the description of the sword. However, he departs from the accounts given in these four works even in the matter of the origin of Tyrfling, and the interesting tale of Svafrlemi and the two dwarfs Dýrinn and Dvalinn it does not seem likely that Morris could have forgotten if he had ever read it. Thus, he represents the old man as saying, in the fourth passage quoted above, that no one knows when the sword was forged but that it most likely was made before the time of man. Of course, it is possible that Morris himself knew that the two dwarfs

*(Continuation of note 7 on page 138) of the sword, none of them mention the fact that the weapon was cursed so that it could not be drawn without killing a man, and to this detail Morris refers in the fourth passage quoted. This quality of the sword, however, is described in Scott's, Herbert's, and Taylor's works.*


2. For the description of Tyrfling in the *Hervarar saga*, see *Fornaldar Sögur*, 1, 414-415.
produced the weapon at the command of Svafirlami, and that he deliberately attributed ignorance of this matter to one of his characters in the interest of the story he was about to tell, of which we know very little since only the opening scene was written out.

On the whole, however, Morris's information regarding Tyrfing seems to have been rather slight. Perhaps he was not drawing on any written account, but was merely basing his remarks on something Magnusson had told him concerning the sword.

In addition to the references to Tyrfing, there are a number of other Norse allusions in the poem. Thus, in the third passage quoted above, Morris mentions Heimdall; with this Norse god and the part he is to play at the time of Ragnarök, we have already seen that Morris was familiar. Again, as I have just pointed out, in his account of Tyrfing he represents the sword as having a "healing-stone" and as being fastened to its sheath by "peace-strings," although these details were not mentioned in the references to Tyrfing in the originals he seems to have used. Magic swords which could heal the wounds they had made were of course fairly common in the folklore of the past. In most cases, however, they exercised this power when the flat of the blade was applied to the wound; only in Norse legends, it seems, were magic swords provided with a stone in the hilt for this purpose. With such "lyfsteinar," as they were called, Morris may have become acquainted through references in

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1. In addition to the references to Tyrfing in the quotations given above, there is a mere mention of the sword in Collected Works, XXIV, 324, 1.14.

2. See above, pp. 93-94.

3. See, for example, The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, F. Robinson (Cambridge: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1933), p. 156, 11.160-167, p. 157, 11. 236-246, and the note to the first passage on 823. See also above, on pp. 76-77, the references to such a sword in Thorpe's tale 'The Land East of the Sun and West of the Moon.'
Thorpe’s Northern Mythology and from the account of “Sköfnung” in the Laxdæla saga. Similarly, “peace-strings” or “friðbænd” seem to have been used only on Scandinavian swords. Morris’s source of information regarding them was probably the Gísla saga, which he is said to have known through Dasent’s translation. Again, his allusions to “lyngworms” and to “treasure-flames” were both very likely the result of his early Scandinavian studies. With the term “lyngormr,” of which the word “lyngworm” is obviously a rendering, Morris had met in his translation of the Völsunga saga and also, perhaps, in the opening chapter of the Ragnars saga loðbrókar.

The belief that lights were to be seen at night over buried treasure was very common among the early Northmen, and it was evidently the references to this tradition that he had met in his Scandinavian reading that led Morris to mention “treasure-flames” here. Similarly, his use of the term “middle earth” in the fourth passage quoted was very likely due to his studies in Old Norse, although the word was of course common in Old English also and he may have known it from non-Scandinavian sources.

Finally, it should be noted that Morris introduced in this poem three metaphors of the type common in early Germanic poetry.

1. I, 219.
2. Pages 250 and 252.
4. See the fifth passage quoted above.
5. Fornaldar Sægr Nordrlanda, I, 151 and 159.
6. Ibid., I, 257.
7. See Thorpe’s Northern Mythology, II, 263-265. Morris may also have known the reference to this belief in Percy’s introductory remarks to his translation “The Waking of Angantyr” (in Mallet’s Northern Antiquities (Edinburgh, 1809), II, 296.
8. See, for example, Thorpe’s Northern Mythology, I, 5 and II and Mallet’s Northern Antiquities (London, 1847), p. 405.
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and usually called "kennings." Thus, in the first of the five passages quoted above Morris says, in describing Tyrfing, that

The ruddy kin of Niblung's curse
O'er tresses of a sea-wife's hair
Was wrapped about the handle fair;

and in the second passage he relates that the old king's grandmother bore Tyrfing from the burning hall,

"Wrapping round
This sword the gift of Odin's ground."

The figures, "the ruddy kin of Niblung's curse," "tresses of a sea-wife's hair," and "the gift of Odin's ground" were obviously formed in direct imitation of the Old Norse kennings. None of these metaphors, so far as I know, actually occur in Old Norse poetry. That the first one stands for "gold" is of course obvious, but the meaning of the other two is not clear. Karl Litzenberg, commenting on the first of these two passages in his article "Allusions to the Elder Edda in the 'Non-Norse' Poems of William Morris," suggests that by the term "sea-wife" Morris may have meant to refer to Rán, the wife of the Norse sea-god Ægir, and that Morris may have used the figure "tresses of a sea-wife's hair" to indicate "gold." This interpretation of the kenning does not seem to me satisfactory, for it would make the passage as a whole mean that gold placed on gold was wrapped around the handle. Perhaps Morris used the expression simply to indicate "seaweed," thinking fancifully of the "peace-strings," which he later describes as being made of gold and pearl, as consist-

1. They are not listed in Sveinbjörn Egilsson's Lexicon Poeticum (2 Udgave ved Finnur Jónsson [Copenhagen: S.L. Møllers Bogtrykkeri, 1931]) nor in the section "Skáldskaparmál" in the Prose Edda. Kennings similar to the first one are of course fairly common. The nearest one to Morris's that I have found is "róg. Niflunga" (see Egilsson, op. cit., p. 471, col. 1, g. y. "róg").

ing of seaweed covered with gold. The meaning of the kenning "the gift of Odin's ground" is equally uncertain. The context seems to indicate that the king's grandmother hid the sword with something—such as cloth, as she carried it past the foemen; there seems to be no reason, however, for calling cloth "the gift of Odin's ground."

