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nearly six books of the *Aeneid*. The decoration has been continued by another hand: had it been finished solely by Morris's hand, it would have been by far the finest piece of modern work of the kind.

Two manuscripts, the *Odes of Horace* and this *Aeneid*, were both on hand in 1874, and now, having done honour to Virgil by this setting of his epic, he is moved to try his hand on the verse itself, and eight books of his translation of the *Aeneid* are noted as done by March 1875, the work having been his 'great joy for months.' The book was through the printers' hands in the late autumn, so that though the diary-notes on it stop in March, and he did not probably finish quite by mid-May (in the diary-project 'end of 12' is noted against the 22nd May) he had no doubt got through the work in good time.

The note-book mentioned has been partially described, it may be remembered, in an Introduction to the *Collected Works*. In its hints and notes it breathes the very atmosphere of a man's literary work at a given time, and is specially typical of my Father and his funny little ways—ways that no one could call 'sloppy,' as they imply such solid conscientious work, but one may say, unconcerned with routine! You see him wrestling with Icelandic, busy with the difficult poems in the Sagas; then the book is turned upside-down and after a few notes of Icelandic phrases, there is the work planned out for the *Aeneid*,\* and noted day by day from December to the end of March. Immediately on that begins Sigurd in pencil, with a note in ink, 'Begun October 15: 1875.' The second Sigurd draft, one of five large quarto books, is filled more than half-way with the conclusion of *Aeneid*, and then next page, without start or flourish, Sigurd goes on from the little book with the bare note, 'continued from No. 1.'

Such is the rather casual beginning of the epic which is generally accepted as the crown of Morris's poetical work. As we know, the fables of the Northern Gods and heroes

\* The printer's MS. of the *Aeneid* is in a very noble script, by the by.

had been at the back of his mind for many years; now at last his project takes form and he has the satisfaction of making the great experiment, moulding an epic of his own out of the shadowy figures of the matter of the North. The Influence of the North

Everything has led up to this. He had very early read all he could come at in modern authors, and when he made the acquaintance of Magnússon, who introduced him to *Völsunga* in 1869, his familiarity with the subject of their studies made light of many difficulties and lessened the toil of acquiring the language. Indeed, for a hard-working man of middle age to have made himself familiar with the modern language if only to converse haltingly and with hesitation, in itself is a feat that anyone under the Icelandic spell can look upon with considerable wonder. Often when trying to find a way through the labyrinth of inflections and the rest, I have recalled with respect and sympathy those efforts of his of which I was sometimes witness as a girl. And it is always one picture that comes to me, of the poet walking up and down the room (by the by, just as the Icelander does today when talking and discussing) his face and voice almost rigid with concentration, his anxiety to get out the words in due order and duly inflected evident in every muscle of his body, Magnússon, deep-voiced and burly, sitting by, watchful, encouraging and correcting.

Magnússon tells us that he was taken aback by the intuition with which Morris got at the sense of the story of Gunnlaug in the very first lesson, eager to see it all with as little delay as possible, determined not to lose time over preliminary wrestling with grammar. He says: 'From the very first day that I began work with William Morris on Icelandic literature, the thing that struck me most was this, that he entered into the spirit of it not with the pre-occupied mind of a foreigner, but with the intuition of an uncommonly wide-awake native.'

After 'Gunnlaug,' done in a fortnight, followed *Gretla*, and before long they were dealing with *Völsunga* and the heroic lays of the *Poetic Edda*, the 'Lays of Sigurd and

Brynchild,' 'Helgi and Sigrun,' and the rest. As we know, the ancient fragmentary lays made a deep impression on him, so much so that when Magnússon suggested he should weave all this matter into a poem of his own, and that he should do the same with the *Laxdaela* on which they were also working, he demurred, as he considered it as quite beyond treatment by a modern hand. But very soon, he seems to have made up his mind, and Magnússon comes upon him in the eagerest mood, saying he is going to deal both with *Laxdaela* and the *Völsunga* matter. Surely enough, the 'Lovers of Gudrun' was undertaken and finished that same year of 1869. So that you see, all in this one year, working at the Icelandic language and literature, he produced these important works from the original: *Gunnlaug-wormtongue*, *Grettir the Strong*, *The Story of the Völsungs and Niblungs*, and his own *Lovers of Gudrun* from the *Laxdale Saga*.

About the same time he began certain literal translations; we find among his forgotten manuscripts a portion of *Laxdaela*, then thirty-nine chapters of *Egilssaga* finely written with delicately ornamental initials, together with a part of the *Norna Geð* story. That he did not go on with the translation of *Egla* is always a matter of regret, as this great saga interested him profoundly. The *Njala* and *Gisla* had both been suitably introduced to English readers years before, but not *Egla*. The pretty passage in *Egil's* childhood, where he rode unbidden to the festival and sang a song and got as 'rhyme-reward' three periwinkles and a duck's egg, was, by the by, a great favourite with the children, and I can recall clearly indeed the expression of face and voice, quietly humorous and tender, as my Father told the quaint tale of the young wildling to his own young creatures.\* The translation stops with *Egil* at the age of twelve and the incident of him and *Thord* wrestling against *Scaldgrim*—a wild scene indeed, of the unnatural wrath of the

\* An interesting reference to *Egilssaga* will be found in a letter to Swinburne, Vol. II, p. 643.

father and the intervention of the handmaid who 'was wise in witch-craft' and who lost her life in saving the boy *Egil*. Blanks are mostly left for the songs: their difficulties were to be dealt with later. The Influenc the Nor

The passage where Morris left the *Saga* is as follows:

'Said *Brak*: "Art thou turned skin-changer, *Scaldgrim*, against thine own son?"

