Wolf, the Midworld's Serpent, Odin's Choosers, the Uttermost Horn, God-home, the House of Gold, the Midworld, and the Day of Doom or Ragnarök. With all this material Morris had undoubtedly become acquainted through Thorpe's *Northern Mythology* and Mallet's

1. See *Collected Works*, XII, 21, 1.21; 73, 1.16; and 144, 1.3; *Northern Mythology*, I, 49-52, 80, 81, and 82; and *Northern Antiquities*, pp. 96, 102, 103, 423, and 452.


3. For the use of the term "Odin's Choosers" for "Valkyries," see *Collected Works*, XII, 134, 1.27 and 172, 1.16; for a description of the "Valkyries" and of their duties as messengers sent by Odin to choose the slain, see *Northern Mythology*, I, 14 and *Northern Antiquities*, pp. 96, 427, and 568.

4. Morris evidently used the term "Uttermost Horn" for the horn of Heimdall; see *Collected Works*, XII, 231, 1.23; *Northern Mythology*, I, 28-29, 79, and 81; and *Northern Antiquities*, pp. 95, 102-103, 421, and 452-453.

5. See *Collected Works*, XII, 7, 1.26; 21, 1.31; 47, 1.23; 64, 1.1; 73, 1.14; 75, 1.2; 77, 1.34; 78, 11.8 and 16; 82, 1.17; 99, 1.9; 117, 1.11; 124, 1.25; 169, 1.8; and 203, 1.25; *Northern Mythology*, I, 152; and *Northern Antiquities*, p. 505.

6. In referring to the "House of Gold" Morris evidently had in mind either "Gladhail" or "Valhalla"; see *Collected Works*, XII, 124, 1.25; *Northern Mythology*, I, 19-20; and *Northern Antiquities*, pp. 399 and 409. Once (in *Collected Works*, XII, 72, 1.4) he represents Odin as telling Sigurd that he has seen Sigurd's fathers living in "a shining house"; here he is clearly referring to Valhalla.

7. For occurrences of the terms "Midworld" or "Mid-earth," see *Collected Works*, XII, 1, 1.23; 297, 1.14; and 298, 1.19; *Northern Mythology*, I, 5 and 10-11; and *Northern Antiquities*, p. 405.

8. For references to the "Day of Doom" or "Ragnarök," see *Collected Works*, XII, 7, 1.13; 21, 1.7; 32, 1.22; and 105, 1.25; *Northern Mythology*, I, 78-83; and *Northern Antiquities*, pp. 102-104 and 451-456.
Northern Antiquities. Moreover, the references found in the poem to the use of "peace-strings" on swords, to the fighting of duels on "the hazelled field," and to the passing of judgment in the hallowed "Doom-rings" are not in the original versions of the Völsung story, but were added by Morris. With the "peace-strings" or "friðbund" found on Norse swords and with the custom of fighting "holmgangs" we have already seen that he was acquainted.

With the term "doom-ring" and the plan of the Old Norse courts which gave rise to this name he had very likely become familiar through the account of the early Scandinavian "doom-rings" given in Mallet's Northern Antiquities and through the allusions to "doom-rings" in some of the sagas he had read with Magnússon. Finally, I should like to point out that Morris introduced into his poem two proverbs which are not in his originals but which he had

1. See Collected Works, XII, 7, 1.15; 14, 1.33; 52, 1.25; 96, 1.29; 150, 1.2; 177, 1.27; and 226, 11. 8 and 17.
2. See ibid., XII, 44, 1.32; 45, 1.1; and 132, 1.22.
3. See ibid., XII, 114, 1.10; 129, 1.23; 181, 1.24; 182, 11.17 and 32; 215, 1.2; 217, 1.19; and 263, 1.32.
4. See above, pages 141 and 226.
5. Pages 107-108.
6. See, for example, Saga Library, I, 91, 1.9 and II, 18, 1.7. He had also seen the remains of a "doom-ring" on one of his trips to Iceland; see Collected Works, VIII, 171-172.
met with in the Grettis saga - namely, "Best unto babe is mother" and "Old friends are last to sever." It should also be noted that the descriptions of mountain scenery found throughout the poem were almost certainly influenced by Morris's travels in Iceland.

Bartel's work is not the only study that has appeared of the relation of Morris's Sigurd the Volsung to the Old Norse prose and poetical versions of the tale of Sigurd. In February, 1923, George T. McDowell published an article on the same topic in Scandinavian Studies and Notes, which, though it is accurate and well-written, adds little or nothing to the subject. He compares Morris's poem with the Völsunga saga, and finds, as Bartels did, that Morris made numerous omissions, additions, and changes. The most important difference between Morris's tale and the original is, he feels, the manner in which Morris sentimentalizes and romanticizes his characters, and throws a "golden haze" over many of his scenes; on the basis of this consideration he concludes that "William Morris can

1. See Collected Works, XII, 38, 1.15 and ibid., VII, 34.
2. See ibid., XII, 204, 1.21 and ibid., VII, 200.
3. See, for example, ibid., XII, 103, 1.32 - 104, 1.6; 106, 11.7-9; 107, 11.6-8 and 14-33; and 151, 11.1-11 and 15-18.
5. McDowell makes one slight error. He says that unessential "and weakening details are omitted in such instances as that of the weasel which suggested to Sigmund a remedy for Sinfjotli when the two were werwolves"(page 154), but Morris does keep this detail in his poem(see Collected Works, XII, 33-34).
hardly be termed a just or wholly trustworthy interpreter of the
spirit of the Icelandic saga of the Volsungs."

In the British Museum, London, are deposited three manuscripts
of Morris's Sigurd the Volsung: two of them, Add 37497 and Add 37498,
are quarto notebooks, presenting approximately the last third of the
first version of the poem, together with numerous revisions at the
close of the last volume; the third, Eg 2366, is a folio volume, con­
taining the final draft of the complete work, with several revised
passages at the end. The greater part of the poem appears in these

1. Page 168.

2. The two quarto manuscripts are bound in three-quarters
dark-brown leather. On the back of the first one is pasted a slip
of paper bearing the words "Sigurd. MS. of First Essay," and below
this paper are imprinted in gilt the words "Brit. Mus. Add. 37,497.
On the inside of the front cover, at the top, we find the note "From
the Library of Ch: Fairfax Murray" on a slip of paper which has been
pasted in, and below this tag the number "37,497" is stamped. In the
lower left-hand corner of the inside of the front cover there is
pasted a slip of paper with the statement "From the Library of
Laurence W. Hodson, Compton Hall, Near Wolverhampton"; just above
this tag is written in pencil the number "449.b." On the opposite
page, the recto of the first flyleaf, the words "Presented by C.
Fairfax Murray Esq. 11 May, 1907" have been written in ink. Below
this note is the stamp of the British Museum.

In this manuscript each sheet, instead of each page, is num­
bered. The writing begins on the verso of the first flyleaf in the
middle of the final scene between Sigurd and Brynhild, continues on
the second flyleaf, and runs on to the top of page 62. At this
point Morris turned the book around, and beginning on what was or­
iginally the last flyleaf, numbered 91, he wrote backwards to page 62,
ending with what is line 25 on page 279 of Volume XII of the Collect­
ed Works. On the recto of the second flyleaf at the end is written
in pencil, "11 + 91.ff. May, 1907. U.B. Examined by C.J.C."

Morris seems to have written out the material in this book very
hurriedly. He wrote in pencil, using sometimes only the right-hand
page, at other times both sides of each sheet. The pages are ruled,
with 23 lines on a page, but he very seldom wrote on the lines,
getting on the average 14 or 15 long lines of poetry on each page.
There is scarcely any punctuation in the manuscript; he did, however,
usually begin each line with a capital.

The other quarto manuscript, Add. 37,498, is similar in form to
the one just discussed. On the inside of the front cover and on the
recto of the first flyleaf are some notes in prose pertaining to the
final meeting between Sigurd and Brynhild. On the verso of the first
flyleaf are pasted two slips of paper, one stating that the book is
"From the Library of Ch: Fairfax Murray," the other that it is "From
manuscripts in the same form as in the printed text, except of course for occasional minor, verbal changes; there are seven passages, however, each one dealing with one of the crucial moments of the story, which have been extensively revised and in parts even completely rewritten in the manuscript. In her Preface to Volume

(Continuation of note 2 on page 244) As in the other manuscript, the pages in the body of the book are ruled, with 25 lines on a page, and each sheet, instead of each page, is numbered. The writing begins on the first paper with ruled lines, which is numbered "1," and runs on to the last page of this type, which bears the number "37." On the recto of the second flyleaf at the end is written in pencil "v + 88 ff May 1907. A.J.W. Examined by P.W.B." At the top of the verso of this flyleaf the number "37,498" is stamped. On the inside of the back cover Morris has written "William Morris 26 Queen Sq. Bloomsbury W.C. Whoever finds this book and brings it to the owner at the above address will receive a reward of 1 L (one pound)." In the main he wrote only on the right-hand pages in this manuscript, and so when he had come to the end of the book, he turned it around and began writing from what was originally the back toward the front; he continued to write in this way until he had reached page 435. The section of the poem written out in this manuscript extends from what is line 26 on page 279 of Volume XII of the Collected Works to the end of the whole poem.

The folio manuscript of Sigurd is bound in half-leather, light brown in color; the covers are of wood. On the back are the words "Sigurd the Volsung By William Morris MS. Brit. Mus. Egerton MS. 2866 (F.)." On the inside of the front cover, in the lower left-hand corner, there is pasted a slip of paper bearing the note "From the Library of Laurence w. Hodson, Compton Hall, near Wolverhampton"; above this tag is written the number "526h." On the recto of the first flyleaf we find in the upper right-hand corner the number "66A; and in the middle of the page the words "Brit. Mus. Egerton MS. 2866 (F.) Purchased of L.B.Hodson Esq. 17 Jan. 1907." There are three more flyleaves; they are all blank.

In the main part of the manuscript the pages are ruled, with 34 lines on a page. Morris has written out the poem in ink, using the right-hand pages only; in the main he succeeded in getting 34 complete lines of poetry on each page, for as a rule he wrote the last two or three words in each verse between the lines instead of on a separate line. The pages have been numbered twice, the original numbering having become incorrect because of omissions and additions of pages here and there. According to the final numbering, the poem runs from page 1 to page 355. After the conclusion of the poem, we find ten more pages, these pages consisting of cancelled versions of various scenes in the tale; this material comes to an end on page 366. Then follow four flyleaves. On the recto of the first of these is written "1x + 3bb folios Exam by P.W.B. March '07."
Twelve of the Collected Works, and in her William Morris: Artist Writer Socialist, Miss Morris refers briefly to some of these revisions and discusses one - the rewriting of the account of the final meeting between Sigurd and Brynhild - in detail, quoting the greater part of the early version of this scene. The other revisions also, it seems to me, are very interesting and deserve careful consideration, for they all throw light on the steps in the evolution of the poem in Morris's mind and on the aims he kept before himself in writing the tale.