The date of the composition of the fragment "In Arthur's House" is not known. Miss Morris says in one of her Introductions that the tale, "though the subject suggests the earlier conceived Arthurian poems, is of a rather later period, and may be one of the projected stories for the Earthly Paradise." It seems to me that Morris's use of the three kennings just discussed almost definitely places the poem well after the fall of 1853, for although Morris was of course familiar with kennings before this time from the Scandinavian works he had read in translation, it was when he began turning sagas into English that he first came into direct contact with these elaborate figures. As I shall make later in Chapter IV, Morris always showed a fondness in his own writings for using metaphorical expressions in place of the common name of an object—even before he began studying Icelandic; but the three figures just considered are the first ones he used of this type which seem definitely to have been formed in imitation of Old Norse kennings, and two of these three—"the ruddy kin of Niblung's curse" and "the gift of Odin's ground"—are the first, so far as I know, which involve Norse characters. It is most


2. See below, pp. 590-593.
natural to assume that it was the experience, often undoubtedly unpleasant, that he had in analyzing Old Norse kennings and in turning them into English in the course of his saga-rendering that led him to imitate the Icelandic kennings in his own figures. Moreover, although the Arthurian setting of the poem seems at first to indicate that the tale was an early composition, the background does not prevent us from dating the fragment after 1866, for according to Mackail, Morris developed a fresh, but transitory, interest in the Arthurian story in 1870. Mackail says of Morris that during the summer of 1870, when *The Earthly Paradise* was practically completed, the "Arthurian legend once more attracted him, not now filling his mind, but making in it something of a counterpoise to the Northern Sagas..."; he further states that Morris thought of writing a long poem on the story of Tristram and another on the tale of Balin and Balan, but that nothing was ever produced. Possibly the fragment we have just been considering was a result of this renewed interest in the Arthur story.

The year 1870 brings to a close what may be considered the first period of Morris's interest in the history, literature, and general culture of the early Scandinavians. During the years 1834 to 1870, as we have seen, Morris's acquaintance with the North grew from the general information he derived from Thorpe's *Northern Mythology* while a student at Oxford to a first-hand acquaintance with


2. In his articles "Tyrring into Excalibur? A Note on William Morris's Unfinished Poem, 'In Arthur's House'" (in Scandinavian Studies and Notes, XV (1938-1939), 81-83) and "Allusions to the Elder Edda in the 'Non-Norse' Poems of William Morris," p. 20, Dr. Litzenberg assumes that the poem "In Arthur's House" was written early—about 1865. As I have said above, there is no conclusive evidence as to the date of the fragment, but what evidence we do have seems to me to point to a time after 1868; Dr. Litzenberg does not state his reasons for believing the poem as early as 1865.
some of the greatest of the Icelandic sagas and with the main part of The Poetic Edda; and his early interest in Old Norse literature, which seems merely to have been a part of his passion for everything medieval, was supplanted by a genuine understanding and appreciation of the great art of the sagas and the Oldic verse. The real impetus to his interest in the North was of course his meeting with Magnússon in 1868. The knowledge of the Icelandic language that he gained from his studies with Magnússon and the first-hand acquaintance that this knowledge gave him with the literature he had hitherto known only through English translations or through general accounts of early Scandinavia awakened in him a deep love for the North, so that in the two years immediately following his introduction to Magnússon he seems to have turned into English at least six sagas, three of which he published, and he composed three poems based on Norse stories. During these last two years he became more and more absorbed in his Scandinavian studies, but up to the end of 1870 it cannot be said that his Icelandic work was his prime interest. In the period 1871 through 1876, however, which I shall consider in Chapter II, he gave himself up almost exclusively to his interest in medieval Scandinavia.
Chapter II.

The Culmination of Morris's Interest in the North: 1871-1876

During the years 1871 to 1876 Morris's interest in early Scandinavia reached its height, and during this period he devoted practically all of his time and energy to his Scandinavian work. He not only continued to translate Icelandic sagas, turning at least twelve of these works into English, either wholly or in part, but he also prepared renderings of a number of Icelandic, Danish, and Swedish ballads. He made two prolonged trips to Iceland, one in 1871 and the other in 1873, visiting the scenes of his beloved sagas and drawing fresh inspiration from the country, its people, and its literature. He wrote a great number of minor poems which were a direct result either of his visits to Iceland or of his growing acquaintance with Old Norse literature. And at the very end of this period he produced his long poem Sigurd the Volsung, which is considered by most critics to be, without question the greatest English work - if not the only truly great work in English - inspired by a Norse legend.

In the case of the Scandinavian work Morris produced before 1871, we know, or can ascertain fairly definitely, the exact time at which the various translations or original poems were written out; in the case of the Norse works he prepared during the period 1871 to 1876, however, we are generally not aware of the precise date of composition. Hence I shall not be able to discuss the renderings and poems belonging to this period in their chronological order, as I have done with his earlier productions, but I shall
treat them instead by groups.

