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hood, where it was thought that they were the advance-guard of a travelling-show. One day, the tilt was blown bodily off in a high wind.

In another picture of Red House, the babies are included: my Father is sitting in his great painted chair at the end of the long table, with a babe on each knee, and he is looking very amused and happy, cutting up a large rosy apple. Red House was built, you will remember, in an orchard: this apple, I hope, not to be given to the younger babe, who was certainly not of an apple-eating age.

CHAPTER III. NARRATIVE POETRY

A MID these happy scenes of home-life, the poet begins his remoulding of ancient tales and The Earthly Paradise is fast taking shape. The rapid production, the planning and actual writing of tales that could not be used in the already overflowing volumes, and that were laid aside as the work went on, no doubt gave rise to the humorous Rossetti legend of the mysterious cupboard in Queen Square ‘full from top to bottom with Morris’s poems.’ We see by this how early he learnt the necessity of matter-of-fact labour in the process of moulding and finishing: we see the picture of the craftsman, sitting at his task, soberly intent on producing the best work he knew how to do, unconcerned that long passages should be cut out, new beginnings made and work started over again. Rossetti’s story is symbolic of the richness and swiftness of invention in the young poet: do we not imagine him reveling in the long succession of tales from East and West, eager to make them his own and add them to The Earthly Paradise store: undecided between one or the other that appeals to him with a special interest, which to include, which to leave unwillingly aside? You may remember that in the first list announcing the publication of these volumes, we have six titles of unwritten tales, tantalizing to all lovers.

* ‘Seven hundred lines of Jason in a day,’ said Charley Faulkner.
of Morris: 'The Story of Theseus,' 'The King's Treasure-House,' 'The Dolphins and the Lovers,' 'The Fortunes of Gyges,' 'The Seven Sleepers,' 'The Queen of the North.' Here is matter enough for another Earthly Paradise volume, had he not begun to carry his adventure into other fields.

The existing fragments show the tales in the making, and show how what we call the 'minstrel-mood' was early replaced by one in which the verse flowed with more elegance. The step from youth to manhood has been made, and the young ardours and vaguenesses tend alike to be rejected. Here, inevitably, there is both gain and loss. 'Callow work' are words often in the mouth of the mature artist, harshly critical of his own early production; his inspiration is mellowed by sober judgement and experience; and he is impatient both of technical imperfection and crudeness of thought. His public, looking back, can survey such work with sympathy; we try to see things through that early glamour of the discoverer, divining his surprises, his agitations, his hunt after wonders half-seen, lost, and caught again; and as we follow the broken images and phrases that convey a meaning but imperfectly, the picture of the very man rises before us, with both his 'sureness,' his hesitations, his many-coloured musings: a glimpse of that sacred mystery, the building of a human soul.

He is making his world; the treasures of the past are crowding in on him, the present faces him with its demands and its gifts, the future stretches before him with its grave question: all the weight, the responsibility of life and its choices are revealed to him—what to take, what to leave of the riches offered, how to mould and fashion anew, how best to answer to the high sense of duty towards humanity and the beyond: in 1860 he would call it God, later in life the mystery beyond our visible world had no name. Of this working of an active and receptive mind we can see something in watching his methods, and we recognize that while it is sometimes unconscious, more often than not it is a reasoned process. Part of the richness of Morris's life lay in
this consciousness of the meaning and of the due proportion of all that goes to the up-building of human existence; none of the gifts of the spirit did he take unavailing
And unworthy spend.
No trouble, no anxiety or disappointment could ever extinguish his ‘awareness’ of the beauty of the world, nor of the responsibility that the enjoyment of its gifts involved. To realize fully this understanding, at once glad and grave, of the world’s beauty, we have only to read once more a passage dealing at length with the land and what man makes of it, and in reading one cannot fail to note that the poet is as keen at picturing the details of familiar country life as at inventing the wonders and terrors of fairyland—keener, indeed, writing in all sympathy with human life and effort. Take, for instance, in ‘Bellerophon in Lycia,’ the peasant’s talk about the farmstead before the coming of the chimera—which passage, by the way, Andrew Lang gives at full length in writing on Morris’s poetry in 1882. Such a passage with its enjoyment of the seasons’ changes, of man’s activities on the land, of the beauty of hill and stream and little house, is a standing witness against the much-laboured criticism that Morris was among the poets of vague and dreamy things. There are about forty lines of this speech, beginning

A vineyard hath he there
Whose blossoming in March was full and fair.

There is nothing dim in the picture, no generalizing or mere assertion of beauty; the writer is not content to say ‘It was a fair homestead’; but he builds up the scene for us, bit by bit; he would have us know how the vineyard stretched up the hill, that there was an oakwood on the summit of it, well stocked with game; how the pond at the mill-head was full of fish, and about the hay-meadows and the pigs, and so

*‘The Poety of William Morris,’ by Andrew Lang, Contemporary Review, August 1882.

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forth. So crisply is the medieval homestead put before us, as it might be one of those highly-wrought pictures of Fouquet, that we would not spare a word, and do not wonder that the poet, living in the scene, lingers happily over every fresh touch. But there is a graver note mingling with the song of pure delight in beauty which breathes in every page of The Earthly Paradise. Just as in listening to the music of a stream hurrying seawards you hear beneath its chuckling mirth the mournful beat of distant waves, so in the verse of The Earthly Paradise, singing of the richness and fullness of life, sounds the undertone of melancholy which tells of the unquiet mind standing on the verge of some infinitude, waiting and listening. . . .

But I do not see in this melancholy that all the critics of the poems dwelt on, in writing of the verse of those mid-Victorian days, a mere acceptance of the swift ending of earthly joys. It was surely the outward and visible sign of something deeper and graver at work in his nature. So passionate a believer in the beauties of the world could not hold that world to be empty of spiritual significance, and the very quality of Morris's joy in life shows that it had its origin in deep and constant meditations over its meaning. It was in truth no superficial or self-indulgent feeling, but a grave stirring of the spirit that made him write later of 'men who love life though it be troublous better than death though it be peaceful.' His sense of the continuity of human life, an idea, which in all its majesty and its weight finds full utterance in the later years of anxious work, is present through the writings of earlier days, though but dimly felt and often manifested only by the restlessness and dissatisfaction with the swift passing of beauty that has given rise, as suggested above, to the contemporary criticisms on the philosophy of pleasure in his verse of this period. We, with our knowledge of the man as preacher and writer on problems that had not then begun appreciably to stir English middle-class life, at least can see how the sense of responsibility to the race of man, so insistent in the preaching of
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Morris's later life, was latent here, though rarely expressed, and showing itself principally in the unrest and melancholy that hang like gossamer over the golden land of the Earthly Paradise.

The growth in Morris's style throughout the writing of *The Earthly Paradise* is a matter that cannot fail to hold the attention of those who follow with sympathy the workings of his many-sided genius. I wish therefore in this place to supplement my notes in former Introductions by consideration of a few early drafts not dealt with in them or but briefly referred to.*

The quatrains of the early Prologue, composed two years before the published Prologue, are hurriedly written with a very soft drawing-pencil in one of the old note-books, the first thing at hand, caught up at random for rough sketches and jottings. A list of some of the Cupid and Psyche subjects he wanted illustrated is here too. Then the Argument, in paragraphs, of 'The Wanderers.' Then we break off for some of the pretty scraps of design I have already spoken of, both his own and notes of medieval ornament. Then a note of a British Museum MS. Calendar (2936 Harl.): he could not have enough of these in his head. And now we turn the book upside-down and here are four pages headed 'Books for Calendars,' being a list of calendars from the Museum MSS. carefully arranged and described in columns for comparison, most of them with his comments on their quality. One has 'very good landscapes'; another is 'a

* We may record here further documents of a life that grows daily more crowded with varied work. The book is a medley of different interests; among the memoranda of Firm-work are some for sundry pieces of decoration for Llandaff Cathedral, and here we come across several pages of description of Welsh arms: Cryffydd ap Cynan Prince of North Wales, vert 3 Eagles displayed in fess or; Elyston Gledrudd, Prince between Wye and Severne, gules a lion rampant regardant or, &c., &c. One can understand the special interest taken by the way in the subject, as my Father liked to remember and to remind us that we were of Welsh descent.