The first of these revisions, the reworking of the account of the birth of Sigurd, is chiefly interesting because it shows in a very striking manner the extent to which Morris improved the poem, from a literary point of view, in the course of rewriting certain sections. One of the loveliest passages in the whole work, as we have it in the printed text, is the dialogue between King Elf and the women who come to show him the new-born babe; this scene, with its very effective suspense and climax, is entirely missing in the original version. There the child is presented to King Elf without any introductory comment, and he arises and delivers a long speech

1. Pages xxiv-xxx.
2. I, 478-492.
3. The earlier version is found in Manuscript Eg 2866, pages 73, 74, 72, and 78, 1.1, these cancelled pages being scattered among the sheets containing the rewritten account; the revised passage, which is written out in Manuscript Eg. 2866, pages 70, 71, 75, 76, and 77 and in Manuscript Add 37497, pages 90b-82b, is the same as that in the printed text (see Collected Works, XII, 62, 1.31 - 67, 1.4).
4. Collected Works, XII, 63, 1.31 - 65, 1.13.
summarizing the early history of the Volsung family; the account given here of Sigi, Rerir, and the birth of King Volsung is found at the very beginning of the *Völsunga saga*, but Morris had omitted it at this point in his own version of the tale. When Morris rewrote this scene, he struck out this speech of King Elf; the only mention of the early Volsungs in the revised version occurs in the twelve-line account, at the end of this section, of the songs of the minstrels, in the course of which Sigi and Rerir are merely named. Perhaps Morris felt that this long speech with its indirect references to the early Volsungs would not only be unintelligible and therefore tedious to the majority of his readers, who would very likely be unacquainted with the *Völsunga saga* itself, but would also retard the action of the story too much at this significant moment. There can be no doubt that the dialogue which replaced it, with its air of unrestrained joy mingled with wonder and awe at the event which has just taken place, is far more effective.

In *Manuscript Eg 2866* there is also found an early version of Sigurd's fight with Fafnir on the Glittering Heath; in revising this description, Morris not only improved the passage as poetry but he also completely altered the details of the story itself. In the

2. Ibid., XII, 66, 1.23 - 67, 1.2.
3. The cancelled version is found in Manuscript *Eg 2866*, pages 123(last 3 lines), 130, 131, and 132, 11.1-25. The revised account is given in Manuscript *Eg 2866* on pages 124-129, and in Manuscript Add 37497, pages 53 - 62; in the printed text it appears in *Collected Works*, XII, 108, 1.15 - 112, 1.22.
revised account Sigurd meets Odin as soon as he arrives on the Glittering Heath, and Odin instructs him to dig a pit in the path of the serpent and to conceal himself therein; Sigurd follows the directions, and when Fafnir glides over the pit, the hero thrusts his sword into the monster's heart, giving him his death wound; then ensues a dialogue between Sigurd and Fafnir, in which the latter foretells the future. In this version Morris follows substantially the story given in the Völsunga saga. In the earlier account, however, there is no mention of Odin; Sigurd does not construct a pit, but fights with Fafnir entirely on the surface of the ground; and the serpent dies without speaking. It is difficult to perceive what reason Morris could have had for originally presenting the story in this form. It seems almost impossible that he could have forgotten the method in which Sigurd killed the dragon and the conversation which he had with Fafnir that morning, for both these features are unusual and they are found not only in the Völsunga saga but also in "Fáfnismál"; on the other hand, it seems very unlikely that Morris

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1. See Collected Works, VII, 328-331. The account given in the Völsunga saga differs slightly from Morris's revised passage, for according to the Völsunga saga it is Regin who advises Sigurd to dig a pit in which to lie in wait for Fafnir, and Odin, when he appears later, instructs the young hero to prepare several pits, into which Fafnir's blood may run.

2. For the reference to the account of this episode in the Völsunga saga, see above, note 1; for the account in "Fáfnismál," see Saemundar Eide, ed. Grundtvig, pp. 110-112. In "Fáfnismál," as in the Völsunga saga, we are told that Sigurd killed Fafnir by attacking him from a pit and that as Fafnir died, he conversed with Sigurd, but in "Fáfnismál" it is not related that Sigurd met Odin, as in the Völsunga saga.
could have remembered these details, and that he could have omitted
them deliberately. Miss May Morris, speaking of this passage, says
that in the early form Fafnir is "a blind force of Hatred, dying
without speech"; that Morris seems to have been afraid that if he
left the scene in this form his readers might misunderstand the sig-
nificance of this episode and might "attribute the slaying of Fafnir
to small human things, as the hatred of Regin"; and that he therefore
rewrote this section, introducing Odin and "the wonderful death-dia-
logue." That the version in the printed text is the better is obvious;
Morris's motives for presenting the episode in the first form are,
however, by no means clear.

The account of Sigurd's drinking of Grimhild's magic potion,
as a result of which he forgets Brynhild and marries Gudrun, also
appears in a different form in one of the manuscripts. The early
version of this episode differs considerably from the revised account,
but in rewriting this scene Morris in the main simply expanded his
original description without changing the actual facts of the story.
In only two cases, in fact, do the two passages disagree in the details

1. These comments are found in the Collected Works, XII, xxv-xxvi.

2. The original passage is given in Manuscript Eg 2866 on pages
191(last 3 lines), 192, 193, and 198, 11.1-8. The revised account,
with the exception of 11.1-8 on p. 168 of Collected Works, XII, is
written out in Manuscript Eg 2866 on pages 194-197, and, in a somewhat
different form, in Manuscript Add 37497 on pages 58b-62b; the printed
version of this passage is to be found in Collected Works, XII, 166,
1.11 - 170, 1.2.
of the action itself, and neither one of these two changes is significant: in the original version, Sigurd, after drinking Grimhild's cup, broods in silence for a moment, and then strides out of the hall while the feasters sit bewildered, but in the printed account Sigurd remains in the hall throughout the evening, his silence throwing a hush on the rest of the company, and he does not set out on his ride until the others are departing from the feast and going to bed; moreover, at first Morris represented Sigurd as visiting Brynhild's home twice during his ride, once during the night and again the following morning, but in the rewritten account he mentions only one visit to the burg of Brynhild. Both these changes, as I have already stated, are without importance. Moreover, the question whether the first or the revised description follows the original account more closely in these respects does not arise, for both versions are entirely Morris's own; the Völsunga saga, the only one of his sources that mentions Grimhild's potion of forgetfulness, merely states that Sigurd drank the cup Grimhild offered him and then forgot Brynhild.

As I stated above, the main difference between the original and the revised account of this scene lies in the length of the two, but

this difference in length is important, for in the additional material found in the later version Morris seems definitely to be striving to impress upon his readers the significance of the event he is describing. He first presents a long Homeric simile, in fourteen lines, comparing the silence that came over the Niblungs after Sigurd had drunk Grimhild's cup and his face had become stern and moody to the hush that might fall on a group of feasters on a beautiful summer day when the eastern sky suddenly becomes murky with an approaching thunder-storm. He then relates that a short time after Sigurd drained the cup, marvellous flames leaped up around the hall where Brynhild sat dreaming of the Volsung hero. Finally he describes how Grimhild called for music to drive away the melancholy and gloom that had settled on the Niblung warriors, and how the music of the harp went unheeded by the men who could do nothing but gaze upon the face of Sigurd and long for the sunny morning. Very likely Morris rewrote the scene, keeping Sigurd in the hall throughout the feast and introducing this additional material illustrating the intensity of his gloom because he felt that if he left the scene in its original form his readers might fail to realize the tremendous influence Grimhild's magic potion was destined to have upon the remaining days of Sigurd and the Niblungs.

The fourth important revision, that of the scene between Brynhild and Sigurd after the quarreling of Brynhild and Gudrun, has been fully discussed by Miss May Morris in the Preface to Volume
Twelve of the Collected Works. She there points out that the most striking difference between the first and the revised version is the elimination in the latter of "the note of human tenderness and suffering" that Morris had originally introduced into the scene; she thinks that her father rejected the first version of this episode because it was out "of scale with the epic plan" of the whole poem.

In my summary of Bartel's study of the sources of Morris's Sigurd the Volsung, I have already pointed out that the last part of the poem shows the influence of the Nibelungenlied to a marked degree. In the Volsunga saga Atli, soon after his marriage to Gudrun, begins to long to possess the treasure of the Niblungs, and he invites Gunnar and Hogni to a feast in his hall in order that he may have an opportunity to fall upon them with a superior force and overcome them and so gain the gold; Gudrun, suspecting her husband's designs, tries to warn her brothers against accepting the invitation. In Morris's poem, however, the destruction of the Niblung kings by Atli is the deliberate work of Gudrun; even after she has been married to Atli, she does not forget her brothers' murder of Sigurd, and in order to obtain revenge, she stirs up in her second husband a desire for the Niblung gold and induces him to bid Gunnar and Hogni come and

1. Pages xxiv-xxix.
2. Page xxvi.
3. See above, page 237.
visit him, so that he may bring them into his power. Morris' Gudrun, therefore, shows a closer resemblance to Kriemhild of the Nibelungenlied than to Gudrun of the Völsunga saga. That Morris is to depart from the Norse story in his portrayal of Gudrun is first revealed to us in the scene in which Grimhild, Gunnar, and Hogni come to the home of Queen Thora for the purpose of inducing Gudrun to accept Atli's suit for her hand in marriage. In the Völsunga saga and in "Guðrúnarkviða II" we are told that when Gudrun drank the magic cup of forgetfulness she lost all memory of Sigurd's murder; but in Morris's Sigurd the Volsung we read that

But never the day of her sorrow, and of how o'er Sigurd she sat.  

In one of the manuscripts, Add 37498, is found an early version of this scene which is very interesting, for in this account Morris places much greater stress on Gudrun's recollection of the slaying of her husband, and he seems to hint that it was simply because of the possibility that she might receive aid from Atli in obtaining...


3. Collected Works, XII, 250, 1.13 - 253, 1.2.


5. Collected Works, XII, 252. Morris's use of the clause "how o'er Sigurd she sat" at the end of this quotation, it should be noted, was almost certainly influenced by the first sentence of the prose passage at the beginning of "Guðrúnarkviða I": "Guðrún sat yfir Sigurði dauðom." See also ibid., stanza 1, 1.2.

6. The rejected passage is found in Manuscript Add 37498, pages 51, 62, 63, 63b, 64, 64b, and 65, 11.1-3; these 63 lines are replaced by 12 lines in the revised version (in Collected Works, XII, 252, 1.33.

...
revenge that Gudrun finally accepted his suit. In writing this first account Morris may have definitely had in mind the corresponding scene in the Nibelungenlied; there Kriemhild is at first utterly opposed to Etzel's offer, but consents when Rüdeger swears that he and his men will do their utmost to help her obtain revenge for the loss of Siegfried if she marries Etzel. It is also interesting to note that in this early version Gudrun does not make her decision on the first day, as she does in the Völsunga saga, but thinks about it during the night and decides on her answer the next morning, just as in the Nibelungenlied.