'*Scaldgrim* let go *Egil* and caught hold of her; but she broke away from him, and ran off and *Scaldgrim* followed her; and so fared they outward of *Digraness*: there she leapt off the cliff into the sea; but *Scaldgrim* cast a stone after her that smote her between the shoulders, so that she never came up again; and that is now called *Braksound*.

'Afterward when they came home to *Burg* that evening was *Egil* very wrath. *Scaldgrim* sat down to table with all folk, but *Egil* was not in his place.'

Although after Morris had first read the translation Magnússon made for him of *Völsunga* he showed by a rather disparaging remark his distaste for the violence of some of the legends in the grim brief statements of the *Saga*, we have seen that he changed his opinion. The following letter to Professor Charles Eliot Norton confirms this and shows how the cycle of legends had taken their due place in his mind. Still in 1870, though hankering to deal with the subject after his own fashion, he is still afraid of spoiling it.

26 Queen Square, Bloomsbury.  
Dec. 21st [1869]

My dear Norton

I suppose I had better waste neither invention nor materials in excuses for not writing, so I will only say how very glad I shall be to hear from you again despite my 'lâcheté.' I don't know if you have my book by this time, or have begun to deal with its somewhat elephantine bulk, wh: I should feel penitent about, only it is principally caused by

Morris as a Writer the length of Gudrun which I feel sure is the best thing I have done—however no more of that. I have begun a translation of the 'Nibelungen' which I find very amusing; I have also another Icelandic translation in hand, the Völsunga Saga viz. which is the Ice: version of the Nibelungen, older I suppose, and, to my mind, without measure nobler and grander: I daresay you have read abstracts of the story, but however fine it seemed to you thus, it would give you little idea of the depth and intensity of the complete work: here and there indeed it is somewhat disjointed, I suppose from its having been put together from varying versions of the same song; it seems as though the author-collector felt the subject too much to trouble himself about the niceties of art, and the result is something which is above all art; the scene of the last interview between Sigurd and the despairing and terrible Brynhild touches me more than anything I have ever met with in literature; there is nothing wanting in it, nothing forgotten, nothing repeated, nothing overstrained; all tenderness is shown without the use of a tender word, all misery and despair without a word of raving, complete beauty without an ornament, and all this in two pages of moderate print. In short it is to the full meaning of the word inspired; touching too though hardly wonderful to think of the probable author; some 12 century Icelandic, living the hardest and rudest of lives, seeing few people and pretty much the same day after day, with his old religion taken from him and his new one hardly gained—It doesn't look promising for the future of art I fear. Perhaps you think my praise of the work somewhat stilted, but it has moved us one and all in the same way, and for my part I should be sorry to attempt reading aloud the scene I have told you of before strangers. I am not getting on well with my work, for in fact I believe the Völsunga has rather swallowed me up for some time past, I mean thinking about it, for it hasn't taken me long to do. I had it in my head to write an epic of it, but though I still hanker after it, I see clearly it would be foolish, for no verse could render the best

parts of it, and it would only be a flatter and tamer version of a thing already existing. . . .

Yrs affectionately  
W. Morris

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You see, he was also trying his hand on the Nibelungenlied this year. But I don't suppose any magician could breathe life into the long record of small lords fighting and tourneying with the tantalizing vague references to the ancient Hoard-legends and the Valkyrie legends turned into fairy-tale incidents—occasionally brutal. The glimpses of beauty, here and there, are undeniable—episodes famous and widespread in fairy-tale lore; the Cloak of Darkness, the Dwarfs and the Mountain-Gold, the secret of the hero's vulnerable spot disclosed to his enemy, the bathing Rhine-maidens whose clothes are stolen, the warrior who asks one of the conquerors leave to carry away 'that which he most treasures,' and the like. But Morris soon felt that he could do nothing with it, and abandoned the task after 216 of the four-lined verses. In these, of which the following will show the quality of the translation, Morris followed the Old High German measure, and, according to his customary handling of verse, was as literal as might be:

Now Chriemhild fell a-dreaming As her fair life slipped away  
That a certain wild-bred falcon She nourished many a day  
But two ernes must tear & slay it Yea neath her very eyes  
Nor knew she in the wide world, of aught happed in loathlier wise

Unto her mother Ute This dream then must she tell  
Who could in nought arede it So that the thing seemed well  
'The falcon that thou sawest A noble man it is  
But if God help him better Short end to all his bliss.'

This is perhaps not quite a fair choice, being a couple of the more interesting verses in the whole manuscript, and, as far as I am competent to judge, in the whole of the original text. Here is also the first appearance of Siegfried:

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There waxed in the low countries The child of a King of might  
Sigemund hight his father His mother Sigelind hight  
They dwelt in a fair castle Exceeding wide of fame  
Down by the Rhine river Xanten it had to name. . . .

The appeal to Morris of the *Völsunga Saga*, for all its grimness, for all the gaps and the overlappings of a late piece of story-telling, was another matter. The *Saga* is not only far nearer to the chain of legends than *Nibelungnôt*, but in it tragedy and passion are brought on the stage with great intensity of representation, and the heroic figures are no gracious shadows in glittering embroidered clothing but beings who stand out sharp and clear against their background.

