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# The Collected Works of William Morris

*With introductions by his daughter May Morris*

VOLUME 4:
THE EARTHLY PARADISE: A POEM 2

WILLIAM MORRIS

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Dante Gabriel Rossetti pinx. Emery Walker Ph. sc.

*The Water-Willow*
*(a Portrait of Mrs. William Morris)*

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# THE COLLECTED WORKS OF WILLIAM MORRIS

## WITH INTRODUCTIONS BY HIS DAUGHTER MAY MORRIS

## VOLUME IV
## THE EARTHLY PARADISE
## A POEM
## II

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PSYCHE AT THE ENTRANCE TO HADES, DESIGNED BY EDWARD BURNE-JONES AND ENGRAVED ON WOOD BY WILLIAM MORRIS

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# INTRODUCTION

GOING through the first two volumes of "The Earthly Paradise" in manuscript, I find, together with the manuscript for the printer, duplicates of several of the tales copied by another hand, very much worked upon by my father. Sometimes he writes flowingly and with astonishing rapidity, correcting scarcely at all, and sometimes he seeks about for the right phrase, which, when it comes, replaces with vivid images rather languid and inelastic lines. It is interesting, for instance, to see how "Cupid and Psyche" grew, and what searching handling the tale received. Three manuscripts exist of it, an early manuscript*—the first draft in various forms—the clerk's copy worked upon, and the clean "copy" for the printers. Before the tale reaches its final form, page after page is cancelled, incidents are altered, and the tale indeed largely re-written. Originally, following Apuleius, Psyche's grief impels her after the flight of Cupid to go to her sisters with bitterness and guile in her heart, and after recounting the night's tragedy she brings them relentlessly to their death: as the tale finally took its shape, all this violence and vengeance on her part gives place to the sombre dooming of the Gods. The delicate little song sung to Psyche in the palace by invisible musicians:

> O pensive tender maid, downcast and shy . . .

replaces two other trial-pieces, one in the early manuscript (from the quarto note-books I have described) and another in the clerk's copy above mentioned. Both of them consist of stanzas strung on a thin thread of story (the story different in each), and the second poem has less warmth and colour than the first—both of them were discarded for the right

* Search in a family treasure-chest brings to light also an oblong clasped note-book containing most of the First Prologue and a considerable portion of "Cupid and Psyche." It is all written in pencil, some of it obviously done while travelling, and the verse flows with scarcely a break or a correction.



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lyric, which comes finally and seems to have grown in its place. It is interesting to find that things that "seem to have grown" are sometimes the result of some effort and searching about; there can be no rule, and even in one personality the two processes occur side by side; in my father's case, some of the most beautiful lyrics in "The Earthly Paradise" are printed as they were written, flowing and unaltered, in the first manuscript—indeed most of them were. In these earlier tales (we have seen that "Cupid and Psyche" followed on that first Prologue which is not in "The Earthly Paradise" manner), my father is finding and fixing his narrative style, which is to be simple and direct and sweet and not too monotonous; and as the tales grow, we can watch how the actual technical effort becomes less and less for him. After the Prologue and "Cupid and Psyche," indeed, he soon settles down to the work in happy mood.

In the same tale, Love's farewell to Psyche:

> Ah, has it come to pass, and hast thou lost
> A life of Love, and must thou still be tossed
> One moment in the sun 'twixt night and night?
> And must I lose what would have been delight
> Untasted yet amidst immortal bliss
> To wed a soul made worthy of my kiss,
> Set in a frame so wonderfully made?

with its mingling of tenderness and of the aloofness of a God, is substituted for a passage of moral reproach and a rather pedestrian explanation of his mother's scheming.

In "The Watching of the Falcon," the striking description of the falcon on his perch:

> Unfed, unhooded, his bright eyes
> Beholders of the hard-earned prize
> Glancing around him restlessly
> As though he knew the time drew nigh
> When his long watching should be done

is evolved out of three or four quite unpromising lines.