Perhaps the early version of this scene, with its resemblances to the Nibelungenlied, may be taken as an indication that Morris originally intended to make the whole ending of his poem much more like the German epic than it actually is. He may at first have planned to make Gudrun more like Kriemhild, a cruel, heartless woman who would stop at nothing in her craving for revenge; as he proceeded with his story, this portrayal of Gudrun may have become distasteful to him, and he may also have come to realize that it was not necessary to make Gudrun such an inhuman woman as Kriemhild in order to bind the conclusion of the tale into closer unity with the preceding episode, than was the case in the Völsunga saga, by making the death of Gunnar and Hogni in the land of Atli the result.

of Gudrun's desire for revenge for Sigurd's death. In the description of the fight in Atli's hall, Morris's Gudrun of course shows a closer resemblance to Kriemhild than to the Norse Gudrun, but she is far from being the fiendlike creature that Kriemhild is; in Morris's poem Gudrun watches the capture of her brothers but remains a passive spectator throughout the scene; in the corresponding passage in the Nibelungenlied, however, Kriemhild passionately urges her men to attack her brothers again and again, and when Hagen and Gunther are finally captured and brought before her, she slays Hagen with her own hand. Perhaps it was in order to make the scene in Queen Thora's home more consistent with this later softening of Gudrun's character that Morris rewrote his first version of the fetching of Gudrun, removing the emphasis on her undying hatred for her brothers and omitting any hint that, like Kriemhild, she consented to marry Atli merely because of her hope of thereby securing revenge.

Very interesting also is the early version of Gunnar's song in the snake-pit, found in manuscript Eg 2866. Both the original and revised accounts are entirely Morris's invention, for his Norse

1. Collected Works, XII, 276-286.


3. The original version is given in Manuscript Eg 2866, pages 343, 11.24-34, 345, and 347, 11.1-16. The revised version is found in Manuscript Eg 2566, pages 344, 345, 11.15-24, and 346, and, with minor differences, in Manuscript Add 37497, pages 26-32; in the printed text it occurs in Collected Works, XII, 297, 1.3 - 299, 1.15.
sources merely state that Gunnar sang so sweetly in the pit that he lulled to sleep all the adders except one, this one stinging him to death. Nevertheless, Morris's two descriptions of the scene differ radically. In the early version, the first part of Gunnar's song consists of rather vague and colorless allusions to his past life; in the second half the Niblung hero sings of his approach to Valhalla as he dies. In the second version, however, when Gunnar is thrown into the snake-pit, he breaks the silence of this last night that he is alive by raising his voice and singing of the glory of the creation of earth and of man. As he feels his end approaching, he sings in a more subdued tone of his own life on this earth, not, however, referring to past events, as in the first version, but dwelling upon the joy he has always felt in this glorious world, and solacing himself, as he dies, with the thought that he has always lived nobly and bravely, without complaining and without questioning the plans of the gods. In the original version Gunnar is clearly much more human than in the second: having come face to face with death, he lingers lovingly on the happy scenes of his past. In the revised account, the personal element is minimized: Gunnar's thoughts turn away from himself and go back to the dawn of the world, and he deals with the vast conceptions of the origin of the universe; when he speaks of himself, it is the god-like, not the human, side of his character that he shows. Certainly this second account harmonizes

much more fully than the first with the nobility, dignity, and sustained grandeur of the poem as a whole; it is not at all unlikely that Morris cancelled the first version and substituted in its place the passage in the printed text for the very purpose of making this scene contribute to the heroic tone he was trying to impart to his whole tale.

Less interesting but demanding a few words of comment is the last revision, which comes at the very close of the whole poem. The original conclusion, found in manuscript Add 37497, is somewhat longer, more diffuse in its effect, and considerably weaker than the ending given in the printed text; in this first account, after Gudrun has thrust a sword into Atli and fled, the poem runs on for forty-nine lines, but in the revised version there are only twenty-six lines from that point to the end. The additional material in the earlier description consists mainly of an account of the glorious time that is to come when Balder returns to the earth; then it will be known, says the poet, what happened after Gudrun leaped into the waves, and then men will tenderly recall the whole tragic story of the Volsungs and Niblungas as well as the tragedy of other men who fought nobly and bravely though doomed to defeat. The whole passage seems particularly lacking in inspiration; it was apparently composed very hurriedly, for some of the lines are metrically faulty, and

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1. The rejected passage is given in Manuscript Add 37497, pages 43(last 2 lines), 43b, 44, 45, 46, and 47, ll.1-4; the corresponding passage in the printed text is found in Collected Works, XII, 306, ll.5-35.
others, because of omissions and other mistakes Morris made in writing out his thoughts, are unintelligible as they stand. Much more effective is the terse account given in the revised version: here the poet merely states that Gudrun leaped into the sea, and he professes ignorance of what happened thereafter; he concludes the whole work with a brief summary, in eight lines, of the theme of his tale, emphasizing the divine origin of his hero, Sigurd the Volsung.

An examination of the major revisions that Morris made in writing out *Sigurd the Volsung* throws much light then, as I have indicated in the foregoing discussion, on the principles that he had in mind in composing the poem. In the first place, his alterations make it clear that he was very eager to impart to the tale, as far as possible, a tone of dignity, grandeur, and majesty, in short, to give it true epic proportions. Sometimes, in the course of writing out the story, he was so deeply moved by the suffering and tragic fate of his characters that he momentarily forgot the heroic atmosphere for which he was seeking, and introduced into the poem a sympathetic and tender portrayal of their sorrow; two of the major revisions which I have discussed, one treating the final meeting of Brynhild and Sigurd and the other dealing with the death of Gunnar in King Atli's snake-pit, are devoted to the cancellation of such infusions of sentiment and to the substitution, in their place, of more objective treatments. In the case of the first of these two revisions, we find that Morris was willing to sacrifice a passage of infinite tenderness and beauty for the sake of preserving the heroic tone of
Moreover, it was evidently for the same reason that he rejected the original ending of the whole poem. In the first draft, as I have already pointed out, the conclusion is rather weak because it is unduly lengthy and lacks unity of effect; furthermore, in that version Morris introduces a personal note, for he dwells on the happy time to come, when a new world will be created and Balder will return to life, and says that then it will be pleasant to recall this and other tales of tragedy and woe. In the revised form of the poem he has completely cancelled this original ending, and has inserted in its place a passage which is characterized by terseness and conciseness and which is entirely objective in point of view. Furthermore, the revisions Morris made indicate that he realized that the Old Norse story he was retelling had a rather complicated and involved plot, which his modern English readers would perhaps find it hard to follow, for in several of the revisions which he made in the original draft of the poem he seems to be striving to render the story more readily intelligible by bringing into clear relief the main incidents in the tale and by emphasizing the unity of the whole. Thus, in the first version of Sigurd's fight with Fafnir, Morris for some unaccountable reason neglected to mention Sigurd's conversation with the dying Fafnir, but in the rewritten form he presents a full account of this dialogue; the inclusion of this part of the scene is very important if we are to understand the later development of the story, for in this passage we are told of the curse resting on Fafnir's gold and this curse, with its effect on all possessors of the gold, is the central theme of the whole story. Similarly, as I have already
pointed out, the account of Sigurd's drinking of Grimhild's cup of forgetfulness was originally much shorter than it is in the printed text; probably Morris developed this scene more fully in the rewritten version so that his readers would not overlook the importance of this episode. It is also possible that in the scene describing the birth of Sigurd, Morris omitted in the final draft the original speech of King Elf, in which he summarized the early history of the Volsungs, for the reason that he was afraid that these brief and indirect references to events in the lives of Sigurd's ancestors, all of whom are of distinctly minor importance for the story as a whole, would be confusing to his readers. Finally, several of the revisions show that Morris was endeavoring to add spontaneity and vigor to his account in order to prevent the dignified and exalted style of the poem from becoming dull; two of the most effective passages in the whole poem, one containing the dialogue between King Elf and the nurses of the baby Sigurd and the other presenting the conversation between Sigurd and Fafnir, were added by Morris in revising the first draft, as I have already indicated.

As I have stated above, Morris considered the Icelandic story of the Volsungs and Niblungs one of the greatest tales in the world, and felt that it had inspired him to produce his best poem; but long before his Sigurd the Volsung was finished, he began to fear that the reading public would not understand and appreciate his retelling of this Northern saga. In a letter written to his wife in the summer of 1876, he said, in referring to the publication in the Athenæum of a portion of the unfinished "Tale of Aristomenes,"
By the way the Athenaeum has been very civil to me about that scrap of poem I published in it the other day, though it was not worth publishing either, and sent me £20; it seems, such is the world's injustice and stupidity that it was a success - never mind; I shall pay for it when my new poem comes out...  

As a matter of fact, his prophecy came true; when Sigurd the Volsung was published in November, 1876, it was received with much less enthusiasm than his preceding works, both by his friends and by the public as a whole, and the sale of the book lagged. Contrary to his usual attitude toward the public reception of his literary productions, Morris at first expressed impatience with the people for their failure to appreciate this poem into which he felt he had put his best work; but two months after its publication he had become reconciled to the coldness with which it had been met, and he wrote in a letter to a friend, "My ill temper about the public was only a London mood and is quite passed now: and I think I have even forgotten what I myself have written about that most glorious of stories, and think about it all (and very often) as I did before I began my poem."

If we examine the reviews of the work that appeared in the contemporary periodicals, we find that the critics took widely divergent views of the poem; some saw only defects in the work, others were extremely lavish in their praises, while a few of the more sober critics presented a more balanced criticism of the poem. Henry G. Hewlett, writing in Fraser's Magazine, was especially harsh; in support of his opinion that the poem would in all probability never be very popular, he said,

1. Collected Works, XII, xi.
3. Ibid., I, 335.
Its inordinate length alone will deter some readers even on the threshold; and the diffuseness of style which has now, we fear, become habitual with Mr. Morris, will probably weary others before they reach the end. The diction, however appropriate, is almost pedantically close in imitation to its model, the identical similes and metaphors employed by the Sagaman being often reproduced with some rhetorical amplification. Passages of novel and pictorial description are frequent, but the prevailing tenor of the narrative seldom rises above mediocrity; and beyond an occasionally nervous or graceful phrase, and a line or two exceptionally musical, the memory finds little to carry away, and the ear still less to haunt it....
The verbal archaisms are not, perhaps, in excess, considering the poet's proclivities and the special character of his subject, but, to our thinking, are distinctly tiresome.\footnote{1. Fraser's Magazine, XVI(1877), 110-111.}

The writer of the article on Sigurd the Volsung in the \textit{North American Review} was somewhat less severe, but the general tone of his criticism also was adverse. The chief fault that he found with the poem was that it failed to reproduce faithfully the spirit of its source. The original tale, he said, was too savage and barbarous for modern English readers, and therefore Morris "recast it ... in the forms of modern sentiment"; in dealing with his material in this way, Morris was following the fashion of his time, for to "reproduce the antique, not as the ancients felt it, but as we feel it, - to transfuse it with modern thought and emotion, - that is the method now 'in the air,' as the French say, among Mr. Morris's fellow artists...." Because of this treatment of the original material, the reviewer feels that the poem "is too much the outcome of a transient \textit{vogue} in sentiment to insure a very long remembrance." This criticism is of course to a great extent justified; but it is also true that Morris resisted to a surprising degree the temptation to introduce a modern tone into his retelling of this ancient tale, and as a result his Sigurd the Volsung is far freer from modern sentiment than his earlier \textit{Lovers of Gudrun} or

\footnote{2. \textit{North American Review}, CXXIV(1877), 323-325.}
ennyson's *Idylls of the King*. Furthermore, the Old Norse material which Morris elaborated in his poem is far from being so primitive, rude, and barbarous as the writer of this review asserts, and Morris was not compelled to make such extensive alterations in remolding it for modern readers as this critic implies. The rest of the article in the *North American Review* was concerned with minor defects: the writer said that the "imitation of the archaic style is, indeed, carried to excess, as if to cover the lack of the antique spirit," that in the narrative itself there was "a deficiency in rapidity and directness," and that the metre "is flexible and musical, though it does not escape the dangers of monotony."  