The following letter written by Morris many years later will be of interest here. A correspondent writes to the *Literary Supplement of The Times* (28 September 1922) that 'a discussion had centred round the practicability of translating the *Saga [Völsunga]* for the stage, and Professor Franklin Peterson, of Edinburgh (who at that time was one of the critics of *The Scotsman*), had written to Morris asking his views. My father answered him thus:

Sir, I fear that I must answer your letter much more briefly than I should like to do considering the importance of the subject and your obvious interest in it. 1st, there is a translation of the *Völsunga Saga* by Mr. Magnússon and myself; it is out [of] print, but I should think might be obtained. Mr Bain, in the Haymarket, would be a likely bookseller to know of it.

2nd, I stick very closely to the *Völsunga* in my poem of Sigurd: it is in fact the same story, modern amplification and sentiment excepted. I have invented nothing except detail. The songs from the Romantic part of the *Edda* included in our translation I have also drawn upon.

But, 3rdly, I suppose that the *Völsunga* and even these Eddaic lays are later than the original tale, that in fact it is

told over and over again in them, the *Völsunga* being a comparatively late redaction of the fragments: the vellum belonging to the early fourteenth century. The terrible incestuously begotten Sinfjotli is, I think, the original Sigurd (so to say), the Dragon-Slayer and the releaser of Sigdrifa the second, and the ally of the Nibelungs and husband of Gudrun the third. The *Andvaranautr* and *Regin* and the Gods belong duly, I think, to the second one. The Gods therein are characterised a good deal like the Gods in the Gylfa-ginning of the prose *Edda*. I should mention that Sigmund and Sinfjotli are mentioned in the *Beowulf*; but Sigmund *there* is the Dragon-Slayer. You will understand that I would on no account wish that the curious entanglement of the ages [which] has been thus at work on the greatest story of the world had not taken place; it has on the contrary, it seems to me, produced something of wonderful imagination and clearness of outline, without disturbance of the huge and vague figures of the earlier times. If I may venture to express an opinion thereon, I should say that such a subject is impossible for the stage, even when helped by the music of a great master. But here I must stop, or I may get to talking about or defending my own work—which would be an offence. You are quite welcome to ask me any questions which may be of any use to you.

Yours truly,  
William Morris.

Kelmscott House,  
Upper Mall, Hammersmith.  
Sept. 12/94.

You will note his opinion that such a subject is impossible for the stage, even helped by a master's music, and will remember how he felt about Wagner's use of the epic. So it was that by degrees the idea of his own epic possessed him; the whole thing developed and took form, and when he set to the task in October 1875, he began to unravel the repetitions of the Sigurd legend, and his imagination was con-

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centrated on 'the curious entanglement of the ages which has thus been at work on the greatest story in the world.' In the next year of work he has made the story his own.

Students of prosody have written about the metre of *Sigurd*: Clutton Brock goes to the root of the matter in saying: 'It has a wider range than any other English metre that has been applied to epic, and Morris was able to invent it and use it epically, because his mind stayed at an epic height all through the poem, . . .' He observes further that 'Sigurd, with all its faults, is an epic poem to be read for its story. Its excellence is in the whole, not in detachable parts, in design, not in ornament. It has a cumulative power possessed by no other modern narrative poem in English.'

Of the metre of *Sigurd* I am incompetent to pronounce an opinion: the 'ringing anapaests' of the poem carry the reader unconsciously over the long line. I should like to quote here Professor Saintsbury's appreciation and leave it at that.

'He was evidently seeking for some narrative metre which should be as free as possible from classical or modern associations. He had not found it; he could not find anything continuously tolerable in the lollop of fifteenth-century doggerel, even softened by his own smoothness. But he took from this doggerel the secret that its fifteenth-century manipulators had vainly sought (if indeed they had sensibility enough in their ears to know that it was there) and he produced the splendid metre of *Sigurd the Volsung*.

'The exact process by which he hit upon it is to me, even after my almost diabolic wandering up and down the earth of English prosody, and going to and fro in it, uncertain. The places whence it might have come—though no single place—I know well. Its gaffer is of course the old equivalenced fourteener of *Gamelyn*, with its obvious central stop; and the younger measure "holds to the blood of its clan" unflinchingly in this respect. But its gammer, though of the clan still, is of a different branch of it—that form of the resolved fourteener metre, or ballad couplet, which arranges

itself so that the odd lines of the ballad form have a syllable short and a quasi-trochaic ending. When these two are joined there is added, in the next generation, a much larger proportion of anapaestic equivalence than was usual in the old fourteener, or even in *Gamelyn* itself, but with retention of sufficient iambic feet to steady and indeed check the measure from too cantering a pace. Internal rhyme is carefully kept out of the blend, because that would introduce a second internal pause; but final rhyme is maintained. And the *sine qua non* of the thing is that, whether there are two short syllables or one short syllable in the third foot of the first half—whether it is anapaest or iamb—the trochaic effect of the final two syllables of that half before the pause shall be unalterable and strongly marked. Very often there is an actual grammatical stop of punctuation; nearly always there is something that would almost justify at least a break, even in such sentences as

The  
Influen  
the No.

