INTRODUCTION

The notes that introduce the matter in these volumes do no more than gather together certain fragments and certain memories, and here and there recall what course my father's life was taking in other directions at the time of writing. The personal impressions thus recorded are intermittent, but sometimes the child's picture of "things as they seem" may help to bring the reality before older eyes. So I use what I find of these pictures that come and go like wavering reflections in a stream, hoping that the want of art in them will tell more in their favour than against them.

In these early poems and prose stories of my father's, real places seen are as vividly felt and described as the dreamplaces, and a great deal of his local colour is taken from the wide flat Essex country where he passed his childhood. The eldest boy in a large family, his early time went by in contented open-air activity in pleasant surroundings which throughout his life were keenly and affectionately remembered. The whimsical play-world of a numerous and united family does not interest anyone outside the circle, but certainly the doings and sayings of those boys and girls who lived happily on the edge of the Great Forest had an absorbing charm for William Morris's two young listeners in later years, and many times has the present writer dreamed herself into that young circle, playing at Indians on the island at Water House, or wandering through the twilight of the hornbeams in the Forest in search of adventure. Never through life did he lose the pleasure of those early memories or the vividness of them. With a few words simply and casually let fall in conversation, he would sometimes bring the young days before his listeners as in a sudden vision, beautiful and poigniant like all the intimate things that have passed. It need hardly be said how deep an impression was made upon his writings by this harmony and contentment, this delight in the open country and in the noble woodland.
His school-life was spent at Marlborough, a choice both lucky and unlucky; unlucky in so far that he was there at the beginning of the school rebellion historic to old Marburians, of which he used to give racy and graphic accounts to the younger generation; lucky, in that he was to spend some years of a sensitive boyhood in a legendary stretch of land, which, like the Essex country with its wide marshes and its forest, was to penetrate into his life and find expression later in his writings. In a pilgrimage to Marlborough and Savernake and the neighbourhood one lovely summer evening the present writer, going over all the old haunts she had often heard described, stood at last before a tablet inscribed with the familiar name, and woke out of a dream: for she had been wandering from place to place with a youthful companion, well-known though never seen, the shy boy who sat devouring his books in shady corners of the school-house, who roamed through Savernake Forest watching the squirrels at play (hundreds of them there); who toiled up the valley of the Grey Wethers and lingered in the great circle at Avebury, weaving stories of the remote people, and carried away from those schooldays something of more lasting value than the rough and ready teaching of the “boy farm,” in his dreaming and wondering over the secret of the earth and the story of the early world.

Leaving Marlborough prematurely, owing to the disorganized state of the school at the moment, William Morris read for about a year with a private tutor, Dr Guy of Forest School, Walthamstow, a man of whom I always formed a pleasant picture, owing to the warmly affectionate and appreciative terms in which my father spoke of him to us.

In 1853 he went up to Oxford; there, in the next few years, he makes his early friends—the friends of a lifetime—and the circle is formed, the record of whose work is a singularly bright page in the history of Victorian art and letters.

The Oxford days, in college and afterwards, are represented by the poems and prose pieces in this volume. It may be convenient for reference to give here briefly certain lead-

ing dates which are well-known. As I have already said, it was in 1853 that the young men created for themselves a delightful existence in the midst of an Oxford “ languid and indifferent,” as Burne-Jones says, far other than the Oxford they had expected to find. In 1855 William Morris wrote his first poem, “The Willow and the Red Cliff,” and the event is pleasantly narrated in Mr Mackail’s “Life.”

“Here one morning, just after breakfast,” says Burne-Jones, “he brought me in the first poem he ever made. After that no week went by without some poem.” It was read to the set and created much excitement. Canon Dixon says: “I felt that it was something like of which had never been heard before. It was a thing entirely new: founded on nothing previous...”

After the publication of “Guenevere,” my father destroyed the manuscript of the early poems he had not wished to include, and this was probably among them. Four copies had been made however by Canon Dixon, and considering its quality and the interest attached to it I have decided to print this poem in the last volume of the series.

This year 1855 is a turning point in my father’s history. In the course of a short tour in France with Burne-Jones and William Fulford, he and Burne-Jones came to a serious conclusion: to give up the Church, for which they had both been intended, and devote themselves to art; Burne-Jones would be a painter and Morris an architect. In a beautiful letter to his mother, my father gave her his reasons and his feelings on the matter, saying very simply: “You see I do not hope to be great at all in anything, but perhaps I may reasonably hope to be happy in my work.” In January 1856 he was articled to George Edmund Street, and there in the office in Beaumont Street, Oxford, first met his life-long friend, Philip Webb, then Street’s senior clerk. And in January also the first number of “The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine” was published, the magazine living through twelve monthly numbers.