Entirely different in tone are the notices of the poem that appeared in the *Saturday Review*, the *London Quarterly Review*, and the *Atlantic Monthly*. The first of these periodicals stated, "We regard this *Story of Sigurd* as his [i.e. Morris's] greatest and most successful effort; of all poetical qualities, strength, subtlety, vividness, mystery, melody, variety - there is hardly one that it does not exhibit in a very high degree." The critic in the *London Quarterly Review* began his article with the assertion that "The *Story of Sigurd the Volsung and the Fall of the Niblungs* is probably the single book published within the last twelve months which it would be safe to set aside as the most certain of a place in the regards of the poetic readers of the next generation," and he concluded his discussion in the same tone with the statement,

1. *CXXIV*(1877), 325.
2. *Saturday Review*, XLIII(1877), 81.
3. *XLVIII*(1877), 211.
Be it recorded... that the style and metrical qualities are surprisingly fine - that beside the clear panoramic evolution of the story we have to praise a most pure and vigorous poetic diction; and mysteries of subtle effect in rhyme and metre such as are not to be found in any work of this latter day - and of a higher quality than anything later than the best works of the Laureate - higher, that is to say, than anything published in England since 1855. 1

The reviewer in the Atlantic Monthly lavished praise on the beauty and nobility of the poetry, the majesty, as well as gracefulness, of the metre, and the archaic diction, which is "so exactly suitable to the character of his [i.e. Morris's] present work as to blend with its faultless general harmony and be hardly noticeable in it"; concerning the description of Sigurd's first meeting with Brynhild on Hindfell, he exclaimed, "We may live and read long before we meet with poetry more noble in thought, more celestially sweet and satisfying in form, than the pages which describe the meeting and mutual recognition of these lovers." 2

Especially interesting are two reviews that appeared but a few weeks after the publication of the poem - one in the Athenæum, the other in the Academy; both these critics presented a somewhat maturer attitude toward the work, for they saw both defects and virtues. The author of the article in the Athenæum regretted that Morris departed from his Old Norse source at the end of the tale and made the death of Gunnar and Hogni the result of Gudrun's craving for revenge for Sigurd's murder, as in the Nibelungenlied, for by making this change he failed to incorporate in his tale one of the chief excellences of the Völsunga saga - namely, the sense of unity resulting from "the

2. XXXIX(1877), 504.
3. Ibid., 503.
dominance of everything - from first to last - by the curse of the gold...."¹ He also feels that the verse is musical, but that in a poem of this length Morris's hexameters are apt to become monotonous.² On the other hand he praised Morris's sympathy with, and understanding of, the Old Norse attitude toward life, as revealed in his poem; Morris is so completely "soaked in Odinism," he said, "that the spontaneity - real, and not apparent merely - of this reproduction of the temper of a bygone age is as marvellous as the spontaneity of the form in which it is embodied; while, for purity of English, for freedom from euphuism and every kind of 'poetic diction' (so called), it is far ahead of anything of equal length that has appeared in this century."³ A few lines later he added, "On the whole, we cannot but think this poem Mr. Morris's greatest achievement. It is more masculine than 'Jason' - more vigorous and more dramatic than the best of the stories in the 'Earthly Paradise.'"⁴ Edmund Gosse, the writer of the review in the Academy, expressed a fear that Morris's poem would not be popular on account of his extensive use of archaisms and Old Norse kennings. Like the author of the article in the Athenæum, but for different reasons, Gosse found fault with the conclusion Morris had given his tale. He regretted that Morris did not make clear the fact that Brynhild was the sister of Atli, for by omitting any reference to this relationship, the modern poet "deprived himself of a valuable connecting link in the chain of retribution"; according to one Scandinavian tradition, which we find in the "Drap Niflunga," Atli's feeling of

¹. No. 2563(December 9, 1876), 753.
². Ibid., p. 755.
³. Ibid., pp. 753-754.
⁴. Ibid., p. 755.
⁵. X(1876), 558.
⁶. Loc. cit.
hostility toward Gunnar and Hogni was the result of their share in the death of Brynhild. It is true, of course, that Morris could have given his tale a certain unity by remaining faithful to his Scandinavian sources, either as the reviewer in the Athenæum or as Gosse suggested; but it seems very probable that Morris preferred to bind the last episode to the body of the story by attributing the slaying of Gunnar and Hogni to Gudrun's craving for revenge for Sigurd's death for the reason that in this way he focussed the attention of his readers on Sigurd throughout the tale, and it was in presenting Sigurd as a great heroic figure that his chief interest lay. Besides pointing out these defects, Gosse found much to praise. Of the poem as a whole he said, "Suffice it to say that Mr. Morris has treated it in a manner fully worthy of the heroic plan. The style he has adopted is more exalted and less idyllic, more rapturous and less luxurious - in a word, more spirited and more virile than that of any of his earlier works." He praised the elevated tone which Morris maintained throughout the poem, and remarked, "In the presence of so much simplicity, and so much art that conceals its art, it is well to point out how supreme is the triumph of the poet in this respect." Thus, although the reading public as a whole did not receive this poem kindly, we learn from these reviews that many of the leading critics of the time, only a few weeks after its publication, understood and appreciated the excellences of Morris's work.

1. Academy, X(1876), 557.

2. Loc. cit.
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1. Academy, X(1876), 557.
2. Loc. cit.
The publication of Sigurd the Volsung in November, 1876, brings to a close, as I have already stated, the period 1871 to 1876 when Morris's interest in early Scandinavia reached its peak. During these six years, as we have seen, Morris had devoted himself almost exclusively to his Norse studies, only two major works that were definitely non-Scandinavian in conception - Love is Enough and a translation of Virgil's Aeneid - having been produced and published during this time; but at the end of 1876 Morris's Norse studies came to an abrupt close. There is absolutely no reason to believe, however, that he suddenly dropped his Scandinavian work at this time because his enthusiasm for the North had become exhausted; it is quite clear that he terminated his Scandinavian studies in 1876 simply because, as I shall show in the next chapter, his attention was now for a time diverted into entirely new channels. It is not at all unlikely that if it had not been for these new interests, he would have gone on working on translations from the Scandinavian and on original treatments of Norse themes for several more years, just as he had done in the period we have been considering in this chapter.
Chapter III
The Period of Morris's Public Activity and Final Return to Literature: 1877-1896

After Sigurd the Volsung had appeared late in 1876, Morris did not produce or publish any adaptations or renderings of Norse material until late in the 1880's. The reason for his failure to produce anything Scandinavian during these eleven or twelve years is that shortly after he had finished Sigurd the Volsung he was drawn into public life, and during the next decade he gave himself up to his new interests almost as completely as he had devoted himself to the literature and culture of the North in the period 1871 to 1876.

The new activities that absorbed so much of his attention at this time were, in brief, the Eastern Question Association, the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, and Socialism. However, although he produced no purely Scandinavian work during these years of strenuous public life, it is clear that the Northern material with which he had been dealing was still very much in his thoughts, for when we examine the lectures, addresses, and newspaper and periodical articles that he prepared in connection with these activities, we find that even in writing or speaking on these entirely alien subjects, he fairly frequently introduced references to Scandinavian matters. I should like now to review briefly the main facts of Morris's life during this period, calling attention as I do so to these scattered allusions that he made to the life of the North.

In 1876 Morris, along with many other Englishmen, was deeply stirred by the reports of the horrible atrocities committed in
Bulgaria by the Turks as a result of the rebellion of some of the Balkan states against the Turkish rule; when it became apparent that the English government would follow its usual policy of supporting Turkey and maintaining her rights in Europe, even, perhaps, to the extent of going to war with Russia, who was already assuming a very hostile attitude toward Turkey and who actually declared war the following April, a number of Englishmen banded themselves together into what they called the Eastern Question Association, in order to stir up public opinion against the attitude of the English government and to rouse sympathy for the Balkan rebels. In the work of this organization Morris was extremely active during this and the next year; he served as treasurer of the society, and freely gave his time to further the cause both by writing and by lecturing.1

Only one very small detail of Morris's work for the Eastern Question Association reflects his interest in Scandinavia. For meeting of this organization in Exeter Hall on January 16, 1877, wrote a ballad called "Wake, London Lads!" to the tune of "The Norseman's Home of Yore."2 The song which provided the melody is a short ballad of two stanzas, in English, describing the ancient Vikings' love for the sea.3 Its melody, I find, is, except for slight variations, the same as that of one of the most popular songs of Norway, "For Norge, kjæempers fødeland";4 its words, however


2. Ibid., I, 360-361, and May Morris, William Morris, II, 571-573.

3. "The Hardy Norseman's Home of Yore" may be found in Hardy Songs (Boston, 1910), p.219.

not a translation from the Norwegian, the Norwegian piece having three stanzas, and consisting of a toast to the glories of Norway. It is unfortunately not definitely known whether it was Morris who selected this Scandinavian air for his "Wake, London Lads!"; but it seems to me very likely that the choice of the melody was his, for if he was asked to write a political song for the meeting, he was probably permitted to select the tune to which he must adapt his words. Moreover, "The Hardy Norseman's Song of Yore" does not seem to have been a very popular song in the Victorian Age; I have been unable to find it in any of the numerous collections of vocal music published at that time that I have examined. It is tempting, and I believe not entirely unjustifiable, to assume that it was Morris himself, his mind being at this time completely filled with Scandinavian material, who selected this stirring Norwegian air for a song which was intended to rouse the moral indignation of the Londoners against the foreign policy of their government.