Haßt thou kept me here from the *net* and the death that tame things die?

where it may be observed that the second half will stand by itself—it has, as it were, discarded the borrowed thing "and"; as well as that the less easily this can be done, as in the very next line—

Haßt thou feared me *overmuch*, thou foe of the gods on high?

so much the less good than usual is the effect.

'But on the whole,

The *metring* of it is a joy to see.

'Perhaps the most beautiful and successful example is, not in *Sigurd* itself (though there are many there), but the exquisite lament of the "Wood Sun," in *The House of the Wolfings*, for the loss of her maiden divinity and the fate of her human lover—a thing that any poet in any metre will have to look over his store carefully before he vies with. And it carries the actual *Sigurd* through admirably, being good for narrative and good for poetry, possessing a combina-

tion of volume, currency, and effective rhythm-marking rare among metres, and having divers little accidental or minor conveniences, such as the way in which it lends itself to sententious half-refrains like

or                      Sinfiotli Signy's son  
                            Sinfiotli Sigmund's son.

It should be needless to say how interesting is the comparison of this with the closely allied but quite different metre of "The Revenge" and "Lucknow," and how curious it is to see what a change catalexis at the pause produces; or to point out many other agreeable things about it. How far it would do for general use I am not prepared to say. But in *Sigurd* it passes the test—that the poem becomes practically unthinkable in any other form than its own.\*

A few notes on the *Sigurd* manuscript and a swift survey of Morris's work on the poem will, I think, be of interest here. Some of the drafts are in the British Museum and others in private hands and not available to the public. The vestiges of the craftsman's moulding of his work seem to me specially important in the case of *Sigurd*, as they show so many stages of a great poem fashioned out of the snatches of heroic legend. And it is to be noted in due place that this modern welding of the stupendous legendary fragments of the North was by no means an easy or straightforward rendering of the late *Völsunga Saga* recension, but was the poet's own work—an achievement memorable indeed and involving labour of which the readers of this modern epic could form no idea unless some account of its progress were laid before them.

I have already shortly described the British Museum MSS.† which consist of the fair copy of the poem and two note-books of great interest as showing how the work was built up. They should really be considered together with the six note-books and loose leaves now to be described,

\* Saintsbury, loc. cit., III, p. 329.      † In *Collected Works*, Vol. XII.  
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which came into my hands later. The first of these is a small octavo of varied interest (see p. 92 *passim*) taken up in a hurry to use for *Sigurd* on top of the Icelandic notes, and the detailed weekly diary of work on the *Aeneid*. Besides this and the five large quarto note-books there are three sets of loose folio sheets of additions and corrections.

It is worth noting that throughout this draft in the small note-book Morris breaks the long line at the caesura making two lines of one, sometimes with capitals to the second line. If this form was originally intended, he changed his mind by the time he reached the other quarto books, where the line is carried on. The beginning of the poem is almost unaltered from the swiftly written pencil draft in this first book: the fighting on King Siggeir's land and the bane of the Völsungs is enlarged and the death of King Völsung added; otherwise all this first part goes unerringly in the first-written words.

In the episode of the skin-changing of Sigmund and his son Sinfiotli, Morris in the draft follows *Völsunga Saga* about the burning of the wolfskins:

'They built a mighty balefire and cast them in the flame  
That they harm no man hereafter. . . .'

The Helgi Hundingsbane chapter in *Völsunga* is not followed though alluded to in a few lines. Morris evidently felt that it was not the place to bring in any part of the epic fragments of the wild and beautiful 'Helgi and Sigrun Lay' that he had translated and included in his volume of the *Völsunga Saga*. Again, in *Völsunga* Sinfiotli loved 'an exceeding fair woman' also wooed by Gudrod, Queen Borg-hild's brother, and they fought over that matter and Gudrod was slain. This Morris has changed for the fight over the deceitful sharing of war-treasure.

There is half a page of crisp acanthus ornament drawn in the quarto manuscript-book opposite the Sinfiotli and Helgi passage; one may think that as he struck out:

And Helgi won him Sigrun that brightest shielded may

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his thoughts carried him on among the tangle of broken legend that he was gathering together for modern eyes and that here he paused a little over these glimpses of wild primitive imaginings—over the riding of Helgi to his howe 'with a great company'—over the anguish of Sigrun waiting and singing:

O me the hope waneth  
Of Helgi's coming;  
For high on the ash-boughs  
Are the ernes abiding,  
And all the folk drift  
Toward the Thing of the dreamland.

Thereafter the whole tense passage of Sinfjotli's death and Sigmund's grief is written with scarcely a verbal correction. And so to the end of Book 1; the invention seems to come to the surface with scarcely any change, with scarcely a pause for smoothing or rounding, in its final form and complete. For those interested in the actual work on the verse making, the following note will be of value; on page 53 the line

And his sword was the flail of the bonder on the wheat of the threshing floor

has been altered (in the draft itself) to

And his sword was the flail of the tiller on the wheat of the wheat-threshing floor

showing that the very full line was deliberate.

I find Book 11, 'Regin,' considerably worked on in these drafts. The story of the birth of Sigurd has been altered and the dramatic question and answer in the King's hall announcing the birth is not in my manuscript. All this episode has been rearranged, intensified; some of the allusions, told lengthily here, have afterwards been woven together and put in their due order; the pace quickens and the emotion rises surely to the climax in the naming of Sigurd.