Altogether this was an eager and difficult time: the busi
ness routine of an architect's office would always have been distasteful to a young man of my father's temperament; his thoughts were turning more and more towards painting; in the autumn, on a short visit to North France and Belgium, he once more had a sight of the work of Jan van Eyck and Memling, and he had this year made the personal acquaintance of Dante Gabriel Rossetti, already to him a great name. He must study drawing at any cost, and in a letter written in the summer, announces his intention of "trying to get six hours day for drawing" without giving up architecture. But the office work had to go, and before the year ended he had definitely given it up for the new work.

One cannot help seeing, however, that he takes to the new path not altogether happily; there is, indeed, a distinct note of depression in this and in other letters now and later, which deal with the matter. "Rossetti says I ought to paint," he writes; "he says I shall be able; now as he is a very great man, and speaks with authority and not as the scribes, I must try. I don't hope much, I must say, yet will try my best—he gave me practical advice on the subject... So I am going to try, not giving up the architecture, but trying if it is possible to get six hours a day for drawing besides office work. One won't get much enjoyment out of life at this rate I know well, but that don't matter. I have no right to ask for it at all events—love and work, these two things only... I

* Mr Webb tells me that he was deputed to overlook the new pupil's work, and remarks that from the first they understood each other, and that he found this a pleasant and easy duty. He says that my father had an astonishing intuition for architecture; he knew for instance, in some mysterious way, just what constituted the difference in character between two French Gothic cathedrals; it was not reasoned out, but a thing deeply felt.

† His first journey abroad was in the Long Vacation of 1854, when he visited Belgium and North France with his sister Henrietta. It is not difficult to imagine what the journey meant to him—Memling and Van Eyck first seen; Rouen, Beauvais, Amiens, Chartres first seen.

can't enter into politico-social subjects with any interest, for on the whole I see that things are in a muddle, and I have no power or vocation to set them right in ever so little a degree. My work is the embodiment of dreams in one form or another...

"Yet I shall have enough to do, if I actually master this art of painting; I daresay I have a talent for it. I am just beginning to think of it seriously; I am glad that I am compelled to try anything; I was slipping off into a kind of small (very small) Palace of Art... Ned and I are going to live together. I go to London early in August."

I take these extracts as Mr Mackail gives them in the "Life," the letter is one of the landmarks in my father's life, and each phrase is significant: first, the influence of Rossetti, to whom picture-painting was the one form of art; then the passion of industry, and the not quite happy sense of duty that overcomes him in following the new career; the naive demand for work and love—"these two things only," the dawning impossibility of detach himself artist-fashion from all sympathy with subjects concerning the welfare of his fellows; finally the dream of his small Palace of Art and the vague foreshadowing of his future work—the letter is a whole chapter descriptive of a mind at work with doubts and dreams and hopes.

Then follow what are known in the Morris and Burn-Jones families as "Red Lion Square days:" days wonderful to hear tell of, days filled with Homeric laughter, strenuous work and the hundred fantastic experiments in furniturer-making and decorating that gave rise to the establishment of the firm of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner and Company. Before this event, however, comes the first actual piece of decoration—unfortunately experimental this—in the Oxford Union, while all the year Morris is working at different crafts, showing the beginnings of his many-sided activities and the instinct for grasping technique with little effort and wonderful swiftness. In 1858 "The Defence of Guenevere" was published, and in April of the following year he married.
The story of how he built a beautiful home to receive his wife and his friends, of the happy, vivacious days the young circle spent among the blossoming orchards in a forgotten corner so near the rush and hurry of the city, all this has been told time and again, though I think the charm of the busy life, at once so gay and so full of seriousness, will never grow stale in the telling. Laughter sounded from the half-furnished rooms where the young people painted the walls with scenes from the Round Table histories; laughter sounded from the fragrant little garden as the host, victim of some ingenious practical joke, fulfilled the pleased expectation of his guests by conducting at once vigorous and picturesque under the torment; laughter over the apple-gathering, laughter over every new experiment, every fantastic failure of the young housekeepers; but amid the delight in mere existence and in the beauty of the earth, these young lives were ripening and developing in all seriousness, and their laughter was not the crackling of thorns under the pot. If I linger a little in touching upon the light-hearted exuberance of all these closely-bound personalities, William Morris, D. G. Rossetti, Edward Burne-Jones, Ford Madox Brown, Curnow Price, Philip Webb, Charles Faulkner, it is partly because the contemplation of work and play so interchangeable, so thoroughly enjoyed, is in itself stimulating to a more languid (and perhaps a less hard-working) generation. And though they one and all settled down to the responsibilities of London life very soon, the Red House days remain typical—an intensified illustration of much that William Morris felt and said later regarding the nature of human toil.