During the time that Morris was working for the Eastern Question Association, he was also taking an active part in organizing the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings. He had long been incensed at the ruthless demolition and at the so-called "restoration" of old buildings that was going on in England; he was finally roused to action in the beginning of March, 1877, by the report of the proposed restoration of the Minster of Tewkesbury. In response to a letter that he wrote to the Athenæum suggesting the formation of an organization which should strive to protect old buildings from any alteration except such as was strictly necessary for their preservation, the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, or the
"Anti-Scrape," as it was usually called, was set up in the spring of 1877. Morris took a vital interest in the work of this Association throughout the rest of his life; although he and his friends did not succeed in saving from alteration or destruction all the monuments for which they fought, many priceless relics of the past which would otherwise have been lost were preserved for us as a result of their activity.¹

On December 4, 1877, Morris delivered a lecture on "The Lesser Arts" before the Trades Guild of Learning in London;² this event was very important, for it marked the beginning of Morris's activity as a public lecturer, first on questions of art and later on the subject of socialism,—an activity which he carried on all through the eighties and even into the nineties. He seems to have first come into demand as a lecturer on art, partly as a result of the attention he attracted as a fervid supporter of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings and partly as a consequence of the reputation he had gained for himself as a craftsman of the very highest order. That Morris was successful in his role of public speaker is clearly proved by the great number of lectures that he was asked to deliver all over England during these years; one of his biographers says, concerning Morris's abilities as a speaker,

In the printed sentences you read the eager, persuasive accent, so convincing because so convinced. On the platform he stood, say his friends, like a conqueror, stalwart and sturdy, his good grey eyes flashing or twinkling, his voice deepening with feeling, his gesture and speech sudden and spontaneous, his aspect that of an insurgent, a fighter against custom and orthodoxy.³

2. Ibid., I, 359.
In his early lectures we find no allusions to Scandinavian history and culture, but in the addresses delivered in the eighties we frequently meet with such references. The first one occurs in a talk dating from 1881. In speaking on "Art and the Beauty of the Earth" at Burslem Town Hall on October 13, 1881, Morris contrasted the conditions prevailing in the Middle Ages, when men took pleasure in their work and therefore produced objects of art, with the situation in the modern world, when men must labor under very unhappy circumstances and hence cannot make anything beautiful; the far-superior medieval art, he said, flourished in "the days when Norwegian, Dene, and Icelander stalked through the streets of Micklegarth, and hedged with their axes the throne of Kirialax the Greek king...."¹

With the service of the Northmen in the Varangian guard at Constantinople during the Middle Ages we have seen that Morris had long been familiar.²

In a lecture on "The History of Pattern-Designing" delivered the following year, in 1882, in behalf of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, we meet with another Scandinavian allusion. Here, by way of introducing a discussion of the development of Persian art, Morris briefly retold the story of the revolt of the Persians from the rule of the Parthians and the subsequent birth of the Persian kingdom, and then said,

Now as to the art of these kingdoms. That of the Parthians must be set aside by treating it in the way which was used by the worthy Norwegian merchant in writing of the snakes in Iceland; there was no art among the Parthians, no native art, that is to say, and scarcely any borrowed art which they made quasi-native.

1. Collected Works, XXII, 159.
2. See above, pp. 22-23, 26, and 28.
3. Collected Works, XXII, 224.
Morris referred again to this "worthy Norwegian merchant" who wrote of the snakes in Iceland in an article he composed for the periodical *To-day* the following year;¹ the work that he must have had in mind in both these cases is Niels Horrebow's *Natural History of Iceland*.² He mentioned this treatise by name many years later in a remark of a similar nature in *News from Nowhere*; in this book, which describes how a man of the late nineteenth century, evidently Morris himself, dreamt one night that he was living a hundred years later in a Socialist England, one of the members of the new nation tells the dreamer that in this reformed state there is no such thing as politics, adding, "'If you ever make a book out of this conversation, put this in a chapter by itself, after the model of old Horrebow's Snakes in Iceland.'"³ Horrebow's *Natural History of Iceland*, originally written in Danish under the title *Tilforladelige Efterretninger om Island med et nyt Landkort og 2 Aars Meteorologiske Observationer*,⁴ is, as Horrebow himself states in his Preface, a careful revision, with numerous additions of his own, of that part of Johann Anderson's *Nachrichten von Island, Grönland und der Strasse Davis*⁵ which deals with Iceland. In his book Horrebow discusses, among other subjects, the minerals, beasts, birds, and fishes of Iceland, devoting one chapter to each species; in the English translation of Horrebow, but not in the original work of either Horrebow or Anderson and not in any of the other renderings of the two books, one chapter headed "Concerning snakes"

¹. See below, p. 282.
². (London, 1758).
⁴. (Copenhagen, 1752).
⁵. (Hamburg, 1746).
consists of only one brief sentence: "No snakes of any kind are to be met with throughout the whole island." It was clearly this chapter in the English version of Horrebow's book to which Morris referred in the passage quoted above from News from Nowhere, and it was very likely this same treatment of the snakes in Iceland to which he alluded in his lecture on "The History of Pattern-Designing" and in his article in To-day. To be sure, in both the earlier references Morris ascribes the account of the Icelandic reptiles to a "worthy Norwegian merchant," and Niels Horrebow was born in Copenhagen and was a distinguished Doctor of Laws. The description does not fit the original author, Johann Anderson, either, for he was born in Hamburg, apparently of Swedish parentage, and, like Horrebow, was a jurist of great eminence. However, there is not, to the best of my knowledge, any similar account of

1. Natural History of Iceland, p. 91. In Anderson's and Horrebow's original works and in all the other translations, reasons for the absence of snakes in Iceland are also presented in this chapter; in the English translation this extra material is treated very briefly in a footnote. For this chapter in the other works see Anderson, Nachrichten von Island, p. 106; Anderson, Efterretninger om Island, Grønland og Strat Davis (Copenhagen, 1748), p. 100; Anderson, Histoire Naturelle de l'Islande, du Groenland, du Détroit de Davis, [tr. Gottfried Sellius] (Paris, 1750-1754), I, 222; Anderson, Beschryving van Ysland, Groenland en de Straat Davis, tr. J. D. J. (Amsterdam, 1756), pp. 87-88; Horrebow, Tilforladelige Efterretninger om Island, p. 240; Horrebow, Zuverlässige Nachrichten von Island (Copenhagen and Leipzig, 1753), pp. 275-278; and Horrebow, Nouvelle Description Physique-Historique, Civile et Politique de l'Islande, [tr. Jacques Phillibert Rousselot de Surgy and Meslin] (Paris, 1764), I, 326.

2. See Rasmus Nyerup and J. E. Kraft, Almindeligt Litteraturlexicon for Danmark, Norge, og Island (Copenhagen, 1818-1820), I, 272.

3. For an account of Anderson see the Preface to his Nachrichten von Island.
the snakes in Iceland by a Norwegian merchant or by anyone else, so that, in view of the fact that Morris alludes to Horrebow's work by name in an almost identical reference in a somewhat later composition, it seems extremely likely that he had in mind the chapter on snakes in the English translation of Horrebow in his first two remarks also and simply made a mistake in his description of the author.

During the late summer and early fall of 1882 Morris's interest in Iceland took a decidedly practical turn. As a result of a very cold, wet spring and summer that year, the Icelanders were threatened with a serious famine unless outside aid should reach them before winter; as soon as reports of this danger came to England, Morris and his friends organized an Iceland Relief Fund Committee, in order to raise money with which to buy provisions to send to those in need. During August and September Morris worked hard for the Committee by making fervid appeals to his friends and, through the medium of the newspapers, to the public for assistance; in one of these newspaper letters, which is quoted by Mackail, he paid a high tribute to the Icelanders, eulogizing them as

a kindly, honest, and intelligent people, bearing their lot, at the best a hard one, with singular courage and cheerfulness, and keeping up through all difficulties in their remote desert (for such indeed is the land in spite of its beauty and romance) an elevation of mind and a high degree of culture, which would be honourable to countries much more favored by nature. 1

By means of these activities the Committee succeeded in raising a fairly large sum of money, part of which was used to purchase grain, hay, and other supplies for the starving live stock; and early in October Eiríkr Magnússon sailed to Iceland with the money and

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provisions, with permission to distribute them as he saw fit.¹

Magnússon's report to the Committee on his return shows that the assistance of the English in many cases met very pressing needs and was everywhere sincerely welcomed.²

Early in 1883 Morris took a very important step: on January 17th of that year he joined the Democratic Federation. As his biographers have pointed out, Morris's conversion to the cause of Socialism was very slow and gradual. Even as early as 1876 he had begun to show a sympathetic interest in the plight of the working classes. His work for the Eastern Question Association during that year and the next threw him into close contact with various radical groups in London; a manifesto which he issued in behalf of this organization, directed to the working men and urging them as a mass to refuse to be led into an unjust war merely to satisfy the wishes of certain classes which hated them, contains, as Mackail says, "his later socialist teaching as yet folded in the germ."³ In the early 1880's, when he began to lecture on art, he gradually evolved the idea that all the goods produced today were lacking in artistic value because they were made by men living and working under very unpleasant and unhappy circumstances, and that art could be improved only by the overthrow of the present unjust organization of society and a return to the conditions prevailing during the Middle Ages, when each man, producing a complete piece of work,

¹ For a more detailed account of the work of Morris and Magnússon in behalf of the Iceland Relief Fund see Mackail, op. cit., II, 77-79 and Collected Works, XIV, xvii-xix.


³ Mackail, op. cit., I, 348.
took pleasure and pride in his own labor. Little by little he began to conceive of this remaking of society as a great cause, for the furtherance of which he must give up all his other interests in life. Even before he became a member of the Democratic Federation, he considered the work of the Socialists so important that he sold a great number of his rare and well-loved books to raise money to support the movement; during the three years immediately following his definite enrollment with the Socialists, he sacrificed everything for the sake of this new interest, even neglecting his business to the extent of endangering its success.

Morris joined the Democratic Federation early in 1883, as I stated above, but he did not long remain a member of this group, for late in 1884 he and some of his friends withdrew from this organization on account of internal dissension, and united in what they called the Socialist League. Morris continued to work assiduously for the cause during the next five years as a member of this new group, making liberal contributions both in poetry and prose to the Commonweal, the official journal of the League; but we find that during this period his devotion to Socialism gradually became less complete and exclusive, and that he began once again to take more than a passing interest in his business and in literature.

After November, 1890, when he found it again necessary to break away from his comrades, the majority of them having become anarchists, and together with a small number of his closest friends he formed the Hammersmith Socialist Society, his Socialist activities
rapidly became less and less time-consuming, and during the last four or five years of his life, although he never lost faith or interest in the cause for which he had been working, other pursuits forced his Socialism definitely into the background.¹

Karl Litzenberg, in an essay called "The Social Philosophy of William Morris and the Doom of the Gods,"² tries to show that Morris's ideas on Socialism were influenced by his Scandinavian studies. He first calls attention to the similarity between the Socialist doctrine of the "Great Change," which through a brief period of slaughter was to terminate the present unfair organization of society and to usher in an era of justice and peace, and the "Ragnarök" of Old Norse mythology, which the early Scandinavians believed would destroy the existing world and give birth to a new and beautiful earth, on which even Balder would be happy to live; and he then suggests that the Old Norse conception of the Day of Doom, with which Morris had been familiar since his college days, played a part in Morris's conversion to revolutionary Socialism, with its similar belief in the rebirth of the earth through the Great Change. That the parallelism between the two ideas is close cannot be denied, and according to Mackail, Morris himself noticed the connection;³ just how far, if at all, Morris's acquaintance with the Old Norse Ragnarök actually influenced his adoption of the view that the social ills of the present-day world could be remedied only by a complete revolution

¹ For this account of Morris's Socialism I am in the main indebted to Mackail, _William Morris_, I, 347-351 and II, 23-30, 62-65, and 79-245.

² University of Michigan Publications. _Language and Literature_, X(1933), 183-203.

³ Mackail, _op. cit._, II, 24-25.
and affected his conception of the Great Change it is extremely difficult to say.

