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:

Then here are the verses as printed:

There with 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.

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...
Morris as a Writer

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 wanderer's singer.

Then we turn to 'The Watching of the Falcon,' another
of the earliest tales, and we naturally look for the same sys-
tem 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 pub-
lished 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 senti-
ment 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 care-
lessness in pronunciation and so forth, as, making two sylla-
bles of the vowel in 'sire,' 'squire,' 'desire,' &c. This is
piously revised; for instance,

While from the windows maid and squire lean
becomes
While from the windows maid and varlet lean
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 falcon 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 craftsman-
ship, the revisions and additions in this tale show Morris's
watchfulness over his work. The love-making, altered, be-
comes 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 pre-
served 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

Narrative Poetry: Th Earthly Paradise
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 haft thou got now to sing
Say all your tale and have no fear
Ther 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 know
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

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 stay
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 noonside of that day
His light-armed horsemen did they see
And there were driven easily
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 jousting 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 swanmaiden 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 sills through, as the tale breaks off for its 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.

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 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 of 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 a 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
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 fiction, 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 his 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,
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 aaimless 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 vermillion 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 cars 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 dawn 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.
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 up and down the shore
She gazed, and as they searched the grey down o'er
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 me†(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 even 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
Behold'st thou, is this an earthly maid?

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 o'er with a golden sun.
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 seemedst more to be a Goddess cursed
By some hard fate, then one who death may fear:
Yea such thou mayst be yet, unmoved and clear
Thy face is midst the tidings that we tell
As though thou heldest the Keys of Heaven and hell.

What wilt thou then command us that we stay
And with thy country-peoples hold high feast
For certain days or go on this same day?
For all are thine thou seekest 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; hide 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 hastened 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 retained 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

*Narr Poet Earth Parac

style. The young diöction changes, he is careful that nothing that might strike readers as affection, 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 tamer of the sea
becomes

And by these glittering folk from oversea;

though I rather wish he could have left the 'tamer 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.
Morris as a Writer 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 pages 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 they tell
What music on the feasters fell
So sweet and solemn that from mirth
O'erstrained must gentle tears have birth?
Nay let all pass and think indeed
That every joyance was their need
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—
Within 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 ministerial where Palombarus 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 Moriss 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 mis-spelling 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-reading, 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 draw-
ings and scraps of ‘fine’ writing, by the by, abound here. At times his pen ran away with him in some picturesque de-
tail, but always in the revision these little pictures were sacrificial to the main interest of the situation. Thus in the pass-
age 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 cased fleece
Far 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—

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 ‘ticying’ 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
Narr Eart
Poet Earth
Para

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 awk-
wardly, 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 ap-
prove 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...
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 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:


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 merriment of the vintagers leads up to the devastating horror, I am pleased to find that, in talking of Morris's leisurely 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 xvi (p. 39).

The treatment of the Northern matter in The Earthly Paradise, as in ‘The Fostering of Aslæg’ and the unfinished ‘Wooing of Swanhild’ and in ‘The Lovers of Gudrun,’ is curiously varied from tale to tale. In ‘Aslæg’ 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 Aslæg 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 Swanhild 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 Earthly often-quoted harsh words of hers: ‘Mickle prowess hath been done; I have spun yarn for twelve eells and thou hast 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 Hercholt 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
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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 moment of high tragedy when the three lovers must meet, Morris paints picture after picture—the rich-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 terseness: '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 incidents that unfold the story, all the antics of human perversity 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 Gueðí, 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 growing 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 foresaid has given the history 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 Laxdala.

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搜查ings 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
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 splendours 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 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 fortune: the charm is a menace, the beauty a thing of terror, but so desired that the pilgrim turns back to it from the afflicted Pope’s acquiescence in his despair. All this brooding, this questioning of the vanity of passion, the self-dooming 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 handling of this group of legends.) And when all is said, the conclusion, 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 sainthood 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 happily, 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 preserve the picture of the girl 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.
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, 51, 27, 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 — to
after 100 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 some-
how 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 incom-
pleteness 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 wander-
ing 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

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 Foostering 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 inten-
tion 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 count-
ing of lines adding on it with new sittings, and so it goes on
with beautiful irregularity; but one can get at the tale of

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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.