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There are additions and alterations all through the passage of Regin's tale of his race and the visit of the three Gods to Reidmar, specially in Reidmar's dooming, the description of Andvari's force and the netting of the Elf. One of the more important additions is the parting speech of Odin—that echo of the wild passage in 'Hávamál,' where the God was hanging nine nights over the abyss:

'For myself to myself I offered, that all wisdom I might know . . .'

Again, the Treasure of Andvari includes 'the sword that is called the Render,' following the old texts; this appears constantly in the drafts, to be finally cut out, as Sigurd is to have the sword Gramr, the Wrath of Sigurd, and of course it would not do to have two swords with a personality of their own, the second rivalling that one fashioned out of the shards of Odin's august gift.

There is a note in the draft where Regin is telling Sigurd of the Treasure and his desire for it, 'to make Regin's longing for the Treasure stronger,' and accordingly the well-known passage is inserted on the manuscript bodily, as printed:

Ah! I fell to the dreaming of dreams, &c.

This is one of the many important passages that have been altered, the verse growing more and more tense as the climax is reached. Though it is impossible to record all the building-up and developing of the verse in the epic, the student of Morris's method of work cannot fail to be deeply interested by what these manuscripts show us of that method, and by the evidence of the different moods in which he worked—the verse sometimes starting a little slack or diffuse and corrected and keyed up to the right pitch; sometimes the right note found at once, and the verse untouched by revision. These evidences of work are of course all the more interesting where they help to show how the difficult task of building up the Sigurd fragments from *Edda* has been handled.

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We have to note next in the drafts the passage where Sigurd seeks his mother and asks for the broken sword of King Sigmund. *Völsunga* says he went to the Queen, 'and they talked and drank together'; this brief indication is followed in my draft and worked up into a passage of some length, where Queen Hjordis tells Sigurd of the deeds of King Sigmund, and they sit and drink the wine before she takes him to her treasure-store. This is all rewritten on the draft itself, and here once more one can see how closely Morris watched his own work, how well he understood the claims the epic made on his craft—where the song may linger by the way with many a decoration and where the time should grow swift and ever swifter towards the final phrase. In the pages here discarded the pace is leisurely, most unlike the impetuous entrance of Sigurd into the Queen's chamber in the passage as we know it; there is added, also, the piteousness of her as she looks in his face and sees the youth become a King and a stern-mooded warrior. The same may be said of the Forging of the Sword, which is rewritten and inserted here in a couple of pages much scored about. The entire rewriting of the Prophecies of Gripir is equally significant—more so, truly, as this passage is one of the leading notes of the whole epic as told by Morris.

The student of *Sigurd* must have these drafts in his hand and read the first-written prophecy of Gripir to feel the full force, the inspiration of the passage as we know it. He needs, also, to look back at the few lines in *Völsunga*, and at the question and answer in *Gripisspá* in which Sigurd learns of his life to come: thus we realize how the poetic emotion of this passage grew on the writer. The *Völsunga* account is bald, that of *Gripisspá* is terse and rugged; my manuscript gives the matter in an easy swinging recitation of the Deeds of Sigurd: suddenly Morris has pictured the high drama lying beyond these vestiges; the scene is set, full of the colour and splendour of a dream; Gripir sits there with the spirit of prophecy upon him; and we see how this

inspiration has opened out the mystery and legend of the Northern race to our poet, himself become Gripir and looking into the crystal of 'the ball that imaged the earth' and dealing with the deeds to come in a mood of exaltation and dramatic intensity most moving to the reader.

In the riding of Sigurd and Regin to Gnitaeiði there is much rearranging of verses in the draft, and some alterations, though Sigurd speaking of the glory and thirst for world-dominion that blinds Regin is scarcely altered. Then all is unchanged until the slaying of Fafnir. This is entirely rewritten; in the draft it is all simpler, more like the handling of a fairy-story, the 'horrors' less convincing. (The meeting between Sigurd and Odin before the fight is not in the draft,) nor the question and answer passage with Fafnir. Of these, Fafnir's dying talk with the slayer follows fairly closely the matter of the *Fafnismál* and *Völsunga-saga*. The tale then goes on without difficulties until we come to the Burg on Hindfell, and here is a good deal of work that we have to follow. We are dealing now with a sheaf of loose foolscap sheets (three drafts) coming between note-books four and five. Draft A, in pencil as usual, is not carried so far as draft B, which is a fair copy in a beautiful hand, carefully punctuated. This fair copy goes to the end of Book II, but a great deal of it is not used, though both A and B contain Brynhild's waking words and her Salutation, all of which stands as rendered from the old texts. They also both contain a snatch of the Teaching of Brynhild and a long passage (cut out later) of the Wrath of Odin and Dooming of Brynhild, which will be referred to again. Folded up with the copied manuscript B are some pencilled foolscap sheets C with the alterations as they now stand of Sigurd's Ride through the fire and the Awakening of Brynhild; also the important addition of the Teaching of Brynhild scarcely altered.

In these drafts A and B, Sigurd and Brynhild tell their stories to each other and the Valkyrie's account of the Wrath of Odin is given some prominence. I imagine that



Morris as a Writer Morris found as he came to deal with this scene—the facing of the two Gods, the one at the back of Fate, eternal and unchanging, the other interfering and trying to ward off Fate—the subject grew so big that it had better be left alone unless it could be treated at length and on the right scale, in which case it would have over-weighted his epic. I give the passage here:

And my story shalt thou hearken: ere my long sleep was begun  
I was called the Victory-Wafer, and many a deed I won,  
And I chose out folk for Odin, and the will of his heart I knew  
When the Kings of hosts were gathered the doomful deeds to do.  
Hither and thither I rode, and the night in my path would pale,  
As the cloudy mane of my war-steed dripped dew in the deep-  
some dale.