In view of what we do know definitely about Morris's development as a Socialist, there seems to me to be little excuse for seeking for any Scandinavian influences on this phase of his life. As I pointed out above, Morris's interest in the Socialist cause in general grew out of his dabbling in politics and out of his work as an artist. That the reason - at any rate the immediate reason - for his conversion to revolutionary socialism in particular was likewise political seems to me to be clear from the second and fourth sentences in the following paragraph, which Mackail quotes from a letter Morris wrote in 1881:

I suppose you have seen about the sentence on Herr Most and read Coleridge's most dastardly speech to him: just think of the mixture of tyranny and hypocrisy with which the world is governed! These are the sort of things that make thinking people so sick at heart that they are driven from all interest in politics save revolutionary politics: which I must say seems like to be my case. Indeed I have long known, or felt, say, that society in spite of its modern smoothness was founded on injustice and kept together by cowardice and tyranny: but the hope in me has been that matters would mend gradually, till the last struggle, which must needs be mingled with violence and madness, would be so short as scarcely to count. But I must say matters like this and people's apathy about them shake one's faith in gradual progress.¹

It was of course only natural that Morris, who was thoroughly steeped in Old Norse mythology, should have noticed the similarity between the Scandinavian conception of "Ragnarök" and his belief in revolution as a means of winning peace and social justice. After he had for political reasons become a revolutionary socialist, his idea of the Great Change may have been colored by his acquaintance with Old Norse mythology; it seems to me dangerous, however,

¹ Mackail, op. cit., II, 25.
to assume that there was any important connection between his socialism in general or his particular brand of socialism and his Scandinavian studies.

We have already seen that during the years that Morris was actively engaged in the work of the Eastern Question Association and the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, even though he threw himself wholeheartedly into these causes in which he sincerely and deeply believed, he did not completely forget his earlier Scandinavian studies. When we examine the lectures and articles he prepared in connection with his new interest - Socialism -, we likewise find fairly frequent allusions to the life and culture of early Scandinavia, these references showing that even though his devotion to, and enthusiasm for, this new cause were still greater, the tales of the early Norsemen and his visits to Iceland were nevertheless very much in his thoughts.

The first allusion to anything Scandinavian with which we meet in this period occurs in a lecture called "Art and the People: A Socialist's Protest against Capitalist Brutality," which Morris delivered in 1883, the very year he joined the Democratic Federation; pointing out that the history of events is a history of "Kings and Scoundrels" whereas "the history of art is made up of the patient many living naturally," he remarked, "There also shall we be free from the troubling of kings and scoundrels" are the memorable words used by the freemen of Norway when they left their country at the end of the tenth century to find freedom among the terrible wastes of Iceland: but for them, the history and mythology of the North would have been forgotten."¹ The statement to which

¹ May Morris, William Morris, II, 385.
Morris here referred is very likely that of Grímr in the Vatnsdæla saga, who, in the course of a discussion as to the advantages of leaving Norway for Iceland, said, "'Er mér sagt gött frá landkostum, at þar gangi sjálfala fé um vetr, en fiskr í hverja vatni, skógar miklir, en frjálslir af ágangi konunga ok illræðismanna.'" With this saga we have already seen that Morris was familiar as early as 1871.

During the next year, 1884, Morris prepared an autobiographical sketch for a friend, in the course of which he gave a very interesting account of his Scandinavian studies; speaking of The Earthly Paradise period, he said, "I had about this time extended my historical reading by falling in with translations from the Old Norse literature, and found it a good corrective to the maundering side of mediaevalism." A few lines later he continued,

Meantime about 1870 I had made the acquaintance of an Icelandic gentleman, Mr. E. Magnússon, of whom I learned to read the language of the North, and with whom I studied most of the works of that literature; the delightful freshness and independence of thought of them, the air of freedom which breathes through them, their worship of courage (the great virtue of the human race), their utter unconventionality took my heart by storm.


2. See above, p. 199.

3. May Morris, op. cit., II, 8-13. Miss Morris does not give the date of this account, but it must have been written in 1884, for in the course of the sketch (page 13, line 29) Morris refers to his joining the Democratic Federation "last year," and we know that he took that step on January 17, 1883 (see Mackail, William Morris, II, 87).


5. Loc. cit.
In July of the same year Morris submitted an article to the periodical To-day on the current exhibition at the Royal Academy; in this discussion of contemporary art, he introduced three references to Scandinavian matters. The first one is the allusion to "the good Norwegian merchant" and the snakes in Iceland which I have already mentioned: as he is beginning his discussion of "decorative beauty," he remarked, "I am sorry to say the task of speaking of this quality is as easy as the good Norwegian merchant found the subject of the 'snakes in Iceland': for in sober truth there is not one single picture (nor has been for years) which even aims at decorative beauty..." As I have already pointed out, the work which he seems here to have had in mind is undoubtedly Niels Horrebow's Natural History of Iceland. The other two Scandinavian references in this article deal with Iceland itself, both of them revealing what a deep love for this bleak land his two visits to the island and his study of its literature had awakened in him. He referred to a certain picture as one that cannot but move anyone who has visited the northern latitudes. There is a sense about it of romance and interest in life amidst poverty and a narrow limit of action and maybe of thought, which is characteristic of a poor but historic country side, and reminds me of many a morning's awakening in a country which one may call the northern limit of history as it is certainly one of its richest treasure-houses; Iceland to wit.

2. See above, pp.272-275.
Concerning one of the artists who was exhibiting, he wrote, "I am not ashamed for instance to remind him of what a mine lies untouched in Iceland; I could tell him of places there as wild and strange as the background of a fairy story, every rood of which has a dramatic tale hanging by it...."¹

In the same month - July, 1884 - he delivered a lecture on "Textile Fabrics"; in the course of commenting on a certain kind of material that was woven in Europe in the Middle Ages he stated,

My own impression is that these tapisseries posterez (judging by the context) were like the rudely flowered stuff traditionally made by the Italian peasants to-day, in the Abruzzi, for instance, and of which the Roman peasant women's aprons are made. This impression is chiefly founded on the fact that exactly the same make of cloth is woven in Iceland for coverlets, saddle-cloths, and the like, the inference being that it was formerly in use very widely throughout Europe.

A little later in the same lecture, while describing the design of a piece of tapestry dating from the beginning of the twelfth century, he remarked, "It is worth while noting that patterns of exactly the same character have been traditionally used in Iceland till within the last hundred years, only by that time they had got to be done by means of worsted embroidery upon linen."² These two remarks about weaving in Iceland were obviously the result of observations Morris had made on his two Icelandic journeys in the early seventies.

Morris joined the Socialist League late in 1884, as I pointed out above, and during the next five years he made generous contributions to the Commonweal, the official journal of this organization. He did not introduce many Norse allusions in these articles, but

2. Collected Works, XXII, 281.
3. Ibid., XXII, 284.
occasionally the topic under consideration reminded him of something Scandinavian. Thus, early in 1886, in a short note called "The Husks that the Swine Do Eat," he related that a man had recently been sentenced to a month of hard labor for stealing food from plates that he was carrying from a soldiers' dining hall to the garbage-tubs, and then Morris exclaimed, "Ghost of William Cobbett, here is another 'vast improvement' for you on the Scandinavian law that decreed a thousand years ago that he who stole from necessity was to go scot free."¹ In the laws on stealing in Magnus Konungs Laga-Baeters Gula-Thing-Laup,² an edition of which was found in Morris's library at his death,³ there is a provision to the effect that if a man had been unable to find work and stole because he was hungry, he should not be punished; it was evidently this passage that Morris had in mind here. The reference that he made does not of course prove that he was acquainted with this whole work, for Magnússon or some other Icelandic may simply have called his attention to this interesting provision. It should be noted that in his other works he does not reveal any acquaintance with Old Norse laws beyond what he could have gained from the sagas.

Later in the same year, in the issue for November 13, 1886, he began publishing in the Commonweal a story called A Dream of John Ball; the last installment appeared on January 22, 1887. The tale was first printed in book form early in 1888.⁴ In this work, in which Morris represents himself as dreaming that he is in Kent at the time of the Peasants' Revolt in 1381 and that he is spending a

1. Commonweal, II(1886), 7.
2. (Copenhagen, 1817), p. 531.
few hours with John Ball, the "mad priest," and a group of his stalwart followers, one would scarcely expect to meet with any Scandinavian allusions, but there are two passages that show that even when he wrote on such subjects, his Old Norse reading was very much in his thoughts. Thus, when Morris, the dreamer, is requested to tell a story while he and his new friends are having supper at the "Rose," he says,

"Now hearken a tale, since ye will have it so. For last autumn I was in Suffolk at the good town of Dunwich, and thither came the keels from Iceland, and on them were some men of Iceland, and many a tale they had on their tongues; and with these men I foregathered, for I am in sooth a gatherer of tales, and this that is now at my tongue's end is one of them."

So such a tale I told them, long familiar to me; but as I told it the words seemed to quicken and grow, so that I knew not the sound of my own voice, and they ran almost into rhyme and measure as I told it; and when I had done there was silence awhile, till one man spake, but not loudly:

"Yea, in that land was the summer short and the winter long; but men lived both summer and winter; and if the trees grew ill and the corn throve not, yet did the plant called man thrive and do well. God send us such men even here."

It is significant that even in a dream vision Morris represents himself as selecting an Icelandic story when called upon for a tale.

In the last paragraph of the passage just quoted we find Morris expressing - as he had already done in several of his early poems - his wonder at, and admiration for, the nobility, dignity, and courage that the Icelanders showed, even in their daily lives, although they were surrounded by innumerable physical hardships and privations. Somewhat later in A Dream of John Ball, when Morris and the priest are discussing the meaning of death, Morris remarks, 

"...I mind me that in those stories of the old Danes, their common

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2. See above, pp. 58 and 99.
word for a man dying is to say, "He changed his life." Morris
is apparently here referring to the Old Norse poetical expressions
"bregða fjörvi," or "bregða lifi," although these phrases really
mean, not "to die," but "to change, or remove from, life" and so
"to kill." So far as I know, there is no expression of this type
in Old Norse meaning "to die." With the metaphors "bregða fjörvi"
and "bregða lifi" Morris had met several times in translating the
Heimskringla and the Gunnlaugs saga.