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SYRINX & PSYCHE
Engraved on wood by William Morris
from a drawing by E. Burne-Jones
for The Earthly Paradise

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lovely calendar full of Saints'; another 'a good rough book.' Most of the remainder of the book is taken up by the four-lined verses of the Prologue; on the verso of the last of this begins 'Cupid and Psyche.' First and last there are many memoranda of glass-windows in course of execution by the Firm.

We must allow ourselves to consider the capacity for sheer hard work in this master of many crafts. Somebody has recently said truly that poetry could not (or should not) be a whole-time occupation: surely no poet ever had so many other duties and interests, so many calls upon him in the intervals of which he would return to his verse once more seek inspiration. It was not only that his brain was always at work, but his hand was seldom still, in these earlier days. If you had but seen and handled those seven great folio volumes of The Earthly Paradise, fair copy and drafts, you would be particularly impressed by this fact. You would have to remember, also, that some twenty or so other MSS. of the single stories exist in one form or other; that the writer was at this time cutting on wood, designing and busy over the hundred and one matters that the head of a personally-conducted business has to attend to; that he kept no amanuensis and did all the writing of notes and drafts and fair scripts in his own hand.

It is not surprising that these endless activities made him a rather careless man of business—careless in detail and in housekeeping. There is a letter to my Mother in existence from Warington Taylor where—single-hearted friend and servant that he was!—he remonstrates with the head of the Firm for his personal extravagance and his carelessness over Firm matters. 'You will all be in the work-house,' is the refrain of it. No doubt to an extent he was right: prudence and foresight in expenditure were the last thing Morris would be thinking of in those days of his early maturity. But the while these anxious reproofs of his manager were hurtling in the air, the object of them, craftsman and man of busi-
We know that the faculty for speed in his writing allowed Morris to indulge to the full his practice of re-writing, casting aside beginnings that did not work out to his liking. Here is evidence of it in concrete form, in the mass of *Earthly Paradise* MS.—a collection so important, so unique as showing a poet at work at his craft that one can but hope that, unluckily scattered as it now is, it will find its way in time to the British Museum for the benefit of students.*

Morris always had a yearning for illustrations to his poems; he saw the stories in brilliantly-defined pictures, and desired that other people should do so, too. 'There is nobody but Burne-Jones who can do them,' he often said. As we know, all the early quarto drafts have the writer's notes on the verso for the subjects for pictures to be done by Burne-Jones—notes racy and concise in their familiar language. See also two pages in one of the collected scraps in the Fitzwilliam Museum, for his early idea of an illustrated Sigurd.

The following notes on some of the *Earthly Paradise* poems are brief and incomplete, but I give them for what they are, hoping they may be not without their use in future time.

As we know, the scheme was alternately a classical tale and a tale from other sources, which fall into two groups: The first is of those that whatever their origin—in the East, and filtered through the Classic Age and the Middle Age—belong to the world's folk-lore in some form or another. These are:

'The Man born to be King,' 'The Proud King,' 'The Writing on the Image,' 'The Lady of the Land,' 'The Watching of the Falcon,' 'Ogier the Dane,' 'The Land East

* Fairfax Murray possessed the bulk of these manuscripts, and it was his definitely expressed intention to present them to the Museum, as he did his Sigurd MSS.
of the Sun and West of the Moon,’ ‘The Man who never laughed again,’ ‘The Ring given to Venus,’ ‘The Hill of Venus.’

The other group comprises ‘The Lovers of Gudrun,’ ‘The Fostering of Æsleft,’ and the unfinished ‘Swanhild’; and these come directly from the North.

A letter to The Times Literary Supplement (17 July 1919) recalls to me the memory of a delightful book of which both Burne-Jones and my Father were very fond. I wonder how far the Abbé Huc’s remarks influenced him in his choice of a story long familiar in the Gesta Romanorum and William of Malmesbury.*

**To the Editor of ‘The Times’**

Sir,—The references in the review of M. Rodocanachi’s ‘Etudes et Fantaisies Historiques’ in The Literary Supplement of 3rd inst. to the story of the statue at Rome with the inscription Percute Hic, versified by Morris in The Earthly Paradise, set me re-reading ‘The Writing on the Image.’ Immediately afterwards I came on a passage in the Abbé Huc’s Voyage en Tartarie et Thibet (Vol. 1, pp. 115–117 of the edition of 1850), which seems to me a curious illustration of the legend on which the poem is based.

After describing the singular method of burial of Tartar kings, the huge brick-work tombs adorned with stone statues of men and animals and ‘divers subjects of Buddhist mythology,’ in which the dead monarchs were laid, surrounded by piles of gold and jewels and royal robes, the Abbé goes on to say that children of both sexes, remarkable for their beauty, were suffocated by huge doses of mercury, by which means were preserved ‘la fraîcheur et le coloris de leur visage, au point de paraître encore vivants. Ces malheureuses victimes sont placés debout, autour du cadavre de leur maître, continuant en quelque sort de le servir comme pendant sa vie. Elles tienennent dans leur main la pipe,”

* See Collected Works, Vol. iii, xxi.
l'éventail, la petite fiole de tabac à priser, et tous les autres nombreux colfichets des majestés tartares.

'Pour garder ces trésors enfouis, on place dans le caveau une espèce d'arc pouvant décocher une multitude de flèches à la file les unes des autres. Cet arc, ou plutôt ces arcs nombreux unis ensemble, sont tous bandés, et les flèches prêtes à partir. On place cette espèce de machine infernale de manière à ce qu'en ouvrant la porte du caveau, le mouvement fasse décocher la première flèche sur l'homme qui entre. Le décochement de la première flèche fait aussitôt partir la seconde et ainsi de suite jusqu'à la dernière; de sorte que le malheureux, que la cupidité ou lacuriosité porterait à ouvrir cette porte, tomberait percé de mille traits dans le tombeau même qu'il voudrait profaner.'

I cannot ask for space to point out the numerous points of resemblance between this description and that of the marvels seen in the Roman tomb by the ill-fated 'man of Sicily' in 'The Writing on the Image'; but they are so close and striking that it seems highly probable that before writing the poem Morris may have read the 'Voyages en Tartarie et Thibet.'

I am, Sir,

H. C. Irwin.

Most of the tales of early date, those written directly after the first Prologue, resolve themselves into what I have ventured to call the minstrel and fairy-tale period of The Earthly Paradise. It would be inept, however, to attempt any hard and fast grouping, as, for instance, Cupid and Psyche, the first tale started on, is not handled in the simple, rather rough 'minstrel-lay' manner. But the changes in this poem were considerable, and the published version is very different in quality from the first drafts, a great part of which were altered, while a great deal of matter was rewritten, at any rate in the early incidents.

In both 'The Proud King' and 'The Watching of the Falcon' we find examples of Morris's earliest method of work in narrative verse. The two poems also show that
while critics often credit authors with a certain system in the actual workmanship of their verse, the writers themselves may be entirely innocent of any such system. Take, for example, the poems mentioned: in comparing the first draft of 'The Proud King' with the published version you can follow Morris's polishing throughout. The method of revision is simplicity itself; the idea is to retain the original rhymed endings, but to alter not only single words, but whole phrases, whole verses, and there is scarcely a passage in the poem that is not so treated. It is really amusing to go through the poem line by line and follow this method of revision (only unconsciously a 'method'). I give two verses of the draft:

Therewith they turned away into the town
And moaning he went on he knew not where
Until at last he stumbled and fell down
And looking round beheld a brook right fair
Close by his feet with big stones here and there
And on the other side a little wood
Nigh which a poor hut built of wattle stood

And so unto the palace being come
He lighted down thereby and entered
And in the gate the people all & some
Stood reverently about with bended head
And to him came a squire & softly said
The Queen awaits thee, O my lord the king
Within the little hall where people sing.

Then here are the verses as printed:

Therewith they turned away into the town,
And still he wandered on and knew not where,
Till, stumbling at the last, he fell adown,
And looking round beheld a brook right fair,
That ran in pools and shallows here and there,
And on the further side of it a wood,
Nigh which a lowly clay-built hovel stood.
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Withal unto the palace being come,
He lighted down thereby and entered,
And once again it seemed his royal home.
For folk again before him bowed the head;
And to him came a squire, who softly said,
'The Queen awaits thee, O my lord the King,
Within the little hall where minstrels sing.'