The present writer has retained certain dream-pictures of those days (by some mysterious process sharply printed on the baby-mind); though too intimate and tender for description here, they are strangely intense, and it is curious to note in passing how such pictures come to be impressed on an unconsidered tiny brain, and carried through the child-life till in later days the time comes for spirit and mind to seize on the import of them: then their beauty at last pierces the heart, and they become a reality—dream and memory, today and yesterday—all strangely intermingled till the dreamer sometimes comes to feel that she too was a guest in the Red House days and shared in the laughter there. "We laughed because we were happy," says one who was there in reality, words almost profound in their simplicity.

Such are the landmarks of these years between the ages of twenty and twenty-five.

"The Defence of Guenevere, and other Poems" was published in 1858; the other pieces included in this present volume are taken from "The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine." Though they appeared before the Guenevere volume, I naturally give first place to the poems first collected and published under William Morris's own eye.

THE HOLLOW LAND

My father's trustees published in 1903 the contributions to "The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine" in the Kelmscott Press letter known as the Golden Type. No one felt more keenly than my father the wrong done to dead authors by gathering together every fragment of their writing regardless of quality, and in his lifetime he always refused to reprint his early prose. Yet in destroying that bundle of verse when "Guenevere" appeared, the young poet did a thing that his friends regretted very much at the moment and afterwards. His first poem already mentioned, apart from its value to-day in the changed perspective, deserved a different fate, and it is probable, considering that his style altered after the appearance of that first slim book, that we have lost poems of a fine intense quality, much undervalued by the impetuous author. The blemishes of this early work, both prose and poetry, are, in truth, not disfiguring or irritating, and are far outweighed by its beauty: a beauty strange and dreamlike, that scarcely finds a place in the work of a man of mature thought.
The writer practised in his craft of stringing words is impatient of his own early work which shows too clearly the defects as well as the ingenuous charm of youth; moreover, the task of the moment is naturally uppermost in his mind. His attitude towards life is changed, and I can imagine that it would be difficult for him to get outside himself and, forgetting the craftsmanship that displeases him, be touched by those qualities that touch and delight us. Hence, though we can understand this wholesale destruction, we regret that the impulse for it came so soon. In "The Story of the Unknown Church" the description on pages 149, 150 of the ancient abbey and the wall-girt town is as finely imagined as could well be; and the ensuing lines on the building among the waving trees, with the glimpse of the open country, brings to one's mind most vividly the setting of Chartres Cathedral, poised above "the great golden corn sea" of the Beauce, which spreads its endless leagues to a far horizon. In "Gertha's Lovers" one sees already that intimate knowledge of medieval warfare, with all its engines and weapons, which is noticeable all through the romances. My father writes of such things in an unconcerned way, pretty much as though he himself were in the daily habit of handling them. He never looked upon himself as an archaologist, yet his knowledge of the everyday usages of past times was amazing; it was instinct, a sort of second-sight, I believe, brought in naturally as though the writer were recounting a bit of his own experiences. I know of no case in the Froissart poems or in the Arthur poems where such detail interferes with the dramatic intensity of the piece: on the contrary, this close description and vivid realization of the story's setting helps to place before our eyes his own wonderful prismatic vision.

In "Lindensborg Pool" is a remarkable piece of dramatic description of desolate forest waste, full of keen observation,

* He said once, in a moment of exasperation, a poor drawing of some medieval armour being in question: "No one can draw armour properly unless he can draw a knight with his feet on the hob, toasting a herring on the point of his sword."

and giving an impression of intolerable dreariness. Many times I have heard "the reeds just taken by the wind, knocking against each other, the flat ones scraping all along the round ones," but never thought to describe them in this simple direct way. "The Hollow Land" gives, one after another, the broken pictures of a strange, beautiful dream, and should be known if only that the snatches of carols and the lovely song at the close might be read in their due place in the story. My plan has been to publish all these contributions to the magazine, except those that appear in "The Defence of Guenevere," so the modern tale of "Frank's Sealed Letter" has to be included. An early Victorian story by my father, with a cold proud heroine named Mabel, is certainly a literary curiosity. The papers on Browning's "Men and Women," on "The Churches of North France,"* and "Death the Avenger," etc., need no comment. One poet discussing the work of another is always interesting reading; moreover, the Browning poems are treated with a sweet seriousness and a certain direct simplicity in the attempt to straighten out some of the complicated personalities that it is scarcely possible to read without being touched; the writing seems to breathe the fresh fragrance of a June garden, and one could not wish these papers overlooked.