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PSYCHE IN CHARON'S BOAT, DESIGNED BY EDWARD BURNE-JONES AND ENGRAVED BY WILLIAM MORRIS

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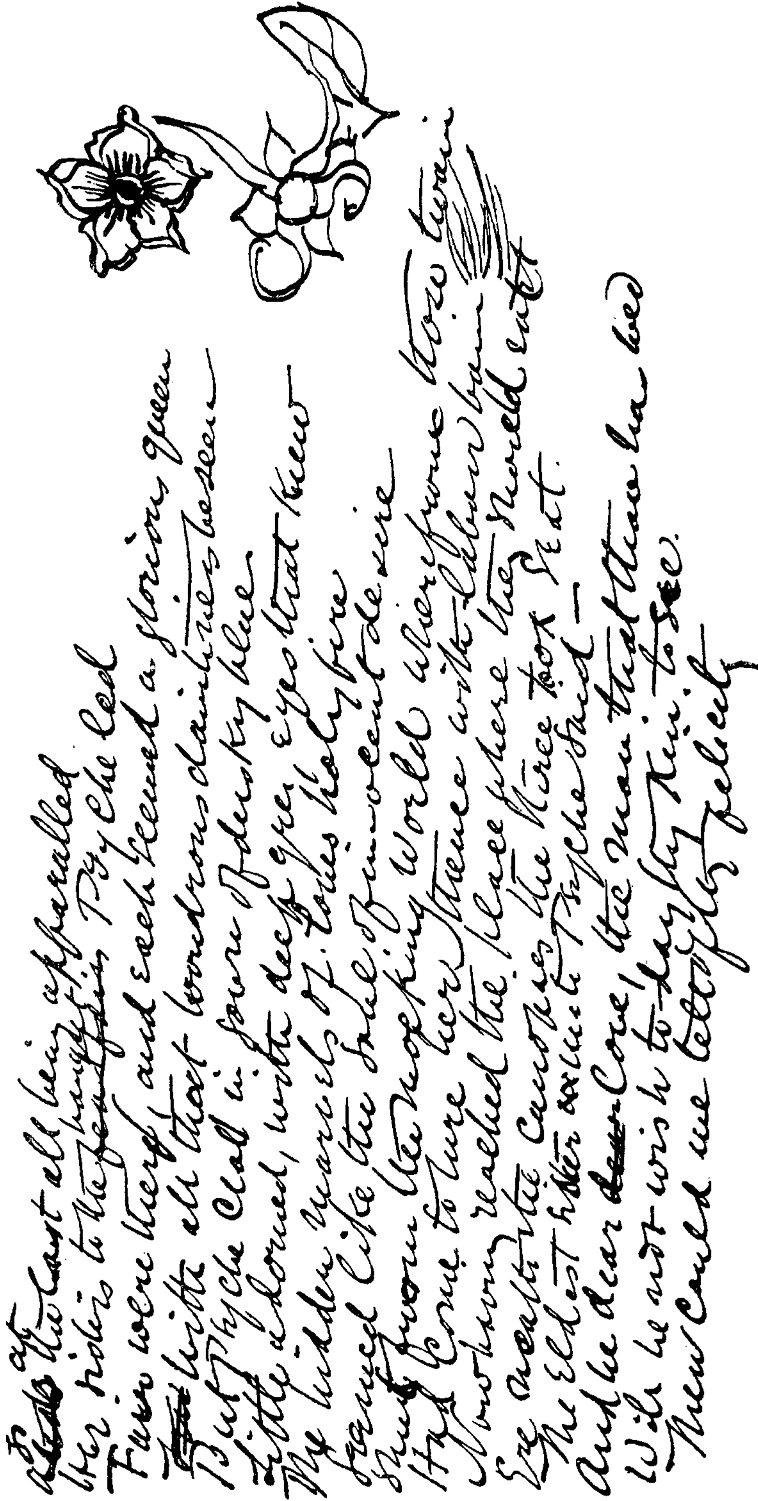

So at the last all being apparalled
Her sisters to the banquet Psyche led
Fair were they, and each seemed a glorious queen
With all that wondrous dainties beseen
But Psyche clad in gown of dusky blue
Little adorned, with deep grey eyes that knew
The hidden marvels of Love's holy fire
Seemed like the soul of innocent desire
Shut from the mocking world wherefrom those twain
Had come to lure her thence with labour vain
Now having reached the place where they should eat
Ere neath the canopies the three took seat
The eldest sister unto Psyche said—
And the dear Love, the man that thou hast wed
Will he not wish today thy kin to see.
Then could we tell of thy felicity

FACSIMILE FROM THE MANUSCRIPT OF THE EARTHLY PARADISE: DRAFT PAGE OF CUPID AND PSYCHE

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"The son of Crœsus," which appears in the draft as "The Story of Adrastus," is a good deal worked on, though the incidents are unaltered. I have sometimes wondered, however, why my father did not use Herodotus' intense and simple ending of the story. It is told there that the unhappy Adrastus waited until the funeral ceremonies were all finished and there was silence round the grave, and then brought his life to an end on the mound where Atys lay.