As is not to be wondered at, the finished work occasionally loses a touch here and there of freshness—as in the second of the two stanzas given:

And in the gate the people all and some
Stood reverently about with bended head
becoming
And once again, etc.

whereby we lose perhaps the careless simplicity of the wandering singer.

Then we turn to 'The Watching of the Falcon,' another of the earliest tales, and we naturally look for the same system of revision. Not a bit of it; the poet is in a different working-mood: for a larger part of the tale, the easy rhymed couplets which come next to 'The Proud King' in the little note-book, in pencil and ink, stand unaltered in the published version, revision mostly consisting of insertions of fresh matter, while one or two passages are cut out and written anew. So much for 'system.' For the rest, the sentiment of 'The Proud King' remains for the reader as 'early' as in the rough unimproved verse of the draft, and to keep the full flavour of this, the unregenerate mind could almost have wished that Morris had let pass some of his early carelessness in pronunciation and so forth, as, making two syllables of the vowel in 'tire,' 'squire,' 'desire,' &c. This is piously revised; for instance,

While from the windows maid and squire leant
becomes

While from the windows maid and varlet leant
This is one of many such corrections.
The first description of the falcon is so good and racy in its first form that it should not be lost:

Till by the dais he did see
A faulcon hooded daintily
That on a perch of silver white
Was set, with fesses of red silk
Nearby a scroll as white as milk
He saw whereon was written this—

So with the first two or three lines of the appearance of the lady:

Clothed was she in royal pall
And round her waist a belt did meet
Of emerald, and from her feet
She held the raiment daintily—

But it is due to an author that when he acts as his own faithful critic one should stress the fact: for the craftsmanship, the revisions and additions in this tale show Morris's watchfulness over his work. The love-making, altered, becomes more remote and mysterious and in due keeping with the spirit of the story; the last episode of an invasion by the Soudan and the King's defeat is all cut out. This is in the poet's early manner and coloured by his familiarity with fifteenth-century chronicles: a fight on a bridge, and so forth. It has a certain youthful simplicity, but it is on a smaller scale, and the craftsmanship is below the mark, so it had to go, and be replaced by the dexterous account of the King's ill-hap and gradual downfall. For the sake of St Michael's Bridge by the Green River it may well be preserved by insertion here. I have left the verses as they were written, all innocent of stops.

Then toward his chamber forth he went
But on the way a squire bent
Before him saying lief sir & dear
The Soudan's herald is come here
And needs must speak to you forthright
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So forth there came a heathen knight
Armed in the fashion of his land
And by him went on the right hand
The herald, wherefore said the King
What song hast thou got now to sing
Say all your tale and have no fear
Then said the herald O King hear
The message of my King and Lord
Which is indeed but a small word
Come to [his] footstool & set down
Thereon thy sceptre and thy crown
And do him homage for thy land
Kneeling full humbly on thy knees
And pay what tribute he may please
And then shalt thou do well enow
And if thou wilt not do this know
Thy people and thy lords & thee
Enough of wretchedness shall see
Where shall I see thy master then
The King said, that [with] my good men
I may full honour to him do
Nor let him have with him a few
Upon that day, because the words
Our clerks will use will be but swords
And for our florins will we pay
Spearheads & arrows that . . .
And so God judge between us [two]
But in his heart, The thing doth go
E'en as she said, he thought but yet
Not now will I my fame forget
Then knelt the Herald on his knee
Nought else my master hoped would be
He said, and therefore has gone forth
With many a man and to the North
Of the green river waiteth thee.
There too in four days will I be

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The King said, and now make good cheer
Then go, and for thy tidings dear
Have now of me this golden chain
That thou mayst wish to come again.
Therewith the herald went away
And all about upon that day
The messengers went hurrying
To draw the people to the King
So in short time much folk he had
Who gathered with light hearts & glad
About that mighty King’s banner
So went they to the Green river
And there St. Michael’s bridge they found
Well guarded by their folk, and sound
Nor had assault thereon been made
So there the King his army stayed
And to the Soudan sent therefrom
To say that thither was he come
And there upon the southern side
For ten days would he still abide
So there unless his words were wind
Alone the Soudan would him find
So when the messenger was gone
Ramparts they raised of earth & stone
Dug ditches and by every way
Made it a worthy place to slay
A mighty army, so three days
Such walls about them did they raise
The fourth the herald came again
And said the Soudan was full fain
To see him & in 3 hours space
From thence would be before the place
So all was set in good array
And about noontide of that day
His light-armed horsemen did they see
And there were driven easily

Narrative
Poetry: The
Earthly
Paradise
From off the bridge
Full many a [ ]
[And] shouts & shrill yells they did hear
And cymbals as their King drew near
Throned in a golden chariot then
Came on the mightiest of their men
But when midmost the bridge they came
He who therefrom could crawl off lame
Was called a happy man that day
So well the cloth-yard shafts did play
Then at a run they came again
Then shouting on they came again
But in the same place were they slain
Or wounded sore, and though some few
The Bridge-head reached nought could they do
Against the bristling hedge of spears
And there they ended all their years.
Then high the doomed King's heart arose
To see such slaughter of his foes
And that foreboding in the vale
Seemed but the echo of some tale
And loud he called Fellows see now
Which way the wind of war doth blow
With no stroke stricken are they slain
And so may all fare who are fain
Of this my crown and yet perfay
Gladly would I go join the play
Our sturdy folk have played with bows
And shortly come to handy blows
Then out there spake a wise old knight
And said the King can do but right.
Yet will I say a word thereon
Yea a good journey have we won
If we be wise & yet perfay
Unless on this side still we stay
Ye have not seen the end of this
And life and crown ye well may miss.
Nay nay the King said follow me
And a good ending shall ye see
Unto this fight and in my crown
The jewels of the Soudan brown
Then forth a mighty shout they sent
And so across the bridge they went
To meet their foes yet many had
Sore doubts yea and the foe was glad
To see them leave their vantage ground
Though thick they gathered all around.
What more of this fight can I say.
Before the ending of the day
Adown the river the King rode
Full fast in flight with whom abode
A small and wretched company
But he escaped as for that day
And on that evil night he lay
Within the cottage of a hind.
And in the morning did he find
A good sort of his beaten men
About him, and set forward then
And in the mountains he abode
For long, yet oftentimes they rode
To meet the foe yet little won.
And meanwhile many a husbandman
And merchant dwelling in the plain
Was harried of his goods and slain
And many a maid was brought to shame.

One of the loveliest of the folk-lore group on which I have already made notes is derived from the swan-maiden legend of the North and of the East, which has since descended into pure fairy-tale: i.e. 'The Land East of the Sun and West of the Moon.' It is worth while to pause a moment over the familiar story to consider how Morris dealt with his material here and elsewhere. We see how he has substituted for the early simplicities of thought the modern
complication of love interwoven with doubt and perplexity; for the Three Gifts and the Helpers of nursery legend who make all things smooth for the wandering Prince or hind, he gives us the long-drawn sufferings of the lover, journeying unhelped through an empty world in search of the land East of the Sun, West of the Moon
A land that no man findeth soon.

The crudeness of the wooing is turned into a delicate scene in which love grows between John and the swan-maiden and the ‘situation’ becomes humanly probable; instead of details of adventure with giants and witches we have the long days of waiting and heart-searching self-reproach and bitterness. The craftsman’s skill has swept away the childish and material details with which simple minds had dressed the legend, and has brought it into the realm of poetry—into that region whence may be had a glimpse of the far-off pictures of early life in the Lay of Weland. And nothing could be less like nursery legend than the beautiful passage in which the mother of John recognizes him as he sits alone by the hearth of his old home and sings to himself the Nowell song that comes back to him out of his younger days.

It is interesting to note that the dream-motive was used by Morris in this early work, as it was used in the late prose-romances—in John Ball and in News from Nowhere. The introduction of Gregory the Star-gazer skilfully draws us into the dream-reality, and all through, as the tale breaks off for his reappearance, heightens the feeling of expectancy and mystery.

The story was a good deal worked on, many passages of the draft being unused and many rewritten. The conclusion as first written, with the Lady’s appearance and farewell, is retained, also the story-teller’s exordium. Though once again I confess to a regret for the last two careless lines of the people’s minstrel:

With foolish hate and vain longing
That many a woe to them will bring.