Four of the five poems that appeared in the magazine, "Riding Together," "The Chapel in Lyoness," "Summer Dawn," "Hands," were included in the "Guenevere" volume. "Hands" appears there as the song at the end of "Rapunzel."

* He himself writes of this article: "It has cost me more trouble than anything I have written yet; I ground at it the other night from nine o'clock till half past four a.m., when the lamp went out, and I had to creep upstairs to bed through the great dark house like a thief." He was writing from Water House, Walthamstow.
THE DEFENCE OF GUENEVERE AND OTHER POEMS

The author had certainly designed a complete Arthurian cycle, and we have fragments of other Arthurian subjects, such as “The Maying of Queen Guenevere,” which gives the following picture of Mellyagraunce brooding on his castle-roof:

The end of spring was now drawn near
And all the leaves were grown full long;
The apple twigs were stiff and strong,
And one by one fell off from song.
This thrush and that thrush by daylight,
Though lustily they sing near night.
This time a-maying went the Queen,
But Mellyagraunce across the green
Fresh meadows where the blue dykes were
Stared out and thought of Guenevere.
“If I could get her once,” he said,
“Whatever men say, by God’s head
But I would hold her.” Here he glanced
Across his strong courts, for he chanced
To be on a tower-roof that tide,
And his banner-staff up beside
His bended knee. “St. Mary, though,
When I think well, I do not know
Why I should give myself this pain
About the Queen, and be so fain
To have her by me; God to aid,
I have seen many a comely maid—
Ahi! and well-born too—if I said:
‘Fair lady, may I bear your glove?’
Would turn round quick and look all love:
While she laughs at me—laughs aloud…”

There is an interesting fragment from a poem on Iseult of Brittany which I am giving in the last volume of this series. There are also some fifteen verses of “Sir Palomydes”
Quest," and the following fragment of a descriptive opening of "Guenevere." As an isolated piece of colour and detail this last is too interesting to pass over, though the author discarded it for the abrupt and dramatic opening of the published poem. It is in the "Guenevere" measure, though it stands unbroken in the poet's first draft:

That summer morning out in the green fields
Along the Itchen, sat King Arthur's knights
Long robed and solemn, their brave battle shields
Hung in the canopies, to see such sights
As might be seen that morning, and to hear
Such strange grim words fiercer than many fights,
That on that morn 'twixt anger and great fear
Brave lips and beautiful might wriote to say.
High up in wooden galleries anear
That solemn court of judgment daines sat—gay
With many coloured kirtles, yea, but some
Were sick and white with much fear on that day;
For now take notice, Launcelot was not come;
The lordly minstrel Tristram, nigh to death
From King Mark's glaive, sat brooding at his home;
Gareth was riding fearful of men's breath
Since he was Gawaine's brother; through the trees
And over many a mountain and bare heath
The questing beast, wings spread out to the breeze,
Trailed Palomydes, weary feet and sore,
And ever Lawaine was at Launcelot's knees,
So he was missed too; ever more and more
Grew Gawaine's nets round Guenevere the Queen.
Look round about what knights were there that wore
Sir Launcelot's colours, the great snake of green
That twisted on the quartered white and red—

It is characteristic of my father's way of working that he should re-model a poem, sometimes on entirely different lines and in a different measure, discarding pages and pages of matter with the cheerful indifference of one to whom the production of these beautiful things appeared to be the spontaneous flow of a spring that is never dry. Correcting meant for him, more often than not, re-writing.

"The Defence of Guenevere" was received with indifference by the critics. In 1910 the young poets of "the fifties" take their due stand on the hill of Parnassus; in the Victorian mid-century they were smiled at by some of the critics. And yet they were, in truth, of their century, and stood for much that could only be voiced through them; they were inheritors of the romantic tradition, themselves covering fresh ground with youthful eagerness and power. But if some people smiled at the new music, men of letters did not fail to know that it rang true. Two figures, well known in London, stand out in the crowd, friendly and genial. They were the first critics to "discover" the new poet; my mother remembers how my father came to her one day in a great state of excitement, waving the paper containing the notice of "The Defence of Guenevere," and the excitement was no less over Dr Richard Garnett's cordial and discriminating review of the poems, some of which he welcomed as already known and admired. I have often heard my father speak with warm appreciation of the kindly treatment he received at the hands of these two men. I do not think the feeling of affectionate gratitude he had towards them in consequence ever weakened throughout his life. It is not a little thing for a shy and sensitive young man to have his first volume of poems treated with understanding and sympathy. That thoughtful critic "Shirley"* wrote on "Guenevere" a little later. He saw that the unwanted words employed in these chivalric poems, which were generally received as affection, "were not mere

fantasy, that the employment of antique and formal words and habits is not formal or antiquarian only, but denotes a living insight into the thought and heart of the dead people whose life they shaped.”