The revision in these corrected manuscripts is made with certainty and decision. With such a mass of matter to deal with, it is natural that a rapid worker like my father should fix the phrases, good and indifferent, the quickest way he might, as they came crowding to the pen's point, without waiting to mould or finish. But then came the overseeing, equally swift, transfusing music and life into some languid passage. Rarely is there any hesitation or fumbling with a correction, and the lucidity of these revisions make one almost fancy the poet fatigued after the long strain, plodding on with thoughts remote from the task before him, and suddenly waking up and coming back laden with new material from that land wherein he had been wandering.

The stanzas for August* tell of Sinodun Hill and the abbey church of Dorchester, and the swift concentrated description produces a more living impression than could any detailed account of this place of many memories. To the wanderer over the Downs, the two hillocks may be landmark and companion for many solitary hours of wayfaring across the wide sweeps that fade from gold to distant blue. In a first stanza, which was struck out, the place lives again to anyone who knows it well.

In this sweet field high raised above the Thames
Beneath the trenched hill of Sinodun
Amidst sweet dreams of disembodied names
Abide the setting of the August sun,

* In the draft there are four stanzas, of which the last three were selected.



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Here where this long ridge tells of days now done;
This moveless wave wherewith the meadow heaves
Beneath its clover and its barley-sheaves.

Thus I have seen it, the corn-land mellow under the burning August sun, on cross-country travelling from London to our Kelmscott home. But the first time we youngsters saw Sinodun Hill was on a delightful river-journey we made from the house in Hammersmith up the Thames to Kelmscott. For some reason, we had not much time at Dorchester, but I remember that my father insisted on us children going up to see the entrenchments—and eager enough were we to fill in the long and happy days with any new delight. The passionate interest he took in these things impressed itself on us, and the strangeness of that first sight of the ancient earthworks, linked with the simple explanation given us of what they meant, will always hang about the picture my mind retains of them. It was already twilight as we clambered over the rough grass, and back to the river and our company: the colour had gone out of the world, and as I look back trying to live again the impressions of the evening, something of the ancient people seems to have lingered in the hushed uncertain evening time, and the momentary oppression and melancholy of it come over me once more as I write.

The following is an extract from Mr Fairfax Murray's diary for 1871:

"Tuesday, May 16th.

"Breakfasted with Mr Morris. Went with him to Farringdon, lunched at Lechlade and drove over to Kelmscott to look at a house and returned in the evening."

This was the first sight of the old house which became so much to my father. Both the men were enraptured with the place, and Mr Murray speaks with renewed pleasure of the enjoyment of that day in talking about it.

The "June" verses for "The Earthly Paradise," written



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before we had made the acquaintance of our beloved Oxfordshire home, seem indeed to embody the poet's vision of the far-off village he was soon to visit by the merest chance. The upper reaches of the Thames had always touched my father closely, and in the quiet music of these verses the very air of the valley where the Thames is young, comes floating with aromatic fragrance. Knee-deep grows the flowered grass in early June in those rich water-side meadows, and the perfume of the blossom seems indescribably mingled with the birds' song, with the soft fall of water over the weir, and the quivering of the warm air alive with butterflies and wandering sheaths of the elm-blossom—all one delicious entanglement of charm.

We had no permanent country refuge in those days, but, of course, often went to grandmamma's—the grandmother who spoilt us so outrageously and adorably. We used to migrate, bag and baggage, in a cab from Queen Square to the pleasant roomy old house at Leyton; and I well remember how grandma would drive up to visit us, in a carriage laden with fruit and flowers and all the country offerings so dear to Londoners. Then we children would be taken shopping, and have a rapturous time in which strawberry ices and mysterious sweets wrapped in gold paper figured largely. Though my father and the small family lived ostensibly in London, we never were really town-birds; country life was always to us the natural and happy thing. Grandma's home at Leyton was a splendid place for a family of children; a self-contained little world it was, with never-failing outdoor interests. I remember nothing in detail distinctly, but the general impression was pleasant. The house was a fine, square, spacious building set in well-bushed grounds, with a wide terrace-lawn, and garden sloping to a wilderness. Life there was a succession of amusements shared with young aunts and uncles and first and second cousins, all very animated and fond of gaiety. The family servants were also our playmates in leisure moments. They were of the old school, of course, affectionate, and upright and intelligent, "knowing their