I have already called attention to the fact that Morris translated a number of Scandinavian ballads, and I have pointed out that he began turning Northern folk songs into English at least as early as the beginning of 1870, for his rendering of "Hafbur og Signy," the first of those that are dated, was composed on February 4th of that year. In all, Morris translated ten Scandinavian ballads — namely, "Hafbur and Signy," "Hildebrand and Hellelill," "Axnes and the Hill-Man," "Knight Aagen and Maiden also," "The Mother under the Mold," "Axel Thordson and Fair Walborg," "The Lay of Christine," "The Son's Sorrow," "Den Lillaa Testamente," and "Herr Malmstens dröm." Only four of these renderings are dated or can be fairly definitely dated, - "Hafbur and Signy," which, as I just pointed out, is marked "February 4, 1870" in the holograph manuscript, "The Lay of Christine," and "The Son's Sorrow," which must have been prepared before August 26, 1870 because they are included in an illuminated manuscript finished at that time, and "Hildebrand and Hellelill," which is dated "March 1, 1871." Although the date of the composition of the other six is not definitely known, it is generally assumed that all these ballad translations were written out in the early 1870's.

2. See Collected Works, IX, xxvii.
4. See Collected Works, IX, xxxv. I should like to point out here that in view of the fact that three of these ballad translations are definitely known to have been produced in 1870, it would, perhaps, have been better to assume that the majority of them were prepared before 1871 and to have considered them as belonging to the first period of Morris's Scandinavian work. However, as I have stated above, we have no definite evidence as to the date of the composition of six of the other seven, and since it is just as likely that they were prepared after the beginning of 1871 as before - perhaps even somewhat more likely - I have decided to treat them as belonging to the period 1871 to 1876, when Morris was most absorbed in his Norse work and was most familiar with the Scandinavian languages.
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Morris printed none of his ballad renderings until 1891, when he included in Poems by the Way "Hafbur and Signy," "Hildebrand and Hellelil," "Agnes and the Hill-Man," "Knight Aagen and Maiden Else," "The Lay of Christine," and "The Son's Sorrow." The first four Morris described — and correctly so — as translations from the Danish; the last two, as he indicated, are renderings from the Icelandic. "The Mother under the Mound," also Danish, was first published by Miss Morris in 1915 in the last volume of the Collected Works. Morris's translations of "Den Hilles Testamente" and "Here Valsstens Grón," two Swedish folk songs, were not put into print until 1936, when Miss Morris included them in her William Morris: Artist Writer Socialist. The rendering of the famous Danish ballad "Axel Thordson and Fair Walborg" has never been published; Miss Morris, in the book just mentioned, merely states that the manuscript is in her possession, describing it as a "long ballad in four-line verse, from the Danish." She does not indicate whether the translation is complete.

In the case of the five Danish ballad renderings by Morris that have been published, I find that for four of them he followed the versions given in Abrahamsen, Nyarup, and Rahbek's Udvalgte Danske Viser fra Middelalderen; for only one did he use the text in Grundtvig's Danmarks Gamle Folkeviser. It is rather surprising that for

2. XXIV, 352-355.
3. I, 517-518.
4. II, 611.
5. For "Hafbur and Signy," "Hildebrand and Hellelil," "Knight Aagen and Maiden Else," and "The Mother under the Mound" Morris followed the texts in Udvalgte Danske Viser fra Middelalderen, edd. W. H. F. Abrahamsen, H. Nyarup, and K. L. Rahbek (Copenhagen, 1812-1814); for the originals of these ballad renderings see ibid., III, 3-12: III, 353-357; I, 210-214; and I, 205-209. For his translation "Agnes and the Hill-Man" Morris used Danmarks Gamle Folkeviser, edd.
four of these folk songs Morris preferred the versions in -
Udvalgte Danske Viser to those in Danmarks Samle folkeviser;
Grundtvig's texts always reproduce the ballads exactly as they
are found in the old manuscripts or in contemporary recordings,
without any alterations or additions, and hence present the songs
in their original form, with all their crudities and inconsistencies
as well as with all their vigor and color, whereas Abrahamson, Nyre-
up, and Kahreberg in their edition frequently make changes, additions,
and deletions in accordance with modern taste and sometimes combine