And the tree-boughs opened to meet it, and glory grew on the  
grass,  
And the earth was fruitful of men, and the dear deeds come to  
pass.

Now two Kings of the people met and the sword on the warshield  
rung,  
And there was the old Helmgunnar, & his foe was Agnar the  
young;  
And I knew the doom of Odin was dark on the young man's face,  
And that well on Valhall's benches that day was dight his place;  
That the elder's promised gift was to live and live on the earth  
Till he knew not the wail of sorrow from the cries of men in mirth.

So I stood and looked on at the battle when the war-flames met  
on the heath  
And bright was the valiant Agnar, as he faced the fateful death;  
But dim and grey was Helmgunnar; then wrath sprang up in my  
heart,  
And I said: All-wise is Odin, but he sitteth far apart  
From the folk of the earth he hath fashioned; and I from the earth  
I came;

And I deal with the earls of the Goth folk, & I know of their glory and sh  
And I know of their joy and their sorrow, and their inmost heart's desi

Lo here the elder of days, who had waded blood and fire,  
And won all the deeds of his life; let him wend the uttermost way;  
But the young shall abide for awhile & fulfill the hope of his day:  
So is Earth with a helper bettered, and the Host of Odin's war  
Hath gained a captain of men well-learned in the battle's lore.  
And if Odin shall yet repent it, and change the good for the worse,  
Then not me but the mighty Odin shall the sons of the Goth-folk curs

So I spake and my heart was uplifted and better than God I seemed:  
But they joined the fight on the heath, and men's eyes in the spearwall  
gleamed,

When, lo, through the cloudy drift, do men my face behold  
And hope goes home to their hearts and fear the bitter-cold;  
But I fashioned the glory for Agnar, and the life of the days to be,  
Till the fire was softer to stop and the wind was duller than he.  
Then I turned on Helmgunnar the old, and he grew weary of life,  
And his shield grew heavy and frail, and his sword grew dull in the strife  
And the waves of the fight swept o'er him, and the cry of victory rose,  
And a while and a little while, and none were alive but his foes.  
Then I watched them lading the mounds with the sheaves of the fruit  
fields

And he went to his fathers' hall to spend the life I gave.  
And I deemed my deed was goodly and that great was I to save.

Then I turned to the mountain dwellings, and trod the earth with my feet  
And the earth-born wind of the even was fresh in my face & sweet,  
And the flowers were fair in the summer, and the gold sky overhead  
Seemed a half-roof meet for the earth; and I thought great scorn of the c  
I said: My will have I done, I have helped the earth at its need  
And now if the Gods mislike it, they are strong to do the deed  
And wise to endure the cursing—but I full well have I done  
Though death be born with my glory and I lose the world I have won.  
But, lo, as I went in my pride, and my love of the earthly home  
To a glimmering bight of the mountains in the dusk of the day was I c

And forth from the night of the crag-walls a cloud-grey man there  
strode  
With a countenance of terror, and withstood my onward road.  
And he cried: 'O fair are thy feet O maiden of the shield  
But whither away this even so late from the shaft-strewn field?

The hillroots shook at his word, and nodded the mountain-wall,  
And frail and feeble I felt and my body soft and small;  
And I deemed that the thunder laughed and that Thor in his  
wain went by

And the gathering night grew strange and I knew not earth from  
sky,  
Or the Æsir stooped from heaven on the ill-matched play to look.  
But the heart grew great in my breast, though my body quivered  
and shook,

[ And I said: 'I walk on the earth and I love it passing well.'

But he spake: 'What tidings tellst thou of Agnar ere he fell?'  
I said: 'There shall be great tidings; for he passed from the field  
of the slain

Aloft on the shields of the Goths, and his story beginneth again;  
I took his life from Odin and gave it to the day:  
Now let the Gods see to it, and take the gift away!'

He spake: 'And how of Helmgunnar, as he sat aloft on the gold,  
And doomed of good and evil as the sons of the Goths from of  
old?'

[ I said: 'In the mound he sitteth with the gold on either hand,  
And the carles shall judge each other, for his land is a Kingless  
land.

I took his life from Odin and cast it to the night.  
Let the high Gods counsel o'er it how they the wrong shall  
right.'

Then greater and greater he waxed and the cloudy head I knew,  
And Allfather's face of sorrow, and faint and feeble I grew,

And the heavens opened aloft, and the Gods stooped down to behold:  
And the heart swelled up in my bosom though my limbs were waxen cold.  
And he said: 'For the earth thou hast failed me, for the blind desire of folk;  
Thou shalt cleave to the earth henceforward, & bear the earthly yoke:  
Thou shalt bring forth men in sorrow; thou shalt cumber thy goodly breast  
With the mouth that may not name thee: thou shalt long and know no rest  
For the heart that hath failed thine heart, and the hand that forgetteth thine  
hand;  
Thou shalt sit by the murderer's hearth, and live in the foeman's land.'

Then the heart swelled up within me; with the fleshly bonds I strove,  
And I cried 'Thou hast doomed me, O Goth-God! but I doom myself to love  
And to bear earth's Kings on my bosom, and to long and know no rest  
For the heart that feareth nothing and the soul that craves the best,  
And to change my life in glory, & come to thee again  
When the world is waxen lovelier for my unforgetten pain!'