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place," which was high in the esteem of their employers. One of our cousins we disliked badly, not because he bullied us two girls (though he did), but because, disapproving of our simple clothes, he called us "medieval brutes," and to our loyal minds the mysterious epithet was offensive, as seeming somehow to cast a slur upon our parents. Every one else was lovely to us, and the servants were our sworn friends. One butler in the family we heard tell of (he was before the time of us children) who had at once such a sense of decorum and of humour that he must have been hard put to it to bottle up his mirth when waiting at table, at the sallies of "the young gentlemen." I believe, sometimes when my father and Burne-Jones were there together and full of fun, he would suddenly rush out of the dining-room and be heard exploding outside in uncontrollable laughter.

One of the few pictures I retain of Leyton is quaint enough, if one comes to think of it: it is a fair summer morning and we are assembled in the dining-room with its door opening on to the garden from whence the scent of syringa comes floating on the fresh dewy air. The butler brings in the steaming urn, then retires, and then the door opens wide and all the house-servants enter, carrying a long bench, which they set down and on which they sit in a row. The *padroni* then settle themselves, and my father begins to read family prayers. I watch the urn sizzling, with one eye on my Aunt Henrietta's little dog out there on the lawn, who is yawning and pretending to smell the flowers, and I wonder if he intends to come in and disturb family worship. Then we all kneel, and there are all the servants' backs bending over their bench in a row! I look at cook's back which is broad, and at the back of granny's maid which is slender and trim with its muslin apron-strings. My father reads the Psalm of the day beautifully, as if he enjoyed it, but when he comes to the prayer by a modern divine he delivers it with short decisive accents, and the sharp child notices the difference ... all the same, one begins to dream ... "For ever and ever. Amen." Prayers are over; the household



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troop out, refreshed, to their duties, the late-comers saunter in and greet the early ones, and grandma stands on tiptoe and strokes my father's face lovingly. The urn sizzles, the little dog patters in, sneezing with affection, and people sit down to breakfast.

My grandmother was short and very fair-complexioned, with an oval face, rather pronounced nose and a small mouth. In the best bedroom there was a blue picture of her as a young woman that we girls were much in love with. It represented a slender lady with fair hair in loops and bows above her head, with a slight smile on her small mouth (you see, the artist wanted to keep it small, yet smiling—the result was nearly a simper!) her slim arms were enveloped in a careless blue scarf, and her hands almost hidden under the long sleeves which were clasped at the wrist with golden bracelets. And the dress was beautifully blue.

I have many pretty memory-pictures of the seventies, of visits to The Lordship, Much Hadham, Hertfordshire, the home where our grandmother ended her days: pictures, I mean, in which my father stands out. If we children were there on a long visit, he or mother would come down for a while, and then there were rejoicings and setting forth of the best fruits and the choicest viands for a welcome. One of the pictures is an apple-gathering—oh, so pretty, so full of the rich colour, of the mellow green of autumn. One part of the old garden was enclosed in the dry moat, now grassed over, a wide quadrangle screened on two sides by great yew walls. Apple-trees grew down in the moat and in the pleasance within: apples of different choice old-fashioned kinds scarcely known now, mellow and perfumed, some bright as jewels, some sobered by a network of brown. They would lie in rich heaps in the grass at the foot of the trees, waiting to be criticised and classified. Amid remembrance of the children's eager delight in the exuberance of this golden sun-warmed treasure I can recall my father's bearing that hot afternoon, as he stood stick in hand, with his mother on his arm, taking it all in with pleasure and affec-