(Continuation of note 5 on page 148) Svend Grundtvig and Axel
Olrik (Copenhagen, 1853-1923), II, 53, No. 380. Dr. Litzenberg's
statement, in his article "William Morris and Scandinavian Litera-
ture: A Bibliographical Essay," p. 96, that the originals of Morris's
"Hafbur and Signy," "Knight Aagen and Maidenn Else," and "Hildebrand
and Hellelil" were the texts in Grundtvig's collection I have found
to be inaccurate.
For other versions that had been published by 1875 of the five
Danish ballads that Morris translated, see the following works:
for "Hafbur and Signy," Levinste, ed. Middel-Aldens Vibtekunst,
[ed. Berthel C. Sandvig] (Copenhagen, 1780-1784), I, 33-44; Gamle danske
Folkeviser, ed. [Adam G.] Gehlenschlager (Copenhagen, 1840), pp. 51-66;
Kjemppeviser, ed. Christian Winther (Copenhagen, 1840), pp. 192-207;
and Danmarks Folkeviser, ed. Grundtvig, I, 276-317;
for "Hildebrand and Hellelil," Levinste, [ed. Sandvig], II, 137-
143; and Danmarks Folkeviser, ed. Grundtvig, I, 393-403, 680-681,
and II, 857-858;
for "Knight Aagen and Maidenn Else," Levinste, [ed. Sandvig], II, 63-
65; Gamle Folkeviser, ed. Gehlenschlager, pp. 86-88; Danske Kjempe-
viser til Skole-Brug, ed. Nikplai P. S. Grundtvig (Copenhagen, 1847),
pp. 185-189; and Danmarks Folkeviser, ed. Grundtvig, II, 495-497 and
III, 870-871;
for "The Mother under the Mound," Gamle folkeviser, ed. Gehlen-
schlager, pp. 82-85; Kjemppeviser, ed. A. F. Winding (Copenhagen,
1843), pp. 31-34; Danske Kjempeviser, ed. N.F.S. Grundtvig, pp. 181-
185; Danmarks Folkeviser, ed. Grundtvig, II, 478-491, 681-682, and
III, 860-868; and Jyske Folkeviser og Ioner, ed. Evald T. Kristensen
(Copenhagen, 1871-1876), I, 54-55 and 206-211;
and for "Agnes and the Kill-Man," Danske Viser, ed. Abrahamson,
Nyrev, and Kahreberg, I, 313-315; Gamle Folkeviser, ed. Gehlenschlager,
pp. 108-110; Kjemppeviser, ed. Winther, pp. 128-130; Danske Kjempe-
viser, ed. N.F.S. Grundtvig, pp. 141-143; Danmarks Folkeviser, ed.
Grundtvig, II, 51-57, 650-661, III, 813-818, and IV, 807-809; and
several ballads to form their own version, in this way giving
the songs a literary finish which is really foreign to them. For
his Icelandic ballad translations Morris followed the texts given
in Svend Grundtvig and Jón Sigurðsson's Íslensk fornkvæði. One
of his renderings from the Swedish, "Den Lillas Testamente," he
based on the version of this ballad in Adolf I. Arwidsson's Svenska
Fornsvänger; for the other, "Herr Malmsters dröm," he used the text
in Geijer and Afzelius's Svenska Folk-Visor.

Most of the ten ballads Morris translated had previously been
turned into foreign languages. Five of the six Danish ones were
very well known in English, German, and French versions, and the
sixth had appeared in English once; the two Icelandic songs, how-

1. (Copenhagen, 1854-1885). For the original of "The Son's
Sorrow" see ibid., I, 144-146; for the text of "The Lay of Christine"
see ibid., I, 154-157. For other versions of the former ballad
see ibid., I, 147-152.

2. (Stockholm, 1834-1842), II, 90-91.

3. Svenska folk-visor från forntiden, ed. Erik G. Geijer and
Arvid A. Afzelius (Stockholm, 1814-1816), III, 104-106. For refer-
ences to other versions that had been published before 1875 of
these two ballads in Swedish, Danish, Norwegian, English, German,
French, Italian, Wendish, Magyar, etc., see below, pages 154 and 156-157

4. In listing below the translations which had been published
by 1875 of these ballads, I have single-starred those which are
dated, not on the same text as Morris used, but on a very similar
version of the ballad and which may consequently be compared with
Morris's rendering, and I have double-starred those which follow
exactly the same text as Morris used.

For English, German, and French translations of the six Danish
ballads Morris turned into English, see the following works:
for "Hafbur and Sipny," Fraser's Magazine, XLV (1852), 656-658**;
Old Danish Ballads, by an Amateur (London, 1856), pp. 29-49*; Ancient
Danish Ballads, tr. R.C. Alexander Prior (London and Edinburgh, 1860),
I, 210-231* and 232-240; Altäänische Heldenlieder, Balladen und
Märchen, tr. Wilhelm C. Grimm (Heidelberg, 1811), 93-101*; Auswahl
äländischer Heldenlieder und Balladen, tr. L. C. Sander (Copenhagen,
ever, so far as I know, had never before been rendered into

