A SHORT HISTORY AND DESCRIPTION OF THE KELMSCOTT PRESS.

The foregoing article was written at the request of a London bookseller for an American client who was about to read a paper on the Kelmscott Press. As the Press is now closing, and its seven years' existence will soon be a matter of history, it seems fitting to set down some other facts concerning it while they can still be verified; the more so as statements founded on imperfect information have appeared from time to time in newspapers and reviews.

As early as 1866 an edition of The Earthly Paradise was projected, which was to have been a folio in double columns, profusely illustrated by Sir Edward Burne-Jones, and typographically superior to the books of that time. The designs for the stories of Cupid and Psyche, Pygmalion and the Image, The Ring given to Venus, and The Hill of Venus, were finished, and forty-four of those for Cupid and Psyche were engraved on wood in line, somewhat in the manner of the early German masters. About thirty-five of the blocks were executed by William Morris himself, & the remainder by George Y. Wardle, G. F. Campfield, C. J. Faulkner, and Miss Elizabeth Burden. Specimen pages were set up in Caslon type, and in the Chiswick Press type afterwards used in The House of the Wolfings, but for various reasons the project went no further. Four or five years later there was a
plan for an illustrated edition of Love is Enough, for which two initial L's and seven side ornaments were drawn & engraved by William Morris. Another marginal ornament was engraved by him from a design by Sir E. Burne-Jones, who also drew a picture for the frontispiece, which has now been engraved by W. H. Hooper for the final page of the Kelmscott Press edition of the work. These side ornaments, three of which appear on the opposite page, are more delicate than any that were designed for the Kelmscott Press, but they show that when the Press was started the idea of reviving some of the decorative features of the earliest printed books had been long in its founder's mind. At this same period, in the early seventies, he was much absorbed in the study of ancient manuscripts, & in writing out and illuminating various books, including a Horace and an Omar Khayyám, which may have led his thoughts away from printing. In any case, the plan of an illustrated Love is Enough, like that of the folio Earthly Paradise, was abandoned. Although the books written by William Morris continued to be reasonably printed, it was not until about 1888 that he again paid much attention to typography. He was then, & for the rest of his life, when not away from Hammersmith, in daily communication with his friend and neighbour Emery Walker, whose views on the subject coincided with his own, and who had besides a practical know-
Ornaments designed and engraved for Love is Enough.
ledge of the technique of printing. These views were first expressed in an article by Mr. Walker in the catalogue of the exhibition of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society, held at the New Gallery in the autumn of 1888. As a result of many conversations, The House of the Wolfings was printed at the Chiswick Press at this time, with a special type modelled on an old Basel fount, un-leaded, and with due regard to proportion in the margins. The title-page was also carefully arranged. In the following year The Roots of the Mountains was printed with the same type (except the lower case e), but with a differently proportioned page, & with shoulder-notes instead of headlines. This book was published in November, 1889, & its author declared it to be the best-looking book issued since the seventeenth century. Instead of large paper copies, which had been found unsatisfactory in the case of The House of the Wolfings, two hundred and fifty copies were printed on Whatman paper of about the same size as the paper of the ordinary copies. A small stock of this paper remained over, and in order to dispose of it seventy-five copies of the translation of the Gunnlaug Saga, which first appeared in the Fortnightly Review of January, 1869, and afterwards in Three Northern Love Stories, were printed at the Chiswick Press. The type used was a black-letter copied from one of Caxton's founts, and the initials were left blank to be rubricated by hand. Three co-
pies were printed on vellum. This little book was not however finished until November, 1890. Meanwhile William Morris had resolved to design a type of his own. Immediately after The Roots of the Mountains appeared, he set to work upon it, and in December, 1889, he asked Mr. Walker to go into partnership with him as a printer. This offer was declined by Mr. Walker; but, though not concerned with the financial side of the enterprise, he was virtually a partner in the Kelmscott Press from its first beginnings to its end, and no important step was taken without his advice & approval. Indeed, the original intention was to have the books set up in Hammersmith and printed at his office in Clifford's Inn. It was at this time that William Morris began to collect the mediaeval books of which he formed so fine a library in the next six years. He had made a small collection of such books years before, but had parted with most of them, to his great regret. He now bought with the definite purpose of studying the type & methods of the early printers. Among the first books so acquired was a copy of Leonard of Arezzo's History of Florence, printed at Venice by Jacobus Rubeus in 1476, in a Roman type very similar to that of Nicholas Jenson. Parts of this book and of Jenson's Pliny of 1476 were enlarged by photography in order to bring out more clearly the characteristics of the various letters; and having mastered both their virtues and
defects, William Morris proceeded to design the fount of type which, in the list of December, 1892, he named the Golden type, from The Golden Legend, which was to have been the first book printed with it. This fount consists of eighty-one designs, including stops, figures, & tied letters. The lower case alphabet was finished in a few months. The first letter having been cut in Great Primersize by Mr. Prince, was thought too large, and 'English' was the size resolved upon. By the middle of August, 1890, eleven punches had been cut. At the end of the year the fount was all but complete. On Jan. 12th, 1891, a cottage, No. 16, Upper Mall, was taken. Mr. William Bowden, a retired master-printer, had already been engaged to act as compositor and pressman. Enough type was then cast for a trial page, which was set up and printed on Saturday, Jan. 31st, on a sample of the paper that was being made for the Press by J. Batchelor and Son. About a fortnight later ten reams of paper were delivered. On Feb. 18th a good supply of type followed. Mr. W. H. Bowden, who subsequently became overseer, then joined his father as compositor, and the first chapters of The Glittering Plain were set up. The first sheet appears to have been printed on March 2nd, when the staff was increased to three by the addition of a pressman named Giles, who left as soon as the book was finished. A friend who saw William Morris on the day after the printing of the page above mentioned
recalls his elation at the success of his new type. The first volume of the Saga Library, a creditable piece of printing, was brought out and put beside this trial page, which much more than held its own. The poet then declared his intention to set to work immediately on a black-letter font; illness, however, intervened & it was not begun till June. The lower case alphabet was finished by the beginning of August, with the exception of the tied letters, the designs for which, with those for the capitals, were sent to Mr. Prince on September 11th. Early in November enough type was cast for two trial pages, the one consisting of twenty-six lines of Chaucer’s Franklin’s Tale and the other of sixteen lines of Sigurd the Volsung. In each of these a capital I is used that was immediately discarded. On the last day of 1891 the full stock of Troy type was despatched from the foundry. Its first appearance was in a paragraph, announcing the book from which it took its name, in the list dated May, 1892.