Glad grew Allfather's visage and his smile was kind and fair  
And Thor laughed out in heaven, and the high Gods witness bare  
As he said: 'The doom abideth, the doom of me and thee:  
Now go thou, sleep and slumber, for long the time shall be  
Ere the world cry out for its glory and the best for the best be born.  
Fare forth and forget and be weary neath the sting of the Sleepful Thorn.'

Then darkened the earth & the heavens & my feet were caught away  
I knew not how or whither, & I waded the cloudland grey  
Till lo the Head of Hindfell and the ruddy shields & white  
And the wall of the wildfire waving around the isle of night,  
And there was I stayed in the midmost, and my feet to the earth were fast  
And a wave of grief and terror across my pride there passed,  
And a flood of woeful longing deep o'er mine anger swept,  
And the heart grew soft within me, and for hope & pity I wept  
And stretched out hands of beseeching for the coming of the day;  
For the earth seemed sweet and plenteous though neath the night it lay,  
And I feared the dark's abiding and the dreams to lead me back  
Through the tumult and the tangle and the days of restless wrack,  
No more a queen as aforesaid to wield the Gods' award

But a drift on the wind of the will of the wrath & the eyeless sword:

Then all thought wavered & fainted, for I felt the sleepthorn's sting  
And I bowed the head and sickened with the doom's encompassing  
And my breath came short and failed me with the first of the weary woe  
And the fallow bonds' constraining, and I fell on the earth a low,  
Then the tears sank back to my heart; there the moan in my heart was stayed,  
There my hands lay weak together; there foot to foot was laid;  
Ah, there was the night and the slumber, while Odin sat above  
And the kings took counsel of battle, and the maidens counselled of love;  
And the world on its ways was wending, while the dark dreams drew me aback  
To the tangle I might not deal with, and the unhelped masterless wrack.  
Yet day from ill day I knew for as sore as the bonds constrained  
And the murmur of many tidings about me waxed & waned  
While I craved and nought came to me: but hopeless was my sleep,  
And wordless my beseeching from out of the deedless deep.  
Till lo, without a warning I wakened unto rest  
And love my body cherished, & kindness fired my breast,  
And the night had never been, & naught was the bondage grey  
And there was the light & the love, and there were the eyes of the day.

With a few additions and verbal changes, the earlier sections of Book III remain as first conceived and written; there are no visible hesitations and no remodelling, even in the meeting of the two Queens where our poet departs from the *Völsunga* text in Brynhild's areading of the dream, and her bitter prophecies of blood and enmity. In our modern

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epic, the scene is conceived in an atmosphere of queenly dignity, the serenity of which would certainly have been ruffled if the said text had been closely followed. ] The Influence of the North

Rewriting and important additions are first met with when Queen Grimhild gives Sigurd the magic drink.\*

Among the many snatches and couplets on the verso of these pages is noted 'Sigurd goes out, rides he doesn't know where or for what and comes back again.' This dazed ride to Lymdale occupies a passage of some length, on too homely a note, I imagine Morris thought, for the high tragedy of the moment, and therefore replaced by one in which the sense of doom is felt to be brooding over the fastness of the ancient Kings—Fate riding with the hero through the shadowy gateways. . . . This passage which has its own charm I have preserved in the Introduction to Volume XII of the *Collected Works*, in dealing with the MS. in the British Museum where it appears again.

The incident of the Fires bursting out around Queen Brynhild's dwelling at Lymdale on that fateful night, by the by, is not in this first draft.

Morris's endless capacity for taking trouble over his work is instanced throughout these note-books, and, with some knowledge of the labour they represent, the reader of *Sigurd* cannot but pause to observe how the dramatic incidents, apparently inevitable, built-up from the beginning of time, have been fitted into their places in the poem after careful thought and experiment. In this respect, for exam-

\* In passing, we may note that this passage is written upside down at the end of the draft MS. number 5—done in absence of mind, probably, as the note-book was not filled the right way up. In a splendid bold hand inside the cover is written

W. Morris  
26 Queen Square  
Bloomsbury  
W.C.

A reward of one pound (£1) will be given to anybody who returns this book to the above address.

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ple, we may note the important passages of the swearing of the young chiefs over the Wood-beast at the marriage-festival in the hall of the Giukings, and the swearing of Brotherhood under the earth-yoke. In the published poem, at the feast, when the Cup and the Boar of Són are brought in, the Kings speak with noble exaltation, each after his own nature: Sigurd hallowing his life to the service of God and man, Gunnar vowing to bear forth the fame of the Niblungs, and Hogni, more enigmatical, vowing to bear out the will of the Norns and so forth; men note that Guttorm's place is empty, he being Westaway on the seas. In the draft before us, Sigurd's oath remaining the same in substance, the swearing of the Niblung brothers is quite otherwise. Gunnar swears

to be by Sigurd's side

Not a horse-length after his hand & to die on the day he died.

Hogni speaks in the same fashion, vowing to protect Sigurd: then comes Guttorm who

swore his body to thrust

'Twixt the sword and the heart of Sigurd, lest the world lie in the dust.