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To pursue my tentative grouping of the tales not altogether chronologically but by subject and style, and, let us add, by the mood of the poet, we may touch next on the classical poems. Here we have the romance of Greece and Rome, not galvanized to a fictitious life with a measured correctness of all detail, but told again for the modern reader in an atmosphere of the poet's own evoking—an atmosphere in which pictures of life all pass before us warm and richly coloured and not without some of the pleasant anachronisms that have endeared to us Flemish tapestry with their medieval representation of classical subjects. It is something of the same spirit which shows in the tapestries Achilles by his tent of cloth of gold and Penthesilea in armour and gleaming velvet, and Troy-town in the background a Gothic city with deep gabled roofs. And, as in this late medieval handling, the old legends re-told have gained a fresh grace of life, with no violence done to the gravity and dignity of ancient lore. Here and there the drafts show that in revision Morris has cut out a phrase that seemed to him too emphatically to lift the picture out of the far-off atmosphere to that of more recent days of romance—somewhat to our regret: though one must allow the artist to know his own business.

The first draft of 'The Story of Rhodope' may stand as an example of Morris's work on some of the classical poems. Like most of the *Earthly Paradise* manuscripts, it is closely written from top to bottom of the blue foolscap, with scarcely any margin. There are no spaces between the verses, but a line drawn right across the page to indicate them. There are few corrections, but through the most part of the manuscript, the bare spaces of the page are filled with bits of decoration: leaves, flowered boughs, ornamental letters—the sure sign of meditation and searching of his invention. The printed poem follows the draft with only a few verbal changes here and there, until the coming of the King's men and the quest for the fellow of the jewelled shoe. Then most of the draft is cast aside and the end of the tale written afresh, partly in pencil, partly in ink, with a
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few verses from the first draft utilized towards the conclusion. In order that we may compare this draft with the finished work, I am including the stanzas giving the passage that was altered. It is different in plan and handling, the story being seen through the eyes of the maiden herself. In it there is more than a trace of the earlier simplicity of diction, and the pictures presented are of homely every-day life. It is, once more, the 'fairy-story' handling with its many charms and imperfections. This portion of the tale as finally revised shows a more fastidious taste, and, in the higher key in which the closing incidents are pitched, the handling is surer and more telling. Yet here, as ever in the choice and rejection of the poet's final revision, we miss a little in what we gain. Though I know that the dramatic situation where Rhodope stands beside the altar with the shoe laid thereon is right and led up to in a workmanlike manner, with emphasis laid in the right place and details swiftly disposed of, though I appreciate this work, I still somewhat regret the poet's earlier touches, familiar as they are—the tent pitched on the down and the banner stuck in the earth beside it, the homely talk, and the old lord at last producing his casket and the shoe. Yet we must admit that in the account of the Eagle bringing the shoe to the King, the published version is all gain. The two versions are so dissimilar that they may have special mention here, as they would be enough in themselves to show how the craftsman kept a watchful eye on his work and how it grew under his hand. Read the two verses describing the coming of the Eagle, the one in the draft (quoted in the following passage) and the other as published, and you will appreciate the quality of Morris's revisions.

The printed verse gives:

But e'en as to its highest shot the flame
And to the awful Gods our hearts did turn,
A cry from out the far blue sky there came
And a bright thing 'twixt flame & sun did burn,
And some there were who said they could discern
An eagle like a faint speck, far above
The altar whereon lay this gift of love.

In the draft we have our childhood's friend, the fairy
eagle, doing his duty stolidly and flying away content that
he has delivered his message 'truly and well.' It is all right
and in keeping with the simple atmosphere of the rest of
the draft. But in the rewritten verse we feel what experience
the poet has gained and how finely he handles his words.
We know that he has seen 'what really happened'; a few
lines have brought us straight into the scene and we live in
the breathless wonder of it; the flame of the altar shooting
up in the hot sun seems as real as though we ourselves were
'the man on the spot' who is not quite sure if he saw the
wonder or not, but for whom the terrible Gods have cer-
tainly spoken out of the blue.

This is the discarded draft referred to above:

But now before the June was gotten old
When to the time had come the year again
When those things happed whereof the tale first told
Was Rhodope upon a spot of ground
That the brown sea-sand on one side did bound
Shepherd ing sheep and sat within the shade
That a small clump of wind-worn beeches made.

Morn was it when she sat her down therein
And turning round beheld across the sea
Betwixt the lower beech boughs scant and thin
A speck that seemed some distant argosy;
But little did she note what it might be
But ere the sun was high walked here and there
About the down the long-foot lark to hear.

But when the sun right high began to flame
And drank up all the coolness that [might hide]
Within the little hollows back she came
Unto the beech ring and thought there to bide
Till noon was past, so lying on her side
Turned landward now she played in aimless wise
With the blue speedwell underneath her eyes.

Amid strange thoughts she was, but as she lay
Thinking of this & that, all suddenly
Did she bethink her of that last years day
When that strange hap befell, and therewith she
Sprang up and turned about unto the sea
And in the bosom of her gown of grey
Felt for the shoe she yet knew was away.

But far away across the sea she saw
The bright sunshine upon a swelling sail
That certes nigher to the land gan draw.
She stood thereon till gan her eyes to fail
Thinking the while I know not of what tale,
And then at last she turned away her face
And toward the homestead went at a slow pace,

Nor looked to right or left but ever gazed
Upon the ground and quicker gan to go
Then lightly with her hand her gown skirts raised
And ran as one who hath a thing to do
Needs must be done and little space thereto,
And so in short space reached the homestead door
Nor made delay but oer the cool dark floor

Went swiftly till her sleeping place she gained,
And there she knelt before a little chest
And raised its lid with bright vermilion stained
And drew from out its hidden place of rest
The pirates gift, and set it in her breast
And then went back as swiftly as she came
Nor answered though a hind called out her name.
None else she saw and through her woolly sheep
   Panting she past and cast her eyes adown
As slowly now her feet toiled up the steep
The ring of beech-trees with its shade did crown,
But when at last her quivering limbs were thrown
Down in the grey shade, panting she turned at last
And o'er the grey sea a quick glance she cast.

There she beheld the ship now drawn so nigh
She saw upon the sail a sun of gold
And glittering points about the mast head high
And flashing oars and soon she might behold
A long red banner its light length unfold
And run adown the wind, and that thereon
A silver moon was wrought a golden sun.

And now at last when it was fully noon
And she at last the shipman's shout might hear
She saw the great sails flap and therewith soon
Could note the cable through the hawse hole tear
As down the anchor ran, and with some gear
The shipmen busy, then with sail and oar
A barge the big ship left and made for shore.

Straight toward the down's top did they make; she stood
And watched them, till the headland hid them quite
And many a thought was stirring in her blood
And now she flushed and now she turned all white
And at the last with something like a fright
She started when she saw their company
At the down's foot come upwards from the sea.

Never she deemed had she yet seen so much
Of gold or bright things as the sun showed then;
First went she thought a band of armed men such
As she had not seen yet, then gold clad men
White bearded as she deemed, and then again
Folk clad in steel, and one of them did bear
A banner with the same device wrought clear.
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That still from the great ship’s mast floated out
Then came a band of men that burdens bore
[She] knew not what; and now as if in doubt
They stayed and looked and up and down the shore
She gazed, and as they searched the grey down oer
Set eyes on her belike, and thereon one
Toward where she stood came glittering in the sun.

Small fear she had of who these folk might be
For little war that simple people knew
And these were few, and she withal could see
How now her own folk from the village drew;
And so the messenger she went unto
With steady face yet in her heart she thought
That some strange thing those men had thither brought.

So when they met in the Greek tongue he said
Damsel come thou unto our company
And see our lords and be thou not afraid
For kindly are they e’en as they are high
And they would know what town they come anigh
And on a certain message are they sent
Here as elsewhere to tell the King’s intent.

She smiled and said to him Not overmuch
We know these names ye tell of King or lord
Nor may my heart have fear of any such
Yea, I will go, and with that latest word
Lightly she stepped on by his rattling sword
And as she turned upon that folk to gaze
She saw them speedily a rich tent raise

Upon the sunburnt down; but when she came
Before the lords, who waited there till all
Was done therat and told about the name
Their country had, so grand she was and tall
With such a grace the words from her did fall
That the one elder to the other said
Beholdest thou, is this an earthly maid?

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And as they stood there talking, one by one
Came up the landsmen, this man driving there
An ass who bore ripe fruits all warm with sun,
While that a wineskin on his back did bear
And this a jar of milk; well knit they were
And some were gay attired yet did she seem
To be amidst them as from some strange dream.