This Troy type, which its designer preferred to either of the others, shows the influence of the beautifully early types of Peter Schoeffer of Mainz, Gunther Zainer of Augsburg, & Anthony Koburger of Nuremberg; but, even more than the Golden type, it has a strong character of its own, which differs largely from that of any mediæval fount. It has recently been pirated abroad, and is advertised by an enterprising German firm as
Die amerikanische Triumph-Gothisch.' The Golden type has perhaps fared worse in being re-modelled in the United States, whence, with much of its character lost, it has found its way back to England under the names 'Venetian,' 'Italian,' & 'Jenson.' It is strange that no one has yet had the good sense to have the actual type of Nicholas Jenson reproduced.

The third type used at the Kelmscott Press, called the 'Chaucer,' differs from the Troy type only in size, being Pica instead of Great Primer. It was cut by Mr. Prince between February and May, 1892, & was ready in June. Its first appearance is in the list of chapters and glossary of The Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye, which was issued on November 24th, 1892.

On June 2nd of that year, William Morris wrote to Mr. Prince: 'I believe in about three months' time I shall be ready with a new set of sketches for a fount of type on English body.' These sketches were not forthcoming; but on Nov. 5th, 1892, he bought a copy of Augustinus De Civitate Dei, printed at the Monastery of Subiaco near Rome by Sweynheym & Pannartz, with a rather compressed type, which appears in only three known books. He at once designed a lower case alphabet on this model, but was not satisfied with it & did not have it cut. This was his last actual experiment in the designing of type, though he sometimes talked of designing a new fount, & of having the
Golden type cut in a larger size.

Next in importance to the type are the initials, borders, & ornaments designed by William Morris. The first book contains a single recto border and twenty different initials. In the next book, Poems by the Way, the number of different initials is fifty-nine. These early initials, many of which were soon discarded, are for the most part suggestive, like the first border, of the ornament in Italian manuscripts of the fifteenth century. In Blunt’s Love Lyrics there are seven letters of a new alphabet, with backgrounds of naturalesque grapes and vine leaves, the result of a visit to Beauvais, where the great porches are carved with vines, in August, 1891. From that time onwards fresh designs were constantly added, the tendency being always towards larger foliage and lighter backgrounds, as the early initials were found to be sometimes too dark for the type. The total number of initials of various sizes designed for the Kelmscott Press, including a few that were engraved but never used, is three hundred & eighty-four. Of the letter T alone there are no less than thirty-four varieties.