(Continuation of note 4 on page 150) 1816), pp. 97-120**;
Danische Volkslieder der Vorzeit, tr. Rosa Warrens(Hamburg, 1858),
pp. 243-260; and Chante Populaire du Nord, tr. Xavier Marmier
(Paris, 1842), pp. 148-155**;
for "Hildebrand and Hellelil," Fraser's Magazine, LI(1855), 89**;
Danish Ballads, by an Amateur, pp. 13-15; Danish Ballads, tr. Prior,
II, 411-415*, 415-418**, 418-420, and 420-422; Ballad Stories of the
Affections, tr. Robert Buchanan(New York, 1869), p. 15-19**;
Altdeutsche Heldenlieder, tr. Grimm, pp. 119-121; and Chants Popu-
laire, tr. Marmier, pp. 141-143**;
for "Knight Aagen and Maiden Else," Romantic Ballads, tr. George
Borrow(London, 1826), pp. 47-52**; Foreign Quarterly Review, VI(1830),
62-63**; Danish Ballads, by an amateur, pp. 75-78; Danish allad,
tr. Prior, III, 76-81 and 81-82**; New Monthly Magazine, CXXLI(1864),
42-43**; Fortnightly Review, I(1865), 693-695**; Ballad Stories, tr.
Buchanan, pp. 112-116**; Altdeutsche Heldenlieder, tr. Grimm,
pp. 73-74; Auswahl altdeutscher Heldenlieder, tr. Sander, pp. 41-45**;
Christian Rauch, "Die skandinavischen Balladen des Mittelalters" in
Jahresbericht über die Friedrichs-Werdersche Gewerbeschule in Berlin
(Berlin, 1873), pp. 29-31; and Chants Populaire, tr. Marmier, pp.
134-135**;
for "The Mother under the Yold," London Magazine, I(1820), 397-
398*; "The Ghaist's Warning," tr. by Robert Janieson(In Sir Walter
Scott's Poetical Works(Edinburgh, 1861), VIII, 335-339); Fraser's
Magazine, XLVII(1852), 653-654**; Danish ballads, by an amateur, pp.
23-26*; Danish Ballads, tr. Prior, I, 366-371**; Henry W. Longfellow,
Complete Poetical works(Boston and New York, 1914), pp. 282-283 **
(composed and originally published in 1873 [see ibid., p. 676]);
Altdeutsche Heldenlieder, tr. Grimm, pp. 147-149; Talvij(Theresa A. L.
von Jakob), Versuch einer geschichtlichen Charakteristik der Volks-
lieder germanischer Nationen mit einer Ubersehrt der Lieder ausser-
europäischer Volkerzibenheiten(Leipzig, 1847), pp. 257-259**; Dänische
Volkslieder, tr. Carl C. Binzer(Schleswig and Flensburg, 1855), pp.
18-22**; Danish Volkslieder, tr. Warrens, pp. 183-191; and Chants
Populaire, tr. Marmier, pp. 108-111**;
for "Agnes and the Hill-Man," Danish ballads, tr. Prior, III,
335-337**;
and for "Axel Thorshon and Fair Walborg," Danish Ballads, tr.
Prior, II, 247-276; Ballad Stories, tr. Buchanan, pp. 117-159; Alt-
deutsche Heldenlieder, tr. Grimm, pp. 357-382; and Chants Populaire,
For the sake of completeness, I should like to note the follow-
ing English, German, and French translations of Swedish, Norwegian,
or Icelandic versions of these same six ballads:
for "Hafur and Signy," Altschwedische Balladen, München und
Schwönke sammt einigen dänischen Volksliedern, tr. Gottlieb Voehnke
(Stuttgart and Tübingen, 1830), pp. 1-10; and Volksagyen und Volks-
lieder, tr. F. H. Unzegitten(Leipzig, 1842);
for "Hildebrand and Hellelil," Volkslieder der Schweden, tr.
Gottlieb Voehnke(Berlin, 1839), I, 34-36; and Schwedische Volks-
lieder der vorzeit, tr. Rosa Warrens(Leipzig, 1857), pp. 86-92;
English or French, and only one of them had ever been turned into German; of the two Swedish ballads, one had been printed in English, German, and French, and the other had appeared in German and French but never in English.

"The Mother under the Mound" and the two Swedish ballad translations call for special comment. As I have already stated, none of these pieces were published by Morris himself, the Danish folk song appearing first in 1915 in the Collected Works and the Swedish

(Continuation of note 4 on page 151)


1. For a translation of The Son's Sorrow before 1875, see Alt-islandische Volks-Balladen, tr. Willatzen, pp. 201-202.

2. For earlier English, German, and French translations of the two Swedish ballads see the following works:

The English and German translations of "Den Lillas Testamente," I should like to point out, are based on the version of this ballad presented by Geijer and Afzelius in their Svenska Folkvisor, III, 13-15, but Morris's rendering, as I have already stated, follows the text in Arwidsson's Svenska Fornsanger, II, 90-91.
ones in 1936 in *William Morris: Artist writer Socialist*. When
Miss Morris printed these works, she did not indicate that they
were translations, but presented them as original compositions of
her father. However, the three poems follow so closely the scan-
dinavian ballads designated above - namely, "Den Dødes Igjenkomst"
in Abrahamson, Nyreg, and Rahbek's *Udvalgte Danske Viser*, "Den
Lillas Testamente" in Arvidsson's *Svenska Kornsängare*, and "Herr
Malmatens dröm" in Geijer and Afzelius's *Svenska Folk-Visor* - that
there can be practically no doubt that they are direct translations
of these Scandinavian pieces. In the case of the first one, the
rendering is so exact that there is not room for any uncertainty
whatsoever. In the other two poems Morris departs occasionally from
the Swedish ballads just cited, but although some of these differ-
ences are surprising, they are really not great enough to justify
any serious doubts that Morris's compositions are translations.
Moreover, these discrepancies are almost certainly not the result
of Morris's having followed some other version of these songs, as
it seems at first that they might be, for an examination of all
the European folk songs on these two themes that are recorded or
mentioned in the ballad collections of J. J. Child, S. Grundtvig,
and Geijer and Afzelius shows, as I shall make clear in a moment.

1. I have not seen the manuscript of the first of these ballad
renderings, but in the holograph manuscript of the two Swedish folk
songs now in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, there is likewise no
indication that they are translations, both pieces being simply
headed "Ballad"; for an account of this manuscript, see above, page
13.

2. Dr. Litzenberg's statement, in his article "William Morris
and Scandinavian Literature: A Bibliographical essay," p. 96, that
"The Mother under the Mound," like "The Raven and the King's Daughter"
and "The King of Denmark's Sons," was "probably written in imitation
of the true Icelandic and Danish ballads which Morris translated
about the same time..." is incorrect, for "The Mother under
the Mound" is clearly, as I just stated above, a translation of a
genuine Danish folk song.
that of all these versions the two Swedish ones referred to above are by far the closest to Morris's poems; evidently the differences between these Swedish pieces and Morris's translations were simply the result of his incomplete knowledge of the Swedish language or of the demands of the metre and rhyme.