Now was the fair tent pitched and there beside
The banner staff stuck in the earth thereby;
Nor longer in the sun would there abide
But sat inside and round them curiously
Clustered the folk and she thrust up anigh
The elders twain, by the rough anxious press
Shone all the more amidst her loveliness.

There stood [she] troubled not nor shrinking aught
One hand upon her bosom and the shoe
The other in her kirtle's grey folds caught
She waited what they yet might chance to do.
Then spoke an elder, Be it known to you
Good people that in no haphazard wise
We come here, neither have we merchandize

That we should chaffer with you. The great King
Has sent us forth to many lands and great
To see if any of a certain thing
Can give true tidings, and some turn of fate
In this your simple land may us await;
So here we come at last: how say ye then?
Here will [we] bide among you countrymen

While [it] is shewn to all the dwellers here
Either set forth within your market-place
Or in some temple that ye hold so dear
That all folk go thereto—to get them grace
Of the great gods. A smile was on his face
Of mockery as he laid his hand upon
A casket wrought oer with a golden sun.
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He raised the lid and now must Rhodope
Turn pale at last, for in his wrinkled hand
The fellow of the fair thing did she see
That lay upon the wonder of the land
Her fragrant breast, but half unwittingly
She drew her hand forth, and een like a dream
To those seafarers all things grew to seem.

Silence there was a while then did outbreak
A great cry from them, and all eyes grew bright
And faces joyous for her beauty's sake
But as a man who needs must do aright
The elder said Fair maid a wondrous sight
Thou showest us: how camest thou by this
Thine hand holds, how the other didst thou miss?

Somewhat askance she looked to see if there
Her father was, and saw him not and then
Told the whole tale as it happed to her.
Then spake the second of those goldclad men:
Good hap and to the great gods many a ten
Of perfect beasts here let us sacrifice
That they have dealt with us in such an wise.

And worthy art thou all good things to gain!
Now nigh a year it is since our great King
Did sacrifice upon the sacred plain,
But as the priests stood round the holy thing
There came a great erne circling with wide wing
Above our heads, who at the last made stay
Above the altar where the victim lay.

Strange all men deemed that omen and kept peace
And yet awhile the eagle hovered there
And in a while our wonder did increase:
For with a cry he dropped this sandal fair
Then turned and flew off northward through the air
Een as a messenger his message done
Truly and well; then wondered every one.

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Then spake the King who young is and unwed
Unto the priests apart, and that day he
Gave out that none but her should share his bed
Whose feet had pressed that sandal daintily.
And forth we went thereon through many a sea
And heard no news thereof till this same day
Nor seen in all the lands so fair a May.

All hail to [thee] then! when we saw thee first
In this rough raiment sure to all men here
Thou seemed'st more to be a Goddess cursed
By some hard fate, then one who death may fear:
Yea such thou may'st be yet, unmoved and clear
Thy face is midst the tidings that we tell
As though thou held'st the Keys of Heaven and hell.

What wilt thou then command us that we stay
And with thy country-people hold high feast
For certain days or go on this same day?
For all are thine thou seest here most or least
Before the burning of the sun hath ceased
And certes thou art worthier of this
Than any maiden that on earth there is.

A proud light lit her face as now she said,
Strange things to me O great lords do ye say
Who in this land am but a labouring maid.
Yet if ye mock me not I will not stay
Long in this land but rather go today
For kind this people is and true of heart
Rather with you is meted out my part

Yet are there two things here I may not leave,
My father and my mother: bide ye here
And they from me these tidings shall receive
For sight of you perchance might give them fear
Moreover if your ship holds aught of dear
Or things far fetched, give gifts unto your might
Unto the folk that something of delight
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May hang round my departing. Then she turned
And her own folk now hasted to give place
For in her eyes so great a glory burned
And in her limbs was set now such a grace
That fear fell on them: then she set her face
Unto the homestead and here found her sire
Driving the red milch kine unto the byre.

The remaining stanzas are not materially altered in the published version. By the specimens given it may be seen that in the first scheme Rhodope has remained the princess of fairy-tale to the last, but the personage as she is presented to us is a being of more complicated emotions, weighed down by the loneliness of life even in her changed fortunes—or rather perhaps because of her changed fortunes seeing that loneliness more clearly. And the sense of Fate that colours the whole tale, as can be seen in the alterations and additions throughout, is consistently maintained and intensified at the close.

It is to be noted that all through this first manuscript the stress of the verse falls on the maiden’s name thus: Rhodope. Morris has changed this to Rhodope,* altering the line to fit; in one place alone he has overlooked the alteration. I may note that the change of the stress was made throughout after writing the altered passage dealt with above.

In some of these drafts, as elsewhere, where my Father had trouble over a difficult passage, he has made an effort to save a favourite phrase or a whole piece of the verse, bringing it along in a reformed draft, and perhaps only cutting all out at the last, in that disciplined spirit of self-criticism for which I think the reading public do not give him enough credit.

It is thus that all through this manuscript of ‘The Story of Rhodope’ and in other drafts of the Earthly Paradise tales in the more matured manner, we see the poet forming his

* Rhodope is the courtesan of history.
style. The young diction changes, he is careful that nothing that might strike readers as affectation, even in this romantic atmosphere, should remain. A phrase like

The goods she had been cheapening at her back

is altered to

The wares she had just dealt for at her back

And again

By these glittering tamers of the sea

becomes

And by these glittering folk from oversea;

though I rather wish he could have left the 'tamers of the sea.' The 'erne' of the draft is generally made the latter-day 'eagle,' and so forth. At that time Mr Henley's remark about 'Wardour Street English'* had not appeared, but we can see that what was of value in it had already occurred to the poet himself. As has been remarked before, a certain nervousness over youthful experiments is one of the preoccupations of mature artists—one that has doubtless lost us many a strange and interesting glimpse into the workings of poet and painter's mind.

The moods in which such a mass of narrative poems is worked out must of necessity be varied; the pace quicker or slower, the invention surer or less sure—indeed if mood and pace were even throughout we should not thank our poet for it! Here, for example, in two of the shorter stories, in the above-noted Rhodope and in the earlier 'Ring given to Venus,' the difference is marked, and interest in the forming and moulding of *The Earthly Paradise* impels me to give one or two extracts from a manuscript to illustrate this. While in Rhodope the story goes straight on till the last part of it, as quoted above, the lines only touched in a few verbal corrections and mending of sound, 'The Ring

* Professor Saintsbury's answer to this has already been quoted, p. 387.
given to Venus' keeps the substance nearly all through but
the verse is much worked upon and smoothed. Thus the
feast in the opening of the tale is developed from this draft:

What need to tell the joyances
Of that fair feast, from what far seas
Strange things had come to make them glad
What cunning pageants there they had—
Old tales enacted gloriously
By all the fairest men could see
Of youths and damsels on that tide
Within whose ancient words did hide
Meet meaning for that lovesome day
What singing of a new made lay
By some sweet living image clad
In such guise as the ancients had
Who made the marble Goddess' feet
And half bared shoulder seem more sweet
Mocked by that shame-fast lingering grace,
And flushing of the timid face,
That for the unmoved eyes must stand—
Why make long words of that sweet band
That brought the rose garland, how tell
What music on the feasters fell
So sweet and solemn that from mirth
Oerstrained must gentle tears have birth?
Nay let all pass and think indeed
That every joyance was their meed
Wherewith men cheat themselves to think
That they of endless joy may drink,
That every sense in turn must bear
Of overburdening mirth its share,
Till for a little while the best
That they might have seemed perfect rest
And their flushed cheeks of air were fain—
Withal the garden did they gain—
And wandered there by twos and threes
Amidst the flowers or neath great trees
Lay keeping troublous thought at bay.

The incident of the voice from the clouds and the mysterious love-passage with the Goddess; the despairing search for the ring and its final recovery, giving point to the story with its phantasms and tests of the weakness of humanity: all this has been developed, where in the draft we have the simple incident of a great bird dropping the ring at Lawrence's feet:

At last when grey dawn striped the sky
He saw a bird with wide black wings
Wheel ever round in closer rings
Until above his head he stopped
And from his beak a something dropped
That to his feet fell glistening
That Lawrence knew his full-loved ring. . .