Early in 1885, in response to a request from the Pall Mall
Gazette, Morris prepared a list of his favorite books. Although
only five of the fifty-two items are Scandinavian, these five are
all of an inclusive nature, so that they actually cover most of
the Old Norse literature which he had read; moreover, in the group
of fifteen works or collections which he designates as "Bibles"
that is, in his own words, books which "cannot be measured by a
literary standard, but to me are far more important than any liter-
ature" --, all five Scandinavian items are included. These Scandina-
vian works are "The Edda (including some of the other early old Norse
romantic genealogical poems)," "Collections of folk tales, headed by
Grimm and the Norse ones," "Heimskringla (the tales of the Norse
Kings)," "Some half-dozen of the best Icelandic Sagas," and "The
Danish and Scotch English Border ballads." Concerning that group
of books in which the Heimskringla and the Icelandic sagas are
included, he said, "...almost all these books are admirable pieces
of tale-telling: some of them rise into the dignity of prose epics,

1. Collected Works, XVI, 265.
2. See Cleasby and Vigfusson's Icelandic-English Dictionary,
p. 77, col. 2, s.v. "bregða," No. A, II, 1; and Egilsson's Lexicon
Poeticum (Copenhagen, 1931), p. 61, col. 2, s.v. "bregða," No. 5.
3. See Heimskringla, ed. Unger, p. 140, l. 10b and p. 499,
1. 7b; and Sagan af Gunnlaugi Ormatungu, p. 192, 1.5.
4. Pall Mall Gazette "Extra," No. 24, pp. 10-11. The list was
so to say, especially in parts. Note, for instance, the last battle of Olaf Tryggvason in Heimskringla; and the great rally of the rebels of Ghent in Froissart.\(^2\)

In 1887 Morris prepared a lecture on Early England. This address was never published in its entirety, but his daughter printed a number of excerpts from it in her introduction to Volume Eighteen of the *Collected Works*; the passages that she quoted are of particular interest for the present study because they contain some critical remarks on the Old Norse sagas, and such utterances by Morris are comparatively rare. In the course of lamenting the influence of Rome on early England - an influence from which the Scandinavian countries were free for a much longer time -, Morris said,

As far as our early literature is concerned that \([i.e.]\) the shadow of Rome was a great misfortune. The history and mythology of Scandinavia was enshrined in the rough casket of Iceland, and though at the time when it was written the people of that island had been converted to Christianity, yet except where the subject-matter positively demands it, there is no sign of the new religion having made any practical impression on the writers, and though monks and priests took their part in this literature, works written in Latin were rare. But in England it was different; the literature was mostly in the hands of the monks.\(^1\) There are in Anglo-Saxon in short none of those pieces of local history told in a terse and amazingly realistic and dramatic style which bring back to us Iceland and Norway in the eleventh century; and what is still more unlucky, we have lost the account of the mythology of the North from the Low German branch of the great Teutonic race. It is the feeblest and slenderest branch of the Goths that have been the storytellers of the race and not the Germans or the English: Odin we know in his goings out and comings in, but Wotan and Woden are but names to us.\(^3\)

The preference Morris expressed here, and also in the following quotation, for early Scandinavian literature is truly significant, for there have been few men as thoroughly acquainted with, and as

\(^1\) The passage to which he is referring may be found, in Morris's own translation, in *The Saga Library*, III, 365-377.

\(^2\) *Collected Works*, XXII, xiv.
deeper appreciative of, both the Old Norse and the Old and Middle
English literatures and therefore as well qualified to judge
between the two, as Morris was. He went on to say in this lecture,
in describing the Battle of Senlac, that he was sorry that there is
no Icelandic account of this engagement, as there is of the Battle
of Stamford Bridge:

And here above all things does one regret that subjection of
the native writers to monkish Latin, and longs for the story now
never to be written which the English saga-man might have given us
of that sad field of Hastings. And this all the more as one part
of the story, and that the least important part, has been told
dramatically enough by an Icelander. For Tostig, Harald's brother,
having quarrelled with him and being dispossessed in consequence,
sailed away north and tried to get Svein the Dane-king to fall on
England; and getting the cold shoulder from him went to Harald the
Terrible, king of Norway, a redoubted warrior once captain of the
guard of the Greek Emperor, whom he enticed into the expedition:
the story-teller gives us all the usual preliminaries of a great
tragedy in the tales of the North; pithy warnings of wise men, omens
of the seers and the like; and dwells at length on the victories
won by the Norse Harald before the English king caught him unawares,
his army without their mail coats, six miles from York: the fight
that follows and the parley before it are given in the usual dramatic
and generous manner of the North, and make one long that such a
story-teller should have told us what followed.\footnote{Collected Works, XVIII, xvii.}
Heimskringla.\(^1\) With this description, which is found in the Haralds saga harðráða, Morris could have become familiar either through Laing's translation of the Heimskringla,\(^2\) to which he had been introduced at an early date,\(^3\) or possibly - though much less likely - from his own rendering of the original; we do not definitely know how much of his Heimskringla translation Morris had completed when he dropped his Scandinavian work in the late 1870's, but there is good reason to believe that he had not proceeded beyond the Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar at that time.\(^4\)

1. The Battle of Stamford Bridge is described in much the same form in five Icelandic works, - in the Heimskringla, ed. Unger, pp. 608-622; in the Fagrskinna, edd. P. A. Munch and C. R. Unger (Christiania, 1847), pp. 134-142; in Hulda (in Fornmanna Sögur, VI, 395-423); in the Flateyjarbók, pp. 387-397; and in the Morkinskinna, ed. C. R. Unger (Christiania, 1867), pp. 109-121. In making the remarks quoted in the text above, Morris could not have had in mind the accounts given in the last two works - that is, in the Flateyjarbók or in the Morkinskinna -, for neither one of these mentions the ominous dreams that King Harald Sigurdsson and his followers had before they set out on their ill-fated expedition. Any one of the other three accounts, however, could have served as the basis of what he here said in praise of the Icelandic style of narration; but of these three it seems most likely that it was the Heimskringla passage that he had read and was here referring to, for the Heimskringla is the best known of these works and, besides, we know that he was familiar with this history but we have no evidence to prove that he was acquainted with the other two.

2. III, 76-93.


4. For a discussion of the dates of Morris's translation of the Heimskringla, see above, pp. 182-183 and below, pp. 344-348. It should perhaps be pointed out that the form of the personal names which Morris introduced into his lecture does not throw any light on the particular account of the Battle of Stamford Bridge which he had in mind. For the names "Harald the Terrible," "Tostig," and "Svein" found in the lecture, Laing has "Harald Harðrátu," "Tosti," and "Swend," and Morris in his own translation (see The Saga Library, V, 157-179) uses "Harald the Hard-Redy," "Tosti," and "Svein"; the Heimskringla (in Unger's edition) and Hulda have "Haraldr harðráðr," "Tostl," and "Svein," and the Fagrskinna has "Haraldr hinn harðráða," "Tostl," and "Svein." Perhaps Morris was simply using the forms with which he thought his hearers would be most familiar.
In a letter written in March of the same year - 1887 -, Morris made a casual reference to Amloði, the Scandinavian original of Shakespeare's Hamlet; in speaking of Tolstoi's *War and Peace*, he said, "There seems to be a consensus of opinion in these Russian novels as to the curious undecided turn of the intellectual persons there: Hamlet (Shakespeare's I mean, not the genuine Amloði) should have been a Russian, not a Dane." This remark, casual as it is, has a certain interest for the present study, for it may possibly be an indication that Morris was familiar not only with the name of the Scandinavian forebear of Hamlet but also with one of the versions of the Norse story of this ancient hero; it is rather unlikely that he would have made such a remark unless he had known the tale told in the *Ambáles saga* or the Hamlet story as it appears in the *Historia Danica* of Saxo Grammaticus.

If he was acquainted with these two works at first hand, he must have read the first in Icelandic and the second in either Latin or Danish, for neither one had been translated into English by 1888; this fact does not, however, preclude the possibility that he was familiar with


3. I, 135-161.

4. For a bibliography of editions and translations of the *Ambáles saga* and of the *Historia Danica*, see *Islandica*, V(1912), 71-72 and 62-70.
these works, for he was of course able to read both Icelandic and Latin at this time.

To be sure, the acquaintance which Morris seems to reveal in this letter with the Scandinavian Hamlet may not be based entirely on these two works; perhaps Magnússon, or someone else who was well read in the early literature of the North, called Morris's attention to the Scandinavian stories of this ancient hero, pointed out the differences between the Norse figure and Shakespeare's Hamlet, and, possibly, directed him to the two accounts mentioned above. In fact, the rather unusual form of the name that Morris uses makes it seem very likely that he was drawing, partly at least, on some oral source: Morris refers to the Scandinavian hero as "Amloði," a name found neither in Saxo nor in the only edition of the Ambæles saga printed in 1888, the former having "Amlethus," and the latter, "Ambæles." The Icelandic form of the name, "Amloði," does occur in the earliest extant Scandinavian reference to Hamlet, which is found in a short poem ascribed to the Icelandic skald Snæbjörn; the second

1. His translation of Virgil's Aeneids (see Collected works, XI) furnishes ample proof of his knowledge of Latin. It should be pointed out here that an account of the Scandinavian Hamlet appeared in the Gentleman's Magazine for October, 1847 (Volume XXVII, New Series, 369-574). According to the introductory remarks, the story "has been translated from the Swedish of a popular miscellany printed at Stockholm during the present year, 1847, and we are inclined to think that we have here the original Scandinavian legend or saga, which was afterwards amplified into the French and English novel..."; the account itself seems to be essentially an abstract of the Hamlet story told by Saxo. However, it is very unlikely, though of course not impossible, that Morris happened to be acquainted with this story which appeared in a magazine twenty years before he became seriously interested in Scandinavian literature. Moreover, it should also be noted that a shorter, but fairly inclusive, summary of Saxo's account of Hamlet was presented by R. K. Porter in his Travelling Sketches in Russia and Sweden During the Years 1805, 1806, 1807, 1808 (Philadelphia, 1809), pp. 4-9, but it is likewise rather unlikely that Morris was acquainted with this fairly rare book. In neither of these accounts does the name "Amloði" occur.

2. In Sagan af Ambæles Kongi, printed by Einar Pórðarson in 1886, throughout. Only one of the four "Ambæles saga"
verse of this poem, in which the phrase "Amloða molo" occurs, Morris may very likely have read either in one of the editions of the Prose Edda or in the Corpus Poeticum Boreale of Vigfússon and Powell. However, it seems very unlikely that Morris would have connected this brief and rather puzzling reference to Amloði with the stories of Amlethus and Ambáles unless someone well versed in the lore of ancient Scandinavia had discussed the matter with him. Some acquaintance with the story of this Norse figure Morris must have had, in view of the distinction he makes between Shakespeare's Hamlet and "the genuine Amloði"; the particular source of his information it is, however, impossible to ascertain.

During 1887, the year in which the letter containing this interesting reference to Amloði was written, we also find that Morris introduced two brief Scandinavian allusions in the Commonweal. In an article called "Artist and Artisan: As an Artist Sees It," which appeared on September 10th, he pointed out that "when art is hopeful and progressive there is plenty of it for every one and every one is in some sense an artist and ... all can understand" what the artist

1. See, for example, Edda Snorra Sturlusonar, ed. Dorleifr Jónsson (Copenhagen, 1875), pp. 109-110.


3. The only account of the history of the Hamlet story published before 1888 in which the form "Amloði" is discussed is, so far as I know, Carl Säve's article "Om Hamlets Namn och Betydelsen deraf. Undersöknings" in Nordisk Universitets Tidskrift, X (1866), 87-102; it is very unlikely that Morris was acquainted with this discussion. Clesbøy and Vigfússon's Icelandic-English Dictionary (page 19, col. 2) lists "Amloði," stating that it is the true name of the mythical prince of Denmark, Amlethus of Saxo, Hamlet of Shakespeare," and Egilsson's Lexicon Poeticum (Copenhagen, 1860) page 14, col. 1] gives the name "Amloði," pointing out that it is the same as "Amlethus" and calling attention to the passage in the Prose Edda mentioned above, but it is improbable that these brief entries alone would have led Morris to adopt the form "Amloði" instead of "Amlethus" or "Ambáles" in referring to the Scandinavian Hamlet. The name "Amloði" occurs in some of the manuscripts of the saga, of the rímur concerning Ambáles, and of the Odda Annaler (see "Summary of Manuscripts" in Israel Gollancz.
does; and then, after citing Homer and Beowulf, he said, "No other authors have the splendid literature of our Scandinavian kinsmen, the best tale-tellers the world has seen, through whom we can to-day live with the people of Northern Europe in the tenth century, and know them, not as puppets of chivalry romance, but good fellows such as our living friends are to-day." A month later, in the issue for October 8th, he referred to a number of Irish Socialists who had defended themselves with unusual courage in an encounter with the police as "champions after the heart of the old Norse story-tellers ..."