Mr Andrew Lang, writing on “The Poetry of William Morris” at a later date, remarks:

“If a critic may for a moment indicate his personal relations to the work received, I might say that I, and several of my contemporaries at college, knew ‘The Defence of Guenevere’ almost by heart, before the name of Mr Morris was renowned, and before he had published ‘The Life and Death of Jason.’ We found in the earlier book something which no other contemporary poet possessed in the same measure: an extraordinary power in the realm of fantasy; an unrivalled sense of what was most exquisite and rare in the life of the Middle Ages. We found Froissart’s people alive again in Mr Morris’s poems, and we knew better what thoughts and emotions lay in the secret of their hearts, than we could learn from the bright superficial pages of Froissart.”

In the Guenevere volume certain alterations were made by the author in a copy of the first edition, made, I should think, at the time of the Ellis reprint in 1875, but not used except for a small erratum (p. 89, line 11, for than read for).

In “The Chapel in Lyoness” (p. 31 in this present edition) he substitutes “a rose lay by my face” for “a rose lay on my face.”

The further corrections I give consecutively and print the alterations in italics, for convenience in reading:

SIR GALAHAD
All day long and every day
Till dreams and madness pass’d away
I watched Ozana as he lay
     Within the gilded screen.

I sung, my singing moved him not;
I held my peace; my heart grew hot,
About the quest and Launcelot
     Far away, I ween.

So I went a little space
From out the chapel, bathed my face
Amid the stream that runs apace
     By the churchyard wall.

There in my rest I plucked a rose
Where neath the lime a garden blows
And winds run through the trembling rows
     Of lilies slim and tall.

I bore him water for his drouth,
I laid the flower beside his mouth,
He smiled, turned round towards the south,
     Held up a golden tress.

The light smote on it from the west:
He drew the covering from his breast,
Against his heart that hair he prest;
     Death draws anigh to bless.

Next, in Sir Bors’ speech, the two first verses are cancelled and these three take their place; the verse following is altered, as below:

SIR BORS
The western door wide open lay
     About the time when we grew sad,
And close beside the door there lay
     The red crossed shield of Galahad.

I entered, and despite of fear,
     My sword lay quiet in its sheath,
Across the rood-screen gilded clear
     I heard the sound of deep-drawn breath.
I said: "If all be found and lost?"
And pushed the doors and raised my head,
And o'er the marble threshold crossed
And saw the seeker nowise dead.

I heard Ozana murmur low,
The King of many hopes he seemed,
But Galahad stooped and kissed his brow,
And triumph in his eye gleamed.

After Ozana dies, the next verse is altered to:

SIR BORS
Galahad gazeth dreamily
On wondrous things his eyes may see
Amidst the air 'twixt him and me—
On his soul, Lord, have mercy.

In "Sir Peter Harpdon's End" there are two alterations.
On page 43, in the scene between Sir Peter and Sir Lambert
outside the castle, one passage in Sir Peter's longest speech
is thus altered:

Now
Why should I not do this thing that I think,
For even when I come to count the gains,
I have them my side; men will talk of us
'Twixt talk of Hector dead so long ago;
Will talk of us long dead, and how we clung
To what we loved; perchance of how one died
Hoping for naught, doing some desperate deed . . .

In the French camp before the castle, page 48, in Sir
Peter's speech, line 2 from the bottom, for then read for; page
49, line 3, for
Fear not death so,
read
Nor fear—so; for I can tilt right well—
Let me not say, "I could" . . .

I think I am right in this reading; the correction is a little
ambiguous, but my father often made a word with a vowel-
sound of the same value as in fear to stand for two syllables.

I have followed the first edition here, except in the case of
obvious misprints. The question of the author's later cor-
rections brings me to a point which I have considered care-
fully, and about which there may well be difference of
opinion.* I have been guided by what my father did when
the question arose of a corrected poem by Keats. "I shall never
forget your father's rage," writes Mr. Cockerell, "when he
found a late version of 'La Belle Dame sans Merci' in the
proofs of the Kelmscott Press Keats, and with what alacrity
the sheet was cancelled and reprinted." I do not mean it to be
inferred that he was a fanatic on this point, but he had a certain
feeling about the first-published form of other men's work,
if not about that of his own; I am bound to confess that if the
alteration made by Keats had been in his judgement an im-
provement to the poem, I feel sure he would have let it
stand.