Professor Saintsbury says that 'the long passage describing the procession of the dead gods and Lawrence's journey to the site thereof is one of the finest things of the kind in English poetry and that its fineness is very largely due to masterly arrangement—the check and loosening and swing and sway—of the metre. There are twenty pages of it without a break or a falter of craftsmanship, without a weakening or a slackening of spell. And though it may be a mere fancy, I like to think that, in the opening sketch of the minster-close where Palumbus lives, there is a hand pointing to Keats, and, in some touches of the ghostly waiting on the sea-links, a salute of acknowledgment to ancient Gower.'*

On going through the manuscript of the two portions of the long Bellerophon story for the purposes of these notes, I once more feel regret that the iron rules of the printer's reader should have deprived us of the amusing little Morris touches that meet us at every turn in the many folio volumes of *Earthly Paradise* manuscripts (some thirteen of them).

* Saintsbury, op. cit.
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We miss his unequal spelling, not to speak of the actual misspelling which is not rare; his ideas on the use of capitals, his punctuation, sometimes, as we know, merely careless, but often important as being obviously rhetorical; all these little personal touches in his writing vanish before the well-trained printer's passion for 'uniformity.' Morris could not be bothered with meticulous proof-correcting, but it is certainly a pity about some of the stops; also a pity that the arbitrary change from 'the Gods' to 'the gods' all through, which he certainly did not intend, had not been withstood.

There are signs of elaborate care about the work on the Bellerophon manuscripts, and in them we have many glimpses into Morris's way of writing in this group of the classical tales, influenced as it must be by the prevailing frame of mind. The story of the hero's adventures was, we may remember, at first given all under one title, and as a single tale this grew to be too long. The poet got so interested in his fighting hero, however, that, rather than spoil the story by curtailing the incidents, he chose to break it up into two parts. He cut out a good deal, but added more, and took great pains with the work. The little marginal drawings and scraps of 'fine' writing, by the by, abound here. At times his pen ran away with him in some picturesque detail, but always in the revision these little pictures were sacrificed to the main interest of the situation. Thus in the passage where Bellerophon is taken to the Queen's rooms, he wrote:

Now mingled with the loom's sharp clicking noise
And the dull tearing of the carded fleece
Fair was it; if they laboured yet in peace
Their days went by, nor had they other care
But the long thread to draw out round and fair
To draw the crimson yarn from out the blue
To [throw] the shuttle through the white race true
Within that scented hall where sat a Queen
Forgetting all the days that once had been—

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Here he lingers over the charm of the actual loom-work and the picture called up of the busy hall, and yet in revision must cut this and balance it by other touches in setting the scene. So far this is moulding and 'tidying' the stanzas; then we see, as the handling matures, instead of stating something in his description, he may sometimes suggest it, as

The Lydian flutes come nigher and more nigh takes the place of the first
To hear the flutes come nigher and more nigh With Lydian measure...

This polishing and finishing usually comes easily and deftly: when rhymes of two couplets clash, or echo awkwardly, or when the sound of words clashes internally, it is amusing to see how the draftsman neatly fits in a phrase or changes a word or two without rearranging the flow of the verse. For example these lines:

therefore she rose at last
When all was utter stillness, and she past
Unto the window. Such a night it was
That a thin wind swept o'er the garden grass

The 'a' sounds clash and will not do; so he changes to
therefore at last she rose
When all was utter stillness, and stood close
Unto the window. Such a night it was...

An example among hundreds. In this poem as in others we have referred to, we may see a phrase refined and smoothed in revision, usually with sure touch; and yet sometimes when the old roughness has lingered and has left its trace in these later tales, one is doubtful whether to regret or approve the change. Here we have in the published tale:

Yet e'er the night beyond its midst was worn
Another tale unto their ears was borne
That cast into their hearts the ancient fear...
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In the draft this was more homely:

Yet e'er the middle of the night was past
There came a tale unto their ears at last
That made them tremble once more with old fear...;

and I am weak enough somewhat to regret 'the golden Artemis' of the manuscript which is replaced by 'The Goddess wrought in gold.' Is there not 'a golden Artemis' in the verse of a fellow-poet?

You will see in these Bellerophon drafts places where Morris breaks off at times in the very midst of a passage. And here holders of traditional views about poetic inspiration (are there any such unsophisticated persons left?) must modify the imagined picture of their poet in his frenzy of inspiration letting nothing earthly enter into the sacred place at such a moment. For here we have Morris breaking off in the sheer middle of the impassioned Sthenoboea's apostrophe to Love, and drawing the usual line that marks his 'tale of work' at one sitting. Unlike other great poets of his time who might sit in their study and think and write all day long if they so chose, even when he was not obliged to give whole daylight hours to designing patterns, he was liable to be called away to attend to firm-business at many moments of the day—especially when living 'over the shop.' Yet he is unconcerned about it, conscious of being able to take up the thread again without effort or loss of time.

In 'Bellerophon in Lycia' we may note that the memorable passage about the Chimaera is scarcely revised at all, and little added to. My Father seems to have had it all very clearly in his mind before putting pen to paper. Andrew Lang in his interesting article on the Poetry of William Morris, speaks very highly of his handling of the Chimaera story, and I may allow myself to repeat here this passage by the brilliant student and critic:

'The same poem, "Bellerophon in Lycia,," contains what

* See p. 398.
I venture to think Mr Morris’s most remarkable and even astonishing feat of imagination. We all know what the Chimaera was, according to the mythologists. Its image, conceived by Greek artists, is familiar enough—a lion with a goat’s head rising absurdly out of the back, and a serpent tail. The problem was to make this grotesque creature as horrible in the fancy of the reader as it doubtless appeared to the country folk rescued by Bellerophon. This problem Mr Morris has solved, in various passages in this remarkable poem; the most impressive we quote; it is the report of a peasant, the sole survivor of a happy host of vintagers destroyed by the Chimaera.’

After a full quotation of the passage where the merriement of the vintagers leads up to the devastating horror, I am pleased to find that, in talking of Morris’s leisureed and detailed method of story-telling, and contrasting it with the more modern method of handling myths by turning them into parables, Lang remarks:

‘In modern poetry, too, the temptation to “find a moral everywhere,” as the Duchess does in *Alice in Wonderland*, is certainly great. Mr William Morris never makes his legendary figures point a moral, though everyone who chooses may deduce, from tales like “Bellerophon” and “The Man born to be King,” the value of courage, probity and good humour.’

Turning a favourite story into a moral lesson was not to my Father’s taste. I think you would have to feel very far removed from the personages of your story if you were dealing with them in this lofty fashion; and as we know, Morris on the contrary got very near his imagined people and saw each one of them ‘in his habit as he lived’; and indeed would have found it very dull to do otherwise. But people would insist on looking for some meaning below the surface in his works. It was quite an ordinary occurrence that when he published a new volume, some serious-minded friend (people used to go about in those days with a Wordsworth in their pocket) would ask in the course of a Sunday
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afternoon gathering ‘what his poem meant.’ ‘I told him I meant what I said when writing,’ he would tell his home-circle afterwards: ‘and you know, my dear, Wordsworth’s primrose by the river’s brim is quite good enough for me in itself; what on earth more did the man want it to be?’

He was only once goaded into making a public statement on the subject. A reviewer sought to extract an allegory from one of his late romances, and the letter he drew from Morris is printed in the Introduction to Volume xvii (p. 39).

The treatment of the Northern matter in The Earthly Paradise, as in ‘The Fosterling of Aslaug’ and the unfinished ‘Wooing of Swanbild’ and in ‘The Lovers of Gudrun,’ is curiously varied from tale to tale. In ‘Aslaug’ we are in a sense back in fairyland, with the minstrel-measure, the poem in its tenderness and delicacy far removed from the reticence and stoicism of the Northern spirit. A glance at the drafts of Aslaug show that it was worked out in a swifter way than, for example, ‘The Ring given to Venus,’ in the same metre, the verse running on with few additions and hardly any verbal corrections.