The ballad theme embodied in "Den Lillas Testamente" is extremely widespread, being found throughout almost the whole of Europe; in the introductory remarks he gives in his English and Scottish Popular Ballads to "Lord Randall," the English equivalent of this folk song, Professor Child cites 18 versions of this ballad in English, 12 in Italian, 6 in German, 1 in Dutch, 2 in Swedish, 2 in Danish, 2 in Magyar, and 1 in Wendish. A comparison of all these texts with Morris's poem reveals, as I just stated, that the one called "Den Lillas testamente" in Arwidsson's Svenska Forn- sanger offers by far the closest resemblance to Morris's piece and must almost certainly have been Morris's source. Not only does this Swedish folk song correspond more closely in general form and substance to the poem in question than do any of the other versions, but it also contains certain details found in this work which are not given in any of the other numerous ballads on the same subject. For example, it is only in Arwidsson's version that the poisonous food of which the central figure in the folk song has partaken and is now dying is described as fried eels and pepper. In regard to the medium of the poisoning Child says,

There is all but universal consent that the poisoning was done by serving up snakes for fish. The Magyar says a toad, English a four-footed fish, and German a well-peppered broth and a glass of red wine. English adds a drink of hemlock stocks to the speckled trout; r, M have simply poison: the fish are distinctively eels in the Italian versions, and in English A, D, E, G, I, Swedish B.

1. (Boston and New York, 1882-1898), I, 151-157. See also ibid., II, 498-499; vi, 499; viii, 449; IX, 208-209; and X, 286-287.

2. Ibid., I, 155.
Thus, although some of the versions state that the poison was eels and one mentions pepper, it is only in Arwidsson's ballad that we find the combination fried eels and pepper. Furthermore, it is in Arwidsson's version alone that the list of bequests made by the victim of the poisoning is given in exactly the same order and form as in Morris's poem; in fact, I believe this Swedish folk song is the only one in which the dying person refers in his will to barns filled with wheat.

I stated above that Morris's poem differs in some respects from Arwidsson's ballad and that these discrepancies are evidently the result either of deliberate changes or of failure on the part of Morris to understand the Swedish. Thus, in the first stanza of the original the girl who has been poisoned says,

"Jag har vat i bång
Hos broderen min!" 2

but in Morris's poem she states,

"To my brother's house I went to play." 3

The reason for Morris's incorrect rendering of the Swedish here was very likely that he was unacquainted with the word "bånne," meaning "prison," which is now obsolete. Again, in the third and fourth stanzas the Swedish says that after the girl had eaten the eels, she gave the bones to the dogs, and they as a result burst into fifteen pieces; but Morris states that it was the broken meat that the girl threw to the dogs, and that when they had eaten of this food, their


1. In an Italian ballad the dying person bequeathes the key to his granary to his father; see G. Nerucci, "Storie e Cantari. Ninne-Nanne e Indovinelli del Montale," in Archivio per lo Studio delle Tradizioni Popolari Rivista Trimestrale, edd. G. Pitré and S. Salomone-Marino (Palermo, 1882-1907), II, 527, 1. 12.
third with 7, and the fourth with 1; that there is 1 in Norwegian, which has been collected in 3 different forms; that there is 1 in Romanic, with 9 versions; that there is 1 in Catalan, with 2 variant forms; that there is 1 in Italian, with 6 versions; that there is 1 in French, with 8 different forms; and that there is 1 in Finnish, 1 in Wendish, 1 in Dutch, and 1 in Faroese. An examination of all these forms of this ballad-theme shows that here again, although the theme and situation are similar in many of the others, none of them by any means resemble Morris's poem so closely in subject matter and form as one of the Swedish ones - namely, "Herr Malmstens dröm" in Geijer and Afzelius's Svenska Folk-Visor. Besides, it is only in this version that the lover is given the name "Malmsten" and that the young man learns of the death of his sweetheart from a woman in blue and a woman in red.

To be sure, in this ballad also, Morris departs from his original in a number of cases. Thus, he completely omits the double refrain,

Så lustelig locker man liljorna
För ålskogsfullt han sörjde'na, 2

and in several passages he renders the Swedish very freely. For example, the exclamation

"Gud nåde er, Herr Malmsten, hvad sorg I får," 3

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1. English and Scottish Ballads, III, 204-206. See also ibid., IV, 512; VI, 510; VIII, 471; IX, 225; and X, 294. For other references to parallels see Svenska Folk-Visor, edd. Geijer and Afzelius (2nd ed.; Stockholm, 1860), II, 233-234 and Danmarkas Gamle Folke-Viser, ed. Grundtvig, V, 352. I have examined all the ballad versions referred to above in the text except the two contained in Kaarel Krohn's Die geographische Verbreitung estnischer Lieder (Kuopio, 1892) and Friedrich H. Bothe's Frühlings-Almanach (Berlin, 1804), for these works I have not been able to locate in the Harvard College Library, the Boston Public Library, or the Library of Congress.

In addition to the parallels to which I refer above in the text, Child mentions a few other ballads which show a partial resemblance to "Lord Lovel."

2. Svenska Folk-Visor, III, 104.
Morris turns into the question,

"My lord Malmston, what-ailst you?"

For the lines

Herr Malmsten så hastigt af gångare sprang;
an lyfte så lått under både-stäng.