Two alterations were made by my father for the Kelmscott
Press edition of "Guenevere," in spite of which I have ven-
tured to keep to the original reading; in "King Arthur's
Tomb" the fourth verse from the end was originally:

Banner and sword and shield, you dare not pray to die,†

* My father was not willing to have "Guenevere" republished,
but was finally persuaded by Mr. Ellis, and, as I have said, began to
make some corrections in an interleaved copy. But he thought better
of it; the alterations were not used and the volume comes out at last
with all its early imperfections; not only that, but, as Mr. Forman
points out, the slip of error being missing in the copy used, the 1875
edition appears with the old printers' errors that had been noted for
correction in 1858.

† Note, in the next verse, "Never, never again; not even when I
die," the same (conscious or unconscious) lengthening of the line
with strangely intensifying effect.
which he altered to
    Banner and sword and shield, you dare not die.
In “Summer Dawn,” the old line,
    Through the long twilight they pray for the dawn,
was first changed to
    They pray through long glooming for daylight new born
and ultimately appears as
    They pray the long gloom through for daylight new born.

    As we all know, the alteration was made under friendly
pressure and my father was unconvinced of sin. “No one
but a Scotchman makes any difference between dawn and
morn,” he said, leaving the rhyme a few lines higher up,
moreover.

The following is a scene for “Sir Peter Harpdon’s End,”
omitted from the poem, as my father thought it weighted it
too much. Swinburne considered it so good that he tried to
persuade him to leave it in.

SIR PETER HARPDON’S END

In the Castle on the walls.

JOHN CURZON
    And yet their hammering is grown fainter now;
An hour might be something, Sir.

SIR PETER
    No fear
But they’ll be ready by the daylight, John.
    Far better let this matter have its way;
Don’t think of it, your heart grows heavy so.

xxvij

JOHN CURZON
    Sir, truly? Well, I know not, just as if
I were a builder and knew what would strain
    And yet not break, or perhaps might not break.
Just so, you see, Sir, do I hold this; as for death
    It makes my heart jump when I say the word,
But otherwise my thoughts keep off from it
    Without much driving.

SIR PETER
    John, where were you born?
    You never told me yet, whose son were you.

JOHN CURZON
    At Goring by the Thames, a pleasant place:
So many sluices on from lock to lock,
    All manner of slim trees—tis now ten years
Since I was there, and I was young that time,
    For I look older than I am, Sir.
My father held a little manor there,
    He’s alive still: I mind once—pardon me,
I trouble you.

SIR PETER
    No, Curzon, on my word.

JOHN CURZON
    I mind once when my sister Anne was wed—
And she has children now: Why, what’s to-day?
    Tenth of November—we shall mind it long
Hereafter when we sit at home in peace—
    The tenth to-day then, or to-morrow—which is it?
I never could keep these things in my mind—
    Is poor Anne’s birthday—hope it is to-day,
I shouldn’t like them to be holding feast
While—God, Sir Peter, those men are in shot.
    I’ll fetch some archers, hold you still the while

xxvij
The Green Tower men will be the least tired out
And John of Waltham draws the stronger bow.
No noise, Sir, I'll be back soon. He goes.

SIR PETER
That man now,
His thoughts go back in such a simple way,
Without much pain, I think, while mine—I feel
As if I were shut up in [a] close room
Steaming and stifling with no hope to reach
The free air outside—O if I had lived
To think of all the many happy days
I should have had, the pleasant quiet things,
Counted as little then, but each one now
Like lost salvation—Say I see her head
Turned round to smile at cheery word of mine;
I see her in the dance her gown held up
To free her feet, going to take my hand,
I see her in some crowded place bend down,
She is so tall, lay her hand flat upon
My breast beneath my chin as who should say,
Come here and talk apart: I see her pale,
Her mouth half open, looking on in fear
As the great tilt-yard fills; I see her, say,
Beside me on the dais; by my hearth
And in my bed who should have been my wife;
Day after day I see the French draw on;
Hold after hold falls as this one will fall,
Knight after knight hangs gibbeted like me,
Pennon on pennon do they drain us out
And I not there to let them. Lambert too,
I know what things he'll say—ah well, God grant
That he gets slain by these same arrows here
That come up now. Enter John Curzon.
So, Curzon; little noise,
Wind the big perriere that they call Torte Bouche.
I think we shall just reach them there: see now,
"Sanxere, Sanxere," "the Marshal for King Charles,"
"St. Ives for Clisson—" Curzon, did you hear?

JOHN CURZON
Yea, Sir, and felt; a good round ton, I doubt,
Has fallen from the wall. I'm ready.

SIR PETER
Again
Among the men then, by Lord Clisson's tent.