The unfinished Swanbild poem is in the writer’s full-blown ‘classic’ manner. It is possible he felt as it progressed that in its suave stanzas and richly invented pictures he was bringing the dim wild story too far down to modern days, and that in such an atmosphere the savage ending could not be successfully carried through. For whatever reason the tale was put aside, one cannot but regret it was not brought to its conclusion, however unsatisfactory the experiment might have proved to the author. But of these tales of the North, ‘Gudrun’ stands alone. It is characteristic of Morris’s dealing with the Laxdale Saga that for all his passion for the Northern matter and for all his power of identifying himself with the thing he loved, he feels bound as a craftsman to present the story to us in a sympathetic form, making the inhuman human and softening the character of Gud-
run so that she may not be quite remote from human experience at the end of the tragedy. The Gudrun that greeted Bodli on his return from the ambush on Kiartan with those often-quoted harsh words of hers: 'Mickle prowess hath been done; I have spun yarn for twelve ells and thou haft slain Kiartan'; the Gudrun who talked and smiled with the brethren who had been slaying her husband while she washed linen in the beck above the hut, this Gudrun is transformed into a figure less remote, less stoic in the expression of grief; the interpretation of her is a queen-like being, human and lonely amid the tangle of her tragic passion.

Morris has woven his story out of the life of the Laxdalers, and it is worth while, for the interest of the thing, to read the Saga side by side with the *Earthly Paradise* poem, noting what the modern poet takes and what he leaves. Indeed, he takes most of the incidents and most of the detail of one-third of the chronicle, that is, of the tragedy built up of the love and hate between the houses of Herdholt and Bathstead. But here is no copying of the abrupt and reticent style of the old writer. Morris has used the material, and the resultant poem fits in to the scheme of *The Earthly Paradise* without clashing with its harmonies. It is full of the subtleties of modern love—passion, hatred, jealousy, doubt of the reality of life itself. In no wise can one imagine the medieval Icelander making Gudrun, in her longing for Kiartan's return, say:

*Will he think me strange*  
*When he beholds this face of mine at last,*  
*Or shall our love make nought of all days past,*  
*Burn up the sights that we apart have seen,*  
*And make them all as though they had not been?*

And Kiartan himself, when he is told of the marriage of Gudrun to Bodli: while the Saga says 'he was nought moved thereat' and things go on as before for the moment, Morris tells us what is moving beneath the surface—the lover's
agony and ‘the world clean changed for me,’ until, we are
told, he braces himself to face things in manly fashion.

And whereas, in building up the incidents to the mo-
ment of high tragedy when the three lovers must meet,
Morris paints picture after picture—the red-kirtled man in
glittering armour on the beach; the great folk at the high
table in the hall hearing the news of his arrival; Gudrun
coming in the night to her husband Bodli with her curses:
in the Saga this speeding up of the story is given in all terse-
ness: ‘Bodli went to Kiartan and kissed him. Kiartan took
his greeting. Thereafter were they led in. Bodli was there-
with most joyous. Olaf took it wholly well, but Kiartan
somewhat amiss,’ &c.

All the same the drama of the North is there: the inci-
dents that unfold the story, all the antics of human perver-
sity that the actors on the scene bow beneath, as though
they were the work of Fate herself: Morris has given us
these in due order. The Four Dreams, the Sorrowing of
Guest, who foresees the future; the Icelanders at King
Olaf’s court; the philandering of Kiartan; Bodli’s treachery
by implication; the return of Kiartan and the rest; the grow-
ing enmity between the two great houses; the stealing of
the King’s sword and the revenge; the ambush and Kiartan
going to his bane with the cheerful courage of the man who
will see the play played out: all these links of the chain
are there, and it is by reading together with this part of
Laxdaela the modern rendering of it that one realizes the
greatness of the Saga, with its masterly unfolding of the
tragedy as one significant event follows on another.

And all through, the poet as aforesaid has given the his-
tory to us of the modern world in his own way—in truth a
poetic version of Laxdaela would be little more than the dry
bones had he done otherwise—and the scoldings of Gudrun
are softened, and the grief of the lovers is expressed rather
than implied; while at the climax, it is all Morris, in Bodli’s
lament over the slain and his hope of meeting
in that fair heaven
The new faith tells of.

Morris finishes with the killing, but there is one-third more of the Saga, wherein is told of the subsequent life in Laxdale.

Those matters that relate directly to his story he gathers up shortly: the death of Bodli; Gudrun’s revenge after twelve years and her last marriage. The often-quoted words in old age to her son that conclude the poem are straight from the Saga.

Morris’s MSS. of Gudrun have been described in Volume V of the Collected Works, but these additional notes seem to be needed to complete the account of Morris’s dealing with this part of the long Saga.

The metre of Gudrun is not important in itself—just the simple narrative couplet of many of the Earthly Paradise tales. I was searching for the right word about this, and found it in Clutton Brock’s study of William Morris, where he says: ‘[It] is a metre which only poetic matter can lift above prose.’

Two of the Earthly Paradise tales seem to me to stand somewhat apart from the rest; they are remarkable as an expression of a different phase of the poet’s frame of mind. These are ‘The Man who never laughed again’ and ‘The Hill of Venus.’ In the case of both these poems a great deal of unused material exists which throws light on the thought and searchings and labour that went to the moulding of them, especially in ‘The Hill of Venus.’ They are, as we know, both stories of wild, barren passion and are built up in an atmosphere of such an unquenchable melancholy that if my father had written little else of note, and if they stood for an expression of himself (as a poet’s work, however consciously fanciful, must do in some degree) you would say, Here is an inward-looking being with scarcely a hope in his life, cursed with a sense of the futilities of the world while keenly alive to its beauties. In one of the Introductions to
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the Collected Works* I have dealt with the work on ‘The Man who never laughed again,’ as shown in the various existing drafts: I have given at some length extracts from them and, I think, have quoted all that would be of general interest. But we may return to the subject for a moment to note that, familiar as my Father was with the Eastern matter and much as he enjoyed its richness, its humour and variety, this tale is the only one taken directly from that wealth of ancient lore.

Though all the best stories of the world may have come originally from the East, by the time they have been adopted in the West, their form and spirit have been fundamentally changed in the countries through which they have travelled. The story-tellers of Greece and Rome and Central Europe of the Middle Ages have taken from them what they wanted, leaving aside some of the ancient splendid and adding their own graces. I do not doubt that in searching among the ‘best stories’ to use for his own scheme he considered subjects definitely of the East and with the full Eastern flavour, but one cannot be surprised at his making so little use of them. The Eastern attitude of mind was not native to him: the sense of Fate hanging over human action is always part of the equipment of a good dramatic story, but the fatalism of the East and the fatalism of the West are pitched in a different key. Though Morris takes up the story of the endurance of suffering in its self-concentration and monotony once again and under another guise in ‘The Hill of Venus,’ his treatment of human troubles and the way in which they are to be borne did not lead him naturally to the blind submission into which the Eastern mind tends to fall.

The fairy legend element in ‘The Hill of Venus’ is mostly overshadowed by the expression of this heavier mood. Morris’s poem is a wild sombre rendering of the old tale interweaving rich fantasy with the empty silence that confronts the lover’s distracted quest when he is again outside

* Vol. v, p. xxv.
the magic place. Here fairy-land is no longer, as in most of
the other tales, friendly, quaint and of childlike beauty,
leading the human who braves its marvels to a happy for-
tune: the charm is a menace, the beauty a thing of terror,
but so desired that the pilgrim turns back to it from the af-
frighted Pope's acquiescence in his despair. All this brood-
ing, this questioning of the vanity of passion, the self-doom-
ing of the man who returns to the wasting of life upon the
Hill: all this is worked out at great length in the various
drafts.* Morris has spent more time on bringing this
strangely arresting tale to its final form than on any other
poem in the book, and the fact that he did have to work so
much on it, identifying himself with such intensity with the
brooding spirit of doom that pervades it, gives it an interest
beyond that which must already attach to the modern hand-
ling of this group of legends. And when all is said, the con-
clusion, with its human tenderness and piety, has cleared
away the clouds and terrors of fairy-land, mellowing the
sombre outlook of the late medieval mind and bringing
back our thoughts to the sweet sanity of God's earth and the
promise of the Blossoming Staff. I like to think from the
appearance of the drafts that it was written swiftly and hap-
pily, a fit ending to the long string of tales, flooding them
with sunlight and a sense of deep peace.

I wish to supplement the quotations from 'The Hill of
Venus' drafts in Volume vi by the following verses, to pre-
serve the picture of the girls with the forest-beasts that
Morris did not use:

Yea, as he looked along the slope he saw
Not many yards away a damsel stand
Her dainty feet nigh touching the rough paw
Of a great lion, and her slim right hand
Laid on his wrinkled brow, a silken band
Hung to her left arm, and its end was bound
About a white fawn laid upon the ground.