Morris writes,

He let his horse loose hastily,
and by the dead corpse quick stood he.

the Swedish says that the young man, on meeting the pier of his beloved, took off his arm six gold rings, and

vet gav han åt den, som skulle griffa och rings,
but Morris simply states that the youth pulled off the rings

and gave them to the clerks to hold.

In none of these cases, however, is Morris following other versions of the ballad. Most likely it was simply his lack of complete familiarity with the Swedish that led him in these passages to reproduce the original incorrectly or with undue liberty. Perhaps, also, the exigencies of metre and rhyme were sometimes responsible.

All the ballad translations that Morris produced he apparently prepared by himself. The only external evidence bearing upon the

6. The question of the authorship of these ballad translations has never been fully investigated, and I therefore feel justified in examining as carefully as possible all the evidence available.
question of authorship that we have is the remark "translated from the Danish(by poor little me)" in the holograph manuscript of one of the copies of "Hafbur and Sígny" and the statement at the end of the illuminated manuscript A Book of Verse to the effect that "I made the verses; but the 2 poems, the 'Ballad of Christine' and the 'Son's Sorrow,' I translated out of the Icelandic." That Morris should have been able in the early 1870's to render Icelandic ballads into English unaided is of course not surprising, for his study of the sagas with Magnússon had undoubtedly made him by this time well acquainted with the Icelandic language, but that he should also have been capable of translating Danish folk songs by himself is rather unexpected. However, strange as it seems, we must, I believe, for various reasons that I shall present below, interpret these two statements literally, and also assume that Morris rendered not only these three ballads by himself but all ten that have come down to us. Evidently it was his intimate knowledge of Icelandic and the slight familiarity with German that he is known to have possessed that enabled him, with the aid of dictionaries, to read the Danish and Swedish although he had never made a formal study of these languages.

Morris sometimes surprises us by the literalness of his ballad translations, even occasionally rendering correctly a difficult word or phrase which other translators of the ballad in question misunderstood; but, as I just stated, he apparently prepared his

1. Collected works, IX, xxxvii.
2. Ibid., IX, xxviii.
3. See ibid., XXII, xiv.
renderings by himself, for there is no reason to suspect that he received aid from anyone acquainted with the Scandinavian languages. In the first place, if the translations had been the result of collaboration, Morris would almost certainly have stated this fact when he published them; with only one exception, he acknowledged the assistance of Magnússon in every saga-rendering that he printed. Secondly, if he had sought help in this work, it would most likely have been from Magnússon, who was acquainted with all the Scandinavian languages, but Dr. Einarsson in his recent biography of Magnússon says nothing of any collaboration by Morris and Magnússon on ballad translations, although he quotes and refers to a great many letters relating to their work together on the sagas. Thirdly, if he had received help from Magnússon, his renderings would undoubtedly have been far more accurate than they are; very rare indeed are the errors in the saga-translations they produced together. It is thus almost certain that in turning these eight folk songs into English, he was not aided by Magnússon or by anyone else who was proficient in reading Danish and Swedish.

There is one other possibility that must be considered: in rendering these Danish and Swedish ballads into English, Morris may

1. The only saga-translation Morris ever published bearing his name only was that of the Fríðþjófs saga (see below, pp. 176-179).

2. In a letter now deposited in the Library of the University of Cambridge, England (Add 6581, No. 263), Magnússon says, in the course of describing his education and scholarly productions, that contributions "to various literary Journals in Germany, Denmark, Norway and Sweden I merely mention in passing, because I write & speak all these languages with facility."

3. For the title of this work, see above, p. 41.
have been aided by previous English, or even German and French, translations. However, it seems extremely unlikely that Morris went to the trouble of locating English, German, or French renderings of the folk songs he wished to turn into English and that he then followed these in reading the Danish and Swedish; such a procedure would be entirely inconsistent with what we know about Morris's usual methods of work. Moreover, when we compare the previous English, German, and French translations with Morris's versions, we find, as I shall show, not only that there is never the slightest verbal similarity between Morris's work and that of his predecessors, but also that sometimes Morris correctly interprets a passage which was misunderstood by the others and that he occasionally mistranslates a phrase or word which is correctly rendered in all the other translations.

Thus, in "Agnes and the Hill-Man" Morris correctly renders the Danish "tøjse" as "twice," but Prior, the only other translator of this particular version, interprets it as "thrice." Later in the same ballad Morris renders the lines

"Og naar du kommer paa Kirkekulv,
saa maa du ej gaa med din kiger i Stol" much more closely than Prior does, for Morris translates them as

"So that when thou standest the church within
To thy mother on bench thou never win," but Prior says,

2. Collected Works, IX, 208, 1.9.
3. Danish Ballads, III, 336, 1.3.
5. Collected Works, IX, 208.
"And when thou kneel'st at church to pray,
Apart from thy mother place the chair."

Similarly, in "Hafbur and Signy" Morris's version is in several cases more exact than the six previous translations that were based either on the text in \textit{Danske Viser} or on the very similar text in \textit{Tragica}. For example, in the account of Hafbur and Signy's arrival in Signy's chamber and their preparation for sleep, Morris renders correctly the lines which in \textit{Danske Viser} read,

\begin{verbatim}
Saa taendte de op de wooldys,
Saa herligt vare de snoed,
\end{verbatim}

and in \textit{Tragica} appear as,

\begin{verbatim}
Saa tendte de op de voxxa lius,
Saa herlig vare de snaa,
\end{verbatim}

for he says,

\begin{verbatim}
When kindled folk the waxlights
That were so closely twined;
\end{verbatim}

but most of the other translators seem to have been troubled by the word "snoed" or "snaa" in the second of these lines.