In *Völsunga*, you may remember, Guttorm is egged on to the killing of Sigurd; Gunnar says, 'he is young and of little knowledge and is clean out of all the oaths moreover.' So here our author cuts out the rather obvious dramatic touch on second thoughts, follows *Völsunga* and, with the sure sense of the born saga-man concerning the fitness of incidents that, seeming to be chancehap, all show the hand of Fate leading men to their doom, specially notes that Guttorm is away and

Nor then nor ever after, o'er the Holy Beast he spake.

In the ritual of the Swearing of Brotherhood that follows, the significance of Guttorm's absence appears in the draft MS.

We find Grimhild's description of Brynhild's hall and

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the following passage of the magic made on the Kings written without correction; so also with the riding of the three Kings to Lyndale for Gunnar's wooing of Brynhild, where the work of shaping and finishing from this early draft only begins to show in the egging of Hogni and the shape-changing. But the alterations are nearly all made on the draft itself, including the tense passage where Sigurd gazes on the image of himself in Gunnar. A passage is cut afterwards which interfered with the swift grim climax to come, the meeting of Queen Brynhild and the Image of Gunnar, and the night they pass is enlarged and bettered, but not altered in any sense. Again, the meeting of the Kings and changing back of their shapes is rewritten, but in his note-book Morris had not yet found his inspiration and the episode does not take its final form till later.

We are now brought to the Wedding of Brynhild to Gunnar the Niblung, and here the meeting between Sigurd and Brynhild is retold with a heightened emotion. Then no change of note until the poet has got past the encounter of the two Queens by the river, a difficult episode which he handled in his draft note-books with decision making scarcely any alteration then or after. (The Queens in truth behave like fishwives in the old story.) After some six pages written on the verso of the square book, we find ourselves dealing with fifteen loose foolscap leaves, in pencil always, the last of my drafts. As these cover the ground of the British Museum MSS. already referred to, I need only mention them here to call attention once more to the repeated signs of anxious work expended on difficult passages. Whole pages are struck out, and of the rest a great deal is unused in the finished work. To quote more than has already been done in the Introduction to Volume XII would only show how, before reaching the tense spirit of tragedy, swift and unbending in expression, as in the last meeting of Sigurd and Brynhild, the poet experimented with long passages of repeated anguish and reproach and pleading, very human indeed, but having no place in an epic. As we know, the an-

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cient poem of this great scene is among those pieces that are lost to us, and here Morris has the situation entirely in his own hands. What he made of it, how he succeeded in bringing that scene out of the shadows of the past and in clothing it in suitable words, is not a subject for my commentary in these notes: but I can imagine a student of Morris's method writing on this, the crown of the poetic work of his mature age, turning over the pages of manuscript drafts in days to come, and musing a little over the popular notion that the poet's verse was easy and unlaboured and that it always flowed from the source in an unbroken stream. In some of the passages, indeed, his inspiration was immediate and came unfalteringly, in others, ideas and language to clothe them fittingly have called for much work. Throughout all the experimenting, reflecting, and building up, we are conscious of him, familiar with the personages of his epic as though he were actually an onlooker at the unfolding of the tangled drama of their lives. There is no vagueness, we feel, in the scenes as they pass before his own eyes, but all this revision is witness to the ever-present anxiety of placing them before our eyes to-day, in language enough in harmony with our mode of thought to make us see what he saw of that forgotten world by the light of his own sympathies, yet in certain passages terse and unemotional, that these heroic figures might stand out in their own atmosphere of stern resignation, Gods and men alike led by the hand of Fate.

One of my Father's last adventures in translation was his attack upon Beowulf. *The Story of Beowulf* naturally looms in the horizon of any English poet; but the difficulties of its language and the problems of scholarship it presents demand a special preparation which Morris was unable to give to it. Accordingly he sought the aid of a competent Anglo-Saxon scholar to do for him what had been so successfully done by Eiríkr Magnússon in his first attempts upon the Icelandic sagas, and Mr Wyatt's aid was enlisted. The critical study of the text of Beowulf is still in a state

of flux and as a consequence the value of Morris's rendering considered as a translation is not on a par with that of his Icelandic translations; but as a sustained effort it still retains its place among his works. A selection from the correspondence which passed between poet and translator will give some idea of the conditions under which the Beowulf was produced. What my Father had long felt about the poem may be seen from the following extract from an unpublished lecture on 'Early England:'

The epic of Beowulf is worthy of a great people for its sincerity of language and beauty of expression, and nowhere lacks the epic quality of putting clear pictures before the reader's eyes; nor is there anything in it coarse, ignoble or degrading; on the contrary it breathes the very spirit of courageous freedom: to live is good and to die is good if you are valiant and faithful and if you reckon great deeds and the fair fame that comes of them of more account than a few more short years of a trembler's life upon the earth. This is the simple ethic of our forefathers, and in these poems it is so set forth that it is clear they really believed it, and in consequence Life amidst all its sufferings and hardships was a continuous poem to them.

Here is the opening of their correspondence:

August 28th [1892].

Dear Sir

Thank you for your letter. I should be very pleased to work with you if we could hit upon some plan together. I hope to be in Cambridge some time this autumn when I could have the pleasure of seeing you; I shall also be in town this day week (in the afternoon I shall be at home) but I should not like to ask you to come all the way from Cambridge to see me, though I should be very pleased to have some talk together. I do not think I should be able to set to work at once, so full as my hands are of work: but my hope is to tackle Beowulf, which no one can appreciate in the present versions I think. Of course I am well aware of the