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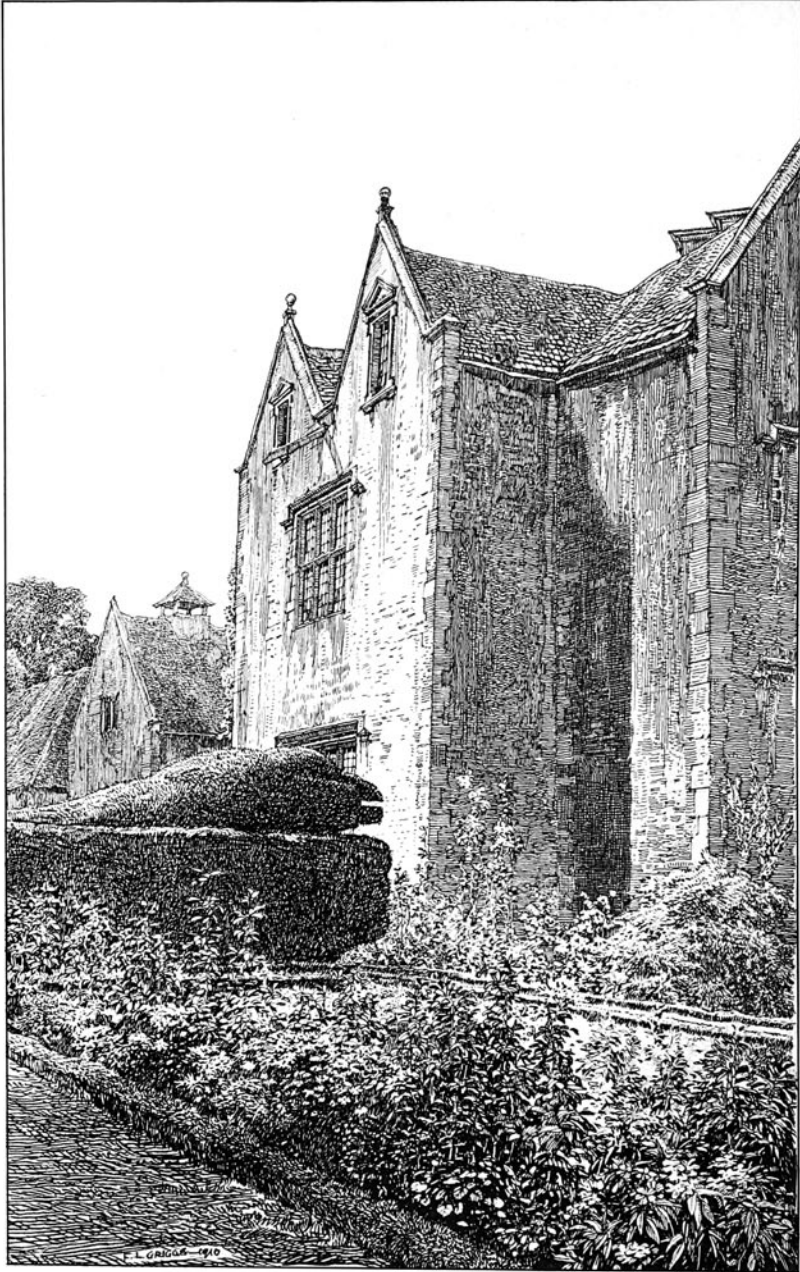


F. L. Griggs del. 1910 Emery Walker Ph. sc.

Kelmscott Manor
looking East

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tion: absorbing the picture, as it were, with his keen eyes, from the feathered white clouds high above the chestnut avenue, to the rough heads and flushed cheeks of his youngsters. Another picture of him and grandmamma: on a bright winter's morning, a wide well-kept walk above the moat-garden was the favourite promenade. It was high and dry, with a sparkle of frost on the close-laid gravel, and up and down the walk they would pass with measured steps, talking of this and that, and my dear granny's fond pride in the son who had once disappointed her by giving up the Church as a career, was eloquent in every movement. "Why, my dear, he might have been a Bishop now!" she exclaimed to me once with plaintive affection; but I think she was very well content with things as they were!

The charming drawing of Kelmscott Manor by Mr Griggs shows the house from the north-east corner of the walled garden, where a vine spreads all over the end of a great barn-end, and where the winter-violets and comfortable warm fragrant things of that sort are. It shows the rather later portion of the house, "the large square parlour . . . built with the tapestry room over, in loftier range, and in a style clearly showing the Renaissance influence, chiefly marked by the two large fire-places, and the small classically shaped windows in the gables of attics in the roofs." *

The dragon in the yew-hedge which Mr Griggs has drawn so delightfully, was cut by my father a good many years after our first occupation of the house; we had a merry time of it when he periodically trimmed and shaped the beast—"cutting the dragon's hair" was a ceremony that took place in the presence of an interested and critical audience. Afterwards, his old friend, the Reverend W. Fulford Adams, our neighbour at Little Faringdon, undertook to keep it in order, which he did until he left, alas, for a cure of souls away in the Cotswolds.

Writing of these old days sets me recalling the reception we children gave to what we could take in of my father's

* Philip Webb in Mr Mackail's Life.