Thus the rendering of this ballad in \textit{Fraser's Magazine} departs entirely from the original at this point:

\begin{verbatim}
Hafbur and Signy took the light,
And their room they lovingly sought.
\end{verbatim}

\begin{enumerate}
\item \textit{Danish Ballads}, III, 336.
\item See above, p.150, n. 4, for a list of these translations. Those that are there single-starred are based on the text in \textit{Tragica}; those that are double-starred follow the text in \textit{Danske Viser}, the basis of Morris's rendering. The version in \textit{Tragica}, I should like to point out, was reprinted by Grundtvig as text I in his \textit{Danmarka folkeviser}, I, 300-304.
\item III, 9.
\item \textit{Danmarka folkeviser}, ed. Grundtvig, I, 301.
\item \textit{Collected works}, IX, 217.
\item XLV(1852), 657.
\end{enumerate}
Grimm, also, completely misunderstood the line:

Sied zündeten die Tuchslichter an, so freudig waren die zwei.

In his Old Danish Ballads in 1856, Prior, following Grimm's translation, says,

The tapers all they lit so bright,
Crew friendly more and more;

and in 1860, in his Ancient Danish Ballads also, Prior seems to have relied on Grimm for this line, although he says that his rendering is based on the text of this ballad in Tragica, for here he translates the two lines thus:

The cheerful tapers there they lit,
And were so well inclined.

Karmier's French version is likewise incorrect at this point: "Le flambeau de cire est allumé. Tous deux étaient bien joyeux." The only other translator besides Morris to understand the word was Sandor, who says,

Das Kunstgedrehte Licht von Wachs,
Das leuchtet ringsumher.

A few stanzas later in the ballad we are told that when Hafbur and Signy were in bed together, Signy discovered the identity of Hafbur, who had come to her disguised as a maiden, and that she chid him for having thus deceived her and put her to shame. She asks,

1. Altdänische Heldenlieder, p. 96.

2. I should like to point out here that I have found that the Old Danish Ballads published anonymously in 1856 and described as having been made "By an Amateur" were almost certainly the work of J. C. Alexander Prior, who four years later published three volumes of Ancient Danish Ballads; I shall therefore in the following discussion refer to Prior as the author of both works.

4. I, 221.
6. Auswahl altdänischer Heldenlieder, p. 106.
in Danmarks Folkeviser,

"Hvi rider jeg til min raders saard
Med Hund, og Høg paa Hænde?"1

and in Tragica,

"Hvi rider I icke til min raders saard
Tid Høg og Hund i hende?"2

There is nothing difficult about these two lines, and Morris translates them correctly as

"Why ridest thou not to my father's garth
With hound, and with hawk upon glove?"3

Moreover, Grimm and Sander render them correctly in their German versions of this ballad, and Marmier, though not so exact, keeps the main idea of the original. Prior, however, departs from the Danish in the second line both in his Old Danish ballads in 1856 and in his Ancient Danish ballads in 1860:

"Why ride not in with hawk and hound
In court my hand to claim."4

The third English translation follows the original more closely than Prior does, but is still not so exact as Morris:

"With hawk and hound to my father's hall,
Ah, if you only came."5

1. III, 11.

2 Danmarks Folkeviser, ed. Grundtvig, I, 302.


4. See Altdänische Heldenlieder, tr. Grimm, p. 97, 1.14; Auswahl altdänischer Heldenlieder, tr. Sander, p. 109, 11.3-4; and Chants Populaires, tr. Marmier, p. 151, 1.32 - 152, 1.2.

I should like to point out here that although Morris's and Sander's translations agree in the two passages from "Hafbur and Signy" already discussed and also in the passage about to be treated, they differ in several other cases, so that there is no reason for supposing that Morris was following this version; for differences, see, for example, Collected Works, IX, 213, 1.28 and Auswahl, p. 99, 1.1; Collected Works, IX, 214, 1.2 and Auswahl, p. 99, 1.2; and Collected Works, IX, 214, 1.26 and Auswahl, p. 100, 11.13-14.

5. Old Danish Ballads, p. 40 and Ancient Danish Ballads, I, 221.
In Morris's rendering of the ballad "The Mother under the Fold" occurs another very striking example of his independence of previous translators. In this song we are told that one night a dead mother begged the Lord for permission to arise from her grave in order to visit her children, who were being maltreated by their stepmother; the Lord yielded to her entreaties, whereupon,

Hun skjød op sine modige Ben,
Der revpås Mur og Marmorsten.

The Danish word "Ben" can of course mean either "bone" or "leg"; in this passage it almost certainly is used in the sense of "legs."

However, Morris is the only English translator to give it this interpretation:

Then forth her weary feet put she.

The rendering in the *London Magazine* reads,

Then up she raised her weary bones;

Robert Jamieson gives the translation

"All her bones she stak a bawt she gae;"

*Fraser's Magazine* has

She lifted up her weary bones.

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1. For the six previous translations with which Morris's may be compared, see above, on p.151, the continuation of n.4 on p.150. Those that are double-starred follow, like Morris's, the text in *Danske viser*; those that are single-starred are based on Foder Syv's text, which is reprinted in *Danmarks Folkeviser*, ed. Grundtvig, II, 480-481, No.89B.

2. *Danske viser*, I, 207. These lines are almost exactly the same in the other text; see *Danmarks Folkeviser*, ed. Grundtvig, II, 480, col. 2, 11.3-4.


4. I(1820), 398.


6. XLV(1852), 654.