St. George Guienne! Long Wat and all you
Shoot all you may.

JOHN CURZON
St. George! Why again there,
It comes away like dried mud; at this rate
They will not need the beffroi. By daybreak
May God have mercy on our souls, fair Sir!
They have made a breach—hark there, they know it too.

The following verses are taken from a fragment of a ballad
of about the same period.

Lo, Sirs, a desolate Damozel
In all highways I made my moan
With words on parchment written well
To help me to get back mine own;

And at the crossways that lead down
To either sea and the waste land,
The forest and the golden town,
I got a pursuivant to stand

Beside a cross of white and red,
And each day many knights passed by
Some bravely were apparelled
And had most things that gold can buy,

And some came poorly from the wars,
With broken arms and visages
Scarred by the Saracen scimitars—
And unto each and all of these

My pursuivant cried loud and well
The words upon the parchment writ
By me the desolate Damozel:
"Fair Knights, I do you all to wit

"My lady a most noble dame
A recreant traitor hath appealed,
And surely, Sirs, it were great blame
Such a fair noble dame to yield

"Unto the fire . . ."

Some of the drafts of these early poems are written in large
quarto note-books, some on half-sheets of note-paper, written
on both sides—the first thing that came to hand. There
are scarcely any stops and few capitals. My father was notori-
ously careless in spelling common words, and he did not
trouble himself much about stops; he had, however, certain
peculiarities in punctuation, and when these got entangled
with the printers' views, the rather muddled scheme has
sometimes a quaint appearance, so I am told by people who
are exact in these matters.

The portrait in this volume is taken from a little pencil
drawing by my father himself. It must have been done at
about the age of twenty-three.

NOTE TO PAGE XI

AMONG the letters written home on the tour in France
with Burne-Jones and Fulford in 1855 were some to
Grandmamma, the first a hurried note in pencil dated
from Abbeville at midnight the night of their arrival, and
written, evidently, in excited anticipation. After describing
how after leaving the station they walked along a paved road with poplars on either side till they came to the river Somme, which they nearly walked into, he concludes: "We caught a glimpse of the Big Church, it looks exceedingly splendid, a very mountain of wrought stone; I long for to-morrow morning; as far as we could see the country about the town is very pretty; but of course a beautiful starlight night does wonders—My best love to Emma and Joseph, Henrietta the boys & all of them

Your affe. Son

William

The following letters show how that state of excitement was kept up all through the holiday, and show the capacity of enjoying things to the utmost, always so characteristic. They give an epitome of the tour, and all the church-seeing and the leisured road travelling, on foot and in diligence.

Rouen: Hotel de France
Sunday, July 29th. [1855]

My dear Mother

I suppose you will be expecting to hear of me by this time so here is a dull account of what we have been doing since we landed; Abbeville has a very fine Church, though very unfinished, and the town itself is very old and full of exceedingly good houses; we were all three in exaltations thereat; we left Abbeville about midday the next day (Friday) and got to Amiens in an hour or so, we stayed there till the next morning being in the Church nearly all the time; my friends were utterly taken aback at the grandeur of the French Churches and have remained in that state ever since: well on Saturday we went first by train to Clermont and thence walked to Beauvais (about 17 miles) we reached that town about 6 o'clock in the evening having had a splendid walk through the lovely country, a very flower garden it is at this time of the year; I was rather knocked up by the walk in consequence of having to wear my slippers, for the shoes