About a year later, on September 15th, Morris referred again to Iceland in the Commonweal; pointing out that "life in a poor country is much more happy for a poor person than in a rich one," he stated,

I remember when I was in Iceland, whose poverty is deeper than most English people could conceive of, being much struck with this. In conversation with my guide, an intelligent and well-read man, I could not make him so much as understand the difference of classes in civilisation; and I say without hesitation that in that wretchedly poor country the people generally are happy, because they have not a trace of the degradation which our inequalities force upon the poor of a rich country.

In an article called "Ducks and Fools," which appeared in the issue of the Commonweal dated April 6, 1889, we find Morris making an interesting comparison between the way in which the eider ducks in Iceland were robbed of their down and the manner in which the poor

2. Loc. cit.
3. The Commonweal, III(1887), 321.
4. Ibid., IV(1888), 289.
people, in his opinion, were deprived of their property by the rich in a capitalistic society; the article deserves to be quoted in its entirety:

When I was in Iceland, I was told about the habits of the eider ducks, which breed in great quantities in the little islets scattered about the firths there, and also of their treatment. They, of course, get their own living; they are pretty good to eat, but not very good; so they are not allowed to be shot, because they produce valuable down, which can be got at by the following process: They make their nests on the ground in the above-mentioned islets; the duck half strips her breast of the down to line her nest; this down is at once collared from the nest by those who are privileged to do so according to law. Then the duck pulls off the rest of her down, as she is anxious to sit and hatch; comes the legal owner of the down, and takes that also. Then comes the drake and half strips himself; this also the legal owner takes, grumbling because the drake's down is coarser, and also because his game is over; for now the poor devils of ducks would not hatch their eggs unless the drake were allowed to line the nest with all that remains to him. Therefore this time the down is not taken; the eggs are allowed to be hatched, so that in due time they may fulfil the function of their lives, and produce down for others' use. Moral: Ducks are obliged to stand this from Icelanders; but why Englishmen should stand similar usage from Englishmen is a curious question.

A few months later Morris made some interesting comments in the Commonweal on Ibsen. Referring to the unfavorable reception "A Doll's House" had received from the critics, he states,

"It is not difficult of explanation: whatever may be the merits of "A Doll's House" as an acting play (by the way, if it is different from an ordinary modern play it must be better...) - I say in any case it is a piece of the truth about modern society clearly and forcibly put. Therefore clearly it doesn't suit the critics, who are parasites of the band of robbers called modern society. Great is Diana of the Ephesians! But if my memory serves me, her rites were not distinguished for purity.

I note that the critics say that Ibsen's plays are pessimistic; so they are - to pessimists, and all intelligent persons who are not Socialists are pessimists. But the representation of the corruption of society carries with it in Ibsen's works aspirations for a better state of things, and that is not pessimism. Therefore Socialists recognize in them another token of the new dawn.

In connection with these remarks on "A Doll's House," I should like to

2. Ibid., V(1889), 193.
call attention to the account Miss Morris gives, in one of her Prefaces, of her father's opinion of Ibsen and his fellow-Norwegian Bjørnson; after commenting on her father's strong dislike of the theatre in general, she states,

My poor father! We made him go to Ibsen performances too, when Ibsen appeared on the horizon. One or two of the plays that he either read or saw acted amused him, and of others he admitted the value, but he viewed the stir and current of life around him too sanely and far-sightedly to be ever carried away by a back-eddy, and Ibsen's art (or art-lessness) left him unmoved in the long run.

Ibsen naturally calls up Bjørnson [sic], and in passing I will note how highly he spoke of the latter's little story Synnøve Synbakken [sic]. Something in the quality of it touched him exceedingly when he first read it, and indeed there is a certain kinship between such tales and his own latest romances. The taciturn life in constant struggle with Nature, and a sober rejoicing in her not lightly yielded gifts; the sweetness of the little maid and the shy wooing under difficulties, the "querness" of some of the minor characters, the grave spaciousness of the Northern mountain-country with its miniature patches of human mirth here and there: you can recognize in all this what it was that appealed to him and was familiar.

In the same year that he commented upon Ibsen in the Commonweal — that is, in 1889 —, Morris delivered a lecture on "Gothic Architecture," in the course of which he referred briefly to the institution of the varangian Guard in Constantinople during the Middle Ages; as he is describing the way in which the Crusades carried Byzantine art to the West, he pointed out that this movement from the East to the West did not actually begin with the Crusades, for there was a thin stream of pilgrims setting eastward long before, and the Scandinavians had found their way to Byzantium, not as pilgrims but as soldiers, and under the name of vörgings a bodyguard of their blood upheld the throne of the Greek Kaiser, and many of them, returning home, bore with them ideas of art which were not lost on their scanty but energetic populations....

I have already called attention to several earlier allusions in

1. Collected works, XXII, xxviii-xxix. See also May Morris, William Morris, I, 90.
Morris's works to the Varangian Guard.

The most interesting lecture of all remains to be discussed; this talk, which Miss May Morris says was delivered "to a Socialist audience," has never been published in its entirety, but copious extracts from the address were printed by Miss Morris in her William Morris: Artist, Writer, Socialist. The date of the lecture is not known, but it must have been delivered in the eighties or early nineties, and I shall therefore discuss it at this point. It is a very important document for the present study, for it shows that Morris was extremely well acquainted with all the important Icelandic sagas; moreover, the account of the sagas given here is by far the fullest discussion of Old Norse literature by Morris that has come down to us.

At the opening of the extract from this lecture that Miss Morris printed in 1936, Morris is pointing out to his audience that in Iceland in the Middle Ages manual labor was not considered a disgrace, and that in the sagas even the chieftains are represented as working with their hands; he says,

...one chief is working in his hay-field at a crisis of his fortune; another is mending a gate, a third sowing his corn, his cloak and sword laid by in a corner of the field; another is a great house-builder, another a ship-builder: one chief says to his brother one eventful morning: "There's the calf to be killed and the viking to be fought. Which of us shall kill the calf, and which shall fight the viking?"

It is of course impossible to ascertain with certainty just which character Morris is referring to in each of these cases, but some, at

1. See above, pages 22-23, 26, 28 and 272. In this same lecture there are three other allusions to Scandinavian matters, all of which, however, are very brief and unimportant (see May Morris, op. cit., I, 274, 1.31; 275, 1.3; and 279, 1.16).

2. I, 449-453.

3. I, 449.
least, of these figures can be fairly definitely identified. The first man referred to may be Gisli Thorgautson, whom Bardi fell upon and slew one day while he was mowing hay, as the Heiðarvíga saga tells us; or he may be Arnkel, in the Eyrbyggja saga, whom Snorri the Priest and his men attacked and killed one night when he was bringing home his hay in the moonlight. In his second example Morris alludes to a chieftain who was mending a gate at a crucial moment of his life. I do not know of any such situation in the sagas; perhaps Morris had in mind Arnkell of the Eyrbyggja saga, who, a year before he was slain by Snorri as I have just mentioned, was attacked by Thorleif while he was busy working on the outer door of his house. The chief who sows his corn, with his sword and cloak laid in a corner of the field, is almost certainly Gunnar of the Njáls saga, whom Örkel rode upon and injured with his spurs while he was so engaged. The "great house-builder" may be Uspak of the Eyrbyggja saga, who turned his stead into an almost impregnable fortress. The "ship-builder" whom Morris had in mind may be either Skallagrím in the Egils saga or Thorolf, the brother of Skallagrím, both of whom were famous as makers of ships. Finally, the two chiefs whose conversation concerning the killing of the calf and the viking is referred to at the end of the passage quoted

2. Ibid., II, 97-100.
3. Ibid., II, 94-95.
5. Saga Library, II, 158, 11.18-20; 166, 11.1-4; and 168, 1.16-170, 1.22.
are Gisli and Thorbjorn, the sons of Thorkel Goldhelm, the occasion of this remark being described in the opening chapter of the Gisla saga Súrssonar. 1

Morris next discusses the position of women in medieval Iceland, calling attention to the fact that Icelandic women often considered a blow or an insult a sufficient cause for divorce. There are numerous accounts in the sagas of divorces for such reasons; two of the most striking cases, both of which Morris undoubtedly knew and to which I have already referred in my discussion of the dramatic fragment "Anthony," are Thordis's divorce from Bork in the Eyrbyggja saga because of the fact that he had struck her when she tried to slay his guest Eyolf, and Gudrun's separation from Thorvald, her first husband, in the Laxdæla saga, for the simple reason that he became impatient at her demands for expensive jewelry and boxed her ears. 4

The next point that Morris considers is the courage of the early Norsemen. "Tears," he says, "are not common in Northern stories, though they sometimes come in curiously as in the case of Slaying Glum, of whom it is told that when someone of his exploits was at hand he was apt to have a sudden access of weeping, the tears rattling on the floor like hail-stones; this of course was involuntary and purely physical." 5 In this passage we meet with the first definite reference in the works of Morris to the Víga-Glóms saga. The characteristic of Glum to which he here refers is described early in the story, shortly

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1. Tr. Dasent, pp. 4-5.
5. May Morris, op. cit., I, 450.
6. From this and the other allusions Morris makes to this tale it cannot be determined whether he read the saga in the original or in the translation by Sir Edmund Head (London and Edinburgh, 1866).
before Glum slays Sigmund. 1 Morris goes on to say in his account of the courage of the early Scandinavians that normally the Norsemen gave no expression to their grief or pain. When Grettir comes home from abroad, for example, and learns that his father and brother are dead and he himself outlawed, he sings a stave and continues to be merry. Again, "Ingiald of the Wells, when he hears of the death of Njal, falls down in a faint and the blood gushes out of his ears and nose; when he comes to himself, he reproaches himself for behaving like a weak woman." 2 Here Morris makes a slight mistake, for it was not Ingiald of the Wells but Thorhall Asgrimsson who acted in this way at the news of the burning of Njal. Finally Morris tells how a certain chief came home from a fight and bade his thrall undress him; when the boy could not pull off his master's breeches, the youth exclaimed, "...you sons of Snorri may well be thought great dandies if you wear your breeches so tight." The chief bids him feel up his thigh, and lo there is a broken arrow-shaft nailing his breeches to him, of which he scorned to complain. 3 Morris here almost certainly had in mind the story told about Thorod Thorbrandson in the Eyrbyggja saga. According to the account given there, however, it was Snorri the Priest who dis-


2. May Morris, op. cit., I, 450. For the scene to which Morris is referring, see Collected Works, VII, 112.


5. May Morris, op. cit., I, 450.

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