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poetic work. Our parents always treated us with the respect due to childhood and were not too "interfering" in the matter of pressing suitable literature on our notice, so it is specially pleasant to remember how familiar to us the stories were that he had worked upon. It is still more pleasant to know that the books he had loved in his youth were also our books; it might have been far otherwise if we had taken upon us to "re-act" from the home surroundings! Some of the "Earthly Paradise" poems came out of volumes that we children had in the nursery and schoolroom, and I think it must have also pleased our elders to see us devouring and absorbing the ancient tales that meant so much to them.

The books that our wily parents put in our way (with no parental command laid upon us) form an interesting "Nursery Library Series." I can remember Lamb's "Tales from Shakespeare," Æsop's Fables, Thorpe's "Yule Tide Stories," and his "Northern Mythology;" Grimm's "Household Tales" ("Holy Grimm" it was called: the term originated with the Burne-Jones children); Hans Andersen's "Tales;" Magnússon and Powell's "Legends of Iceland;" "Heroes of Asgard;" Cox's "Gods and Heroes of Greece"—a delightful introduction for children to the Greek folk-lore and epic; Sir John Mandeville's "Travels;" Miss Frere's "Old Deccan Days;" and Mitford's "Tales of Old Japan." From the ghost-story in the last-named I suffered things not to be explained in measured language. I must not forget our old friend Sir Walter Scott. Rossetti in one of his Kelmscott letters of 1871, writes: "The children, who are indefatigable readers, read about a volume of the Waverley Novels a day." These were some of our classics.

So while the poet was getting his tales of wonder through the press, putting up stained glass windows in churches all over the country, designing wall papers, and learning Icelandic, his youngsters were wandering in the land of wonder he had created, playing at

> Giants and witches and young men bold
> Seeking adventure,



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acting their favourite stories interminably. "Rapunzel" was very popular, I remember, because we liked to pretend we had long hair that reached from the tower to the ground. I must add that we were catholic in our tastes and that Thackeray's "Rose and the Ring" ran "Cupid and Psyche" very close as a favourite, and without meaning any discourtesy, I used to find queer likenesses to the dramatis personæ of that delightful book in our elder friends and acquaintance, the poor dears quite unconscious of any criticism the while. My father was pleased and tickled at our grouping Thackeray's genial absurdity with the tales of the ancient world, but he never could sympathise with the enthusiasm children had a little later on for "Alice in Wonderland." It was a type of child-literature that "gave him the fidgets," he would say. Nor were books for children encouraged which presented the old tales in a modern setting. I can remember that Hawthorne's "Tanglewood Tales" were not viewed with favour. Lamb's "Tales from Shakespeare" were a different matter.

There are two deviations from my text (the one volume edition) that must be noted. In "The Watching of the Falcon," on page 173, line 2 from the bottom, and on the following page, in the whole of the lady's speech, she uses "you" for "thou" in all editions except the Kelmscott Press. Here it is altered to "thou," and I have followed the alteration, as I think it must have been made with my father's sanction. The same thing occurs with regard to a word on page 183, line 19; "within the troops" is altered in the Kelmscott Press edition to "within the folk."

The Water-Willow picture by Rossetti is a portrait of my mother. It is not so happy a likeness as some of the studies, the face being rather pinched, and the nose too long. Mr Rossetti brought into the background of the picture Kelmscott Manor, where he was living at the time of painting it, the little old church with its elegant open belfry, and our boat-house with the fishing-punt moored below. He men-



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tions it in a letter to W. B. Scott, saying, "I am painting a little portrait of Janey for a beautiful old frame I have, and am getting into the background the leading features of Kelmscott—the house, the picturesque church and the river banks. I think it will be pretty." I remember playing about by the boat-house one afternoon when he came down and asked me to get the gardener to come and moor it in another position, as he was going to draw it, and how I was secretly hurt by his rather impatient amusement when I offered to do it myself. Mr Rossetti did not know that I spent much of my time in the lumbering old punt and could handle it quite deftly. We girls were fond of the picture when it was finished, but it bothered me to have house and church and boat-house all brought together, when they were really in different directions. I confided to mother my doubts as to the morality of this, and demanded an explanation. But the child's "That isn't how things really are!" can't be met by explanation.

The red chalk study for this picture, which has none of these local details introduced into the background, is in the Birmingham Art Gallery.

I am much indebted to Messrs Curtis & Cameron, of Boston, who were good enough to allow me the use of their negative of the Water-Willow picture for reproduction in this edition.



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