* See the list in the Appendix.
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He describes the vale

Hemmed by the hills about, now high, now low;
And wellnigh o'er against the place whereby
He first had gained the vale had he come now,
And through the cliffs no pass might he espy,
Nay, rather did they grow more steep and high;
And somewhat too the vale was changing here
For it became more garden-like and fair.

Heavier the roses hung and closer bloomed
And flowers and all fair fruits did more abound;
And still twixt rose and lily-stem there gloomed
The lion's grave face. On the flowery ground
The tiger lay, the bear's tongue found
The dead-ripe mulberry, as he rolled along
Beneath the brown bird's ceaseless gurgling song.

WORKSHOP NOTES

There are traces of a methodical habit in Morris's recording of the 'tale of work' often alluded to in those days, but it was not carried out all through The Earthly Paradise—you would not expect it of him. The Bellerophon manuscripts are numbered more regularly than most, and one can get a pretty accurate idea of these verse-spinning evenings; but when one comes to look at another tale, 'The Fostering of Aslaug,' let us say, the 'system' of counting has only the semblance of method. Many of us will sympathize respectfully with the business-like intention and with the way it works out. The poet counts up the lines of the first two pages which represent a sitting and he notes 108; the next two pages are counted and 219 noted, which is the total of these pages plus the two first—the total being out by seven lines; and so for a while. Then in the middle of a passage and of a page he will start a fresh counting of lines adding on it with new sittings, and so it goes on with beautiful irregularity; but one can get at the tale of
work in a way. And now, halfway through the poem he loses interest in this tiresome counting of lines and makes no further notes whatever. So you see that any observations about the amount of work done at a sitting can have no value as an exact record, though the countings of course are of interest. Here is a batch from a portion of the Bellerophon manuscripts: 144, 195, 71, 26, 57, 77, 99, 52, 77, 152, 78, 131, 160, 74, &c. These are taken in order, with two or three gaps of unnumbered sittings. From 'The Ring given to Venus' we have 183, 125, 274, &c. From 'The Hill of Venus,' 563, 287, &c.; and on one folio of it he notes '310 after 10 o'clock.' We remember how he wrote on the end of the Gudrun manuscript 'Sunday June 13, 1869, 1728.' That is assuredly not an adding up of batches of work but the record of spinning done on one summer Sunday.

In all the drafts above referred to as typical of Morris's work on The Earthly Paradise, we can follow his progress as a craftsman in the different periods they represent. We see the early mood, where he must put down on paper somehow the series of pictures that are jostling each other in his mind—impatience at the slow medium of speech, one might almost say, showing itself in roughness of diction or incompleteness of the picture. But we observe, too, how early he began to discipline himself, improving verse that did not flow happily from the source.

And so as the work goes on we can see from the drafts and alterations how he is all the time teaching himself to throw off the hesitations of apprentice-work; but for all that the moods are varied and much of the early simplicities in verse and in imagery is preserved as in 'The Land East of the Sun and West of the Moon,' where more than a touch of the 'modern' introspective spirit is woven into the wandering minstrel measure. The 'fairy-story' conception of the tales soon gave place to a far more elaborate and crisper realization of life in a world where, though magic counted for so much, it is the human adventure we follow, and the
wonders told of are but the more vivid for being set in an atmosphere not wholly remote from our experience. Morris’s personages have never been the primitive King and Queen and swineherd of folk-lore, but beings who, as the scheme of the tales develops, become more and more endowed with human emotions and go to seek their fortune with something of the heart-searching and the complicated passions of modern story. The strength of *The Earthly Paradise* lies in this power of intense realization of a story, in which the personages, though not always standing out clearly from the setting, are built up of flesh and blood, and walk the stage as living their own life, a life which has all the reasonableness of a clearly-dreamt dream. Whether the tales are woven out of Greek or Eastern legend or come more directly from the great stream of mid-European cultivation they are always marked by this sense of reality. It may be in the wonders of *outre-mer* or it may be in the dear loveliness of England, every phase of the earth’s beauty awakes the poet’s emotion and compels him to write down what he sees before the vision fades, and to write it in particular detail. We can smell the very salt of the sea and hear the waves beating on the rocks where Danaë stands deserted with her babe. We live with Ogier in those swift bright glimpses of France of the Chronicles. The hill-side where Apollo’s voice sounds to Admetus in the golden mist is fragrant and real as some hill in Thessaly to-day where we have seen the asphodel and myrtle bloom. Or, crowning it all, it may be just our England he calls up, and surely there can be few who read the Wanderer’s talk about Peterborough Cathedral without emotion and without sharing with Morris in some degree that sharp realization of how the great building rose above the fen-town:

I who have seen
So many lands, and midst such marvels been,
Clearer than these abodes of outland men,
Can see above the green and unburnt fen
The little houses of an English town,

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Cross-timbered, thatched with fen-reeds coarse and brown,
And high o'er these, three gables great and fair,
That slender rods of columns do upbear
Over the minster doors, and imagery
Of Kings, and flowers no summer field doth see,
Wrought on those gables.—Yea, I heard withal,
In the fresh morning air, the trowels fall
Upon the stone, a thin noise far away;
For high up wrought the masons on that day,
Since to the monks that house seemed scarcely well
Till they had set a spire or pinnacle
Each side the great porch.

This passage may well stand at the end of my notes on *Earthly Paradise* work. It tells us as truly as any more formal statement how he valued all that is best of medieval life and work; it embodies his love of the very stones of his own land, and his understanding as well of the life of simple people as of the minds of the great men who raised 'the walls like cliffs new-made' above the flats.

At all times the pictorial quality of Morris's work has been a commonplace with critics. Even while he was writing he saw the episodes as pictures and noted in his margins hints for the woodcuts that Burne-Jones and himself were to make for the beautifying of his poems.*Here for instance, are descriptions on the MS. of 'The Doom of King Acrisius' opposite the verses to be illustrated:

Danaë in garden, tower building in the distance
Danaë in tower, bed in background,
Danaë and the shower of gold, (naked)
Taking Danaë down to the sea; out on a jetty, boat at the end
Danaë on the sea with Kid
Danaë landed on the island
Dictys finding her on the beach (boat by her).

* See *Collected Works*, xi, xxii. The notes on the MS. of Cupid and Psyche describe 21 episodes which we recognize among the existing 45 wood-blocks. Thirty-five of these were cut by Morris himself.
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Diētnys on horseback (or leading his horse by bridle).
Danaë with her Kid (about 12 years old), in temple of Minerva (or temple in background) (olive grove).
The feast of Polydeectes (the King sending Perseus out).
Minerva giving him the things (sea-shore, moonlight).
Perseus and the Graiae Sisters on a dais in a hall.

HERE is the order of production in my Father’s writing during the next six or seven years: The Story of Grettir the Strong is out in May 1869; Volsunga Saga was finished at the end of 1869 and published early the following year; Parts III and IV of The Earthly Paradise were published at the end of 1869, Gunlaug Wormtongue appeared in 1869; Frithiof the Bold in March and April 1871; Love is Enough was written in 1872, went through the press in November and appeared early next year. Three Northern Love Stories came out in 1875, and the Æneids of Virgil were finished at the end of 1875 and Sigurd at the end of 1876, while all through this work there was an intermittent stream of short copies of verses, some of which he gathered up later in Poems by the Way.

CHAPTER IV. LOVE IS ENOUGH

Of the literary work of these years Love is Enough is the first original production. The poem is of great interest, for several reasons, cut off as it is from the main current of Morris’s work. At the first glance it might seem that in this poem he had returned to the atmosphere of some of the later Earthly Paradise stories, ‘The Hill of Venus,’ ‘The Man who never laughed again,’ &c., dwelling on the bitterness and sweetness of life, at once almost painfully aware of the beauty of the world, and burdened by yearnings to follow the soul’s journey throughout the material life. And it might not be unnatural that after the excitement and fatigues of the Icelandic journey and all it
WILLIAM MORRIS
ARTIST WRITER SOCIALIST
BY MAY MORRIS

VOLUME THE FIRST
THE ART OF WILLIAM MORRIS
MORRIS AS A WRITER

Waneth wealth & fadeth friend
And we ourselves shall die
But fair fame dieth nevermore
If well ye come thereby

Hávamál

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