xxxij

I brought with me I could not wear at all: I think I like Beauvais Cathedral better than Amiens; the apse of Beauvais must be the finest in the world. Well we stayed there till the Sunday evening, when we went back to Clermont by diligence and got back to Paris by ½ past eleven o'clock: we stayed at Paris Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday; and saw there the Beaux Arts department of the exhibition which was very well worth seeing for the English pictures therein and for nothing else; we stayed there about 7 hours on one day. We saw too the Picture Gallery in the Louvre; Notre Dame and some half dozen other Churches including the Sainte Chapelle, and besides that the Hotel de Cluny: nothing else, though we worked hard at sight seeing for at least 12 hours a day, doing a great deal of walking; I don’t quite like Paris yet, though my friends are delighted with it: We left Paris on the Wednesday evening and got to Chartres about 10½ o’clock, and stayed there all the next day Thursday, enjoying ourselves immensely over its quaint streets and gorgeous Churches; on the Friday morning early we took train back to Maintenon (‘tis a very little way), from Maintenon to Dreux by a very quaint nondescript public conveyance. Dreux is a very quaint old town with a fine church: from Dreux to a place with an unpronounceable name Boueill, by the same conveyance; from Boueill to Evreux by a railway, it is only a half hour’s ride, we had a very short time at Evreux to our grief for seeing the beautiful Cathedral there, and then had to go on by a similar nondescript conveyance to Louviers; by the way this same conveyance is a thing with an open coupée holding three, and a rotonde holding 4, it is drawn by one horse, and goes very slow I can tell you, but I can’t tell you the name thereof: Louviers has a very rich and beautiful, though (for France) small Church: well from Louviers we went for a few miles by omnibus to Louviers St Pierre where we met the Rouen railway and got to Rouen by 8½ P.M. this was much better we thought than having to go back to Paris and lose a day in railway travelling, for we fairly enjoyed this journey (wh: took us in all about 1½ hours and cost about 9s. i.e. xxxiiij
a piece) travelling through a most beautiful country (no Lowland country I ever saw equals the valley in wh: Louviers lies) seeing too 3 picturesque old towns each with its lovely church. It was quite delightful, I have seldom enjoyed a day so much; the railway took us little more than an hour in all—well here we are in Rouen, glorious Rouen; yesterday we went about the churches, mounted to the top of the iron spire (360ft.) such a view from there, went all about the roof and lantern of St. Ouen; heard vespers at Notre Dame and finally after dinner mounted S. Catherine and wandered about there till it was quite dark—Well we have had a glorious time of it, working desperately hard; my two friends have been in a state of exstasy since we landed, and for the matter of that so have I. The weather has been just what we could have wished; we hope to be able to stay out another fortnight. I mustn't write any more or it will be overweighs—Best love to all—

Your affectionate son

William

The pen is VERY bad.

Hotel de France
Coutances, Normandy
August 7th 1855

My dear Mother

We left Rouen on the Wednesday morning, &, being disappointed of the Havre boat (wh: doesnt begin to run until later in the year) went on foot to Caudebec, we had a glorious walk, but it was rather too far perhaps for one days tramp, being 25 miles, we were all three good deal knocked up (you know I have very bad shoes for walking or I could have done it easily) and we could not well walk the next day so we went by a diligence to Yvetot & by railway from Yvetot to Havre; and by the way as a rather remarkable fact, I might tell you that we paid the sum of one penny sterling for our ride from Caudebec to Yvetot a distance of 10 miles; we slept at Havre the Thursday night, and went on the Friday morning to Caen by steamer over a very smooth sea, Caen is a fine place, but I was never the less disappointed therewith as I had heard so much of it, but I was not disappointed with S. Etienne in that town, which is a splendid church; we left Caen on Saturday afternoon by diligence for Bayeux, slept there on Saturday evening, and saw the Cathedral wh: is a very good one, and the tapestry on the Sunday; but as they were repairing the choir and transepts, we could not, in spite of our strenuous efforts get into that part of the church much to our disgust; the tapestry is very quaint, and rude, & very interesting. Well on the Monday morning we went on to Coutances stopping an hour or two at S. Lo where there is a fine Church; the Cathedral here is one of the finest we have seen built almost uniformly in a style like our Early English, very plain but very beautiful; there are two fine Churches here besides: the town is built mostly of granite, and lies up a steep hill overlooking a very pretty country, very English in its look, much like Clay Cross without the chimneys. We go on tomorrow by diligence to Avranches from whence we shall see Mont S. Michel, & there alas! alas! will end our French tour, for we shall go back to Granville on the Saturday evening, & start from Granville for Jersey on the Sunday morning (at 11 o'clock just when you are all in church) and I suppose the Monday or Tuesday following will see me at Walthamstow, in a very seedy condition as to my clothes, for my coat is a beautiful russet brown where the sun has caught it, my beautiful violet ribbon had become so seedy that I was obliged to throw it away at Caudebec, and no words can describe the seediness of my dusty hat; then my shoes, Of my shoes! I was obliged to buy a pair of cloth boots at Paris, (boots like you wear, you know) because those shoes I took with me had made my toes so bad, well they were not good things to walk in, but they were the only things I could wear, and I hope they will hold together till I come home, but I don't think they will, they have been patched twice at the sides, and now the heels are coming off, and to-day I took them to a cobbler's, there were 3 men and
a boy there, I said when I had taken off my boot (in French of course), Can you mend my boot if you please? and made a face, expecting what the answer would be; well they laid their heads together and presently they (or rather one of them) said, Monsieur we cannot mend it—so I went away.

Well, I can't tell you when I shall be at home as I don't quite know whether we shall be obliged to sleep at Jersey or not, if I can find out before leaving Avranches I will write and tell you.

It is, I am happy to say, just dinner time, so good bye.

Give my best love to all—

Your affectionate son

William.