The total number of different borders engraved for the Press, including one that was not used, but excluding the three borders designed for The Earthly Paradise by R. Catterson-Smith, is fifty-seven. The first book to contain a marginal ornament, other than these full borders, was The Defence
of Guenevere, which has a half-border on p. 74. There are two others in the preface to The Golden Legend. The Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye is the first book in which there is a profusion of such ornament. One hundred and eight different designs for marginal ornaments were engraved. Besides the above-named designs, there are seven frames for the pictures in The Glittering Plain, one frame for those in a projected edition of The House of the Wolfings, nineteen frames for the pictures in the Chaucer (one of which was not used in the book), twenty-eight title-pages & inscriptions, twenty-six large initial words for the Chaucer, seven initial words for The Well at the World's End and The Water of the Wondrous Isles, four line-endings, and three printer's marks, making a total of six hundred & forty-four designs by William Morris, drawn and engraved within seven years. All the initials & ornaments that recur were printed from electrotypes, while most of the title-pages and initial words were printed direct from the wood. The illustrations by Sir Edward Burne-Jones, Walter Crane, & C. M. Gere were also, with one or two exceptions, printed from the wood. The original designs by Sir E. Burne-Jones were nearly all in pencil, & were redrawn in ink by R. Catton-Smith, and in a few cases by C. Fairfax Murray; they were then revised by the artist and transferred to the wood by means of photography. The twelve designs by A. J. Gaskin for Spenser's
Shepheardes Calender, the map in The Sundering Flood, & the thirty-five reproductions in Some German Woodcuts of the Fifteenth Century, were printed from process blocks. All the woodblocks for initials, ornaments, and illustrations, were engraved by W. H. Hooper, C. E. Keates, & W. Spielmeyer, except the twenty-three blocks for The Glittering Plain, which were engraved by A. Leverett, and a few of the earliest initials, engraved by G. F. Campfield. The whole of these woodblocks have been sent to the British Museum, and have been accepted with a condition that they shall not be reproduced or printed from for the space of a hundred years. The electrotypes have been destroyed. In taking this course, which was sanctioned by William Morris when the matter was talked of shortly before his death, the aim of the trustees has been to keep the series of Kelmscott Press books as a thing apart, and to prevent the designs becoming stale by constant repetition. Many of them have been stolen & parodied in America, but in this country they are fortunately copyright. The type remains in the hands of the trustees, and will be used for the printing of its designer's works, should special editions be called for. Other books of which he would have approved may also be printed with it; the absence of initials and ornament will always distinguish them sufficiently from the books printed at the Kelmscott Press. The nature of the English handmade paper used

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at the Press has been described by William Morris in the foregoing article. It was at first supplied in sheets of which the dimensions were sixteen inches by eleven. Each sheet had as a watermark a conventional primrose between the initials W.M. As stated above, The Golden Legend was to have been the first book put in hand, but as only two pages could have been printed at a time, and this would have made it very costly, paper of double the size was ordered for this work, and The Story of the Glittering Plain was begun instead. This book is a small quarto, as are its five immediate successors, each sheet being folded twice. The last ream of the smaller size of paper was used on The Order of Chivalry. All the other volumes of that series are printed in octavo, on paper of the double size. For the Chaucer a stouter and slightly larger paper was needed. This has for its watermark a Perch with a spray in its mouth. Many of the large quarto books were printed on this paper, of which the first two reams were delivered in February, 1893. Only one other size of paper was used at the Kelmscott Press. The watermark of this is an Apple, with the initials W.M., as in the other two watermarks. The books printed on this paper are The Earthly Paradise, The Floure and the Leafe, The Shepheardes Calender, and Sigurd the Volung. The last-named is a folio, and the open book shows the size of the sheet, which is about eighteen inches by thirteen. The first supply of this
Apple paper was delivered on March 15, 1895. Except in the case of Blunt’s Love Lyrics, The Nature of Gothic, Biblia Innocentium, The Golden Legend, and The Book of Wisdom & Lies, a few copies of all the books were printed on vellum. The six copies of The Glittering Plain were printed on very fine vellum obtained from Rome, of which it was impossible to get a second supply as it was all required by the Vatican. The vellum for the other books, except for two or three copies of Poems by the Way, which were on the Roman vellum, was supplied by H. Band of Brentford, and by W. J. Turney & Co. of Stourbridge. There are three complete vellum sets in existence, and the extreme difficulty of completing a set after the copies are scattered, makes it unlikely that there will ever be a fourth. The black ink which proved most satisfactory, after that of more than one English firm had been tried, was obtained from Hanover. William Morris often spoke of making his own ink, in order to be certain of the ingredients, but his intention was never carried out. The binding of the books in vellum and in half-holland was from the first done by J. & J. Leighton. Most of the vellum used was white, or nearly so, but William Morris himself preferred it dark, & the skins showing brown hair-marks were reserved for the binding of his own copies of the books. The silk ties of four colours, red, blue, yellow, and
green, were specially woven and dyed.

In the following section fifty-two works, in sixty-six volumes, are described as having been printed at the Kelmscott Press, besides the two pages of Froissart’s Chronicles. It is scarcely necessary to add that only hand presses have been used, of the type known as ‘Albion.’ In the early days there was only one press on which the books were printed, besides a small press for taking proofs. At the end of May, 1891, larger premises were taken at 14, Upper Mall, next door to the cottage already referred to, which was given up in June. In November, 1891, a second press was bought, as The Golden Legend was not yet half finished, and it seemed as though the last of its 1286 pages would never be reached. Three years later another small house was taken, No. 14 being still retained. This was No. 21, Upper Mall, overlooking the river, which acted as a reflector, so that there was an excellent light for printing. In January, 1895, a third press, specially made for the work, was set up here in order that two presses might be employed on the Chaucer. This press has already passed into other hands, and the little house, with its many associations, and its pleasant outlook towards Chiswick and Mortlake, is now being transformed into a granary. The last sheet printed there was that on which are the frontispiece and title of this book.

14, Upper Mall, Hammersmith, January 4, 1898.