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978-1-108-05119-4 - The Collected Works of William Morris: With Introductions by his Daughter

May Morris: Volume 5: The Earthly Paradise: A Poem 3

William Morris

Frontmatter

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The Collected Works of William Morris

A creative titan of the Victorian age, William Morris (1834–96) produced a prodigious variety of literary and artistic work in his lifetime. In addition to his achievements as a versatile designer at the forefront of the arts and crafts movement, Morris distinguished himself as a poet, translated Icelandic sagas and classical epics, wrote a series of influential prose romances, and gave lectures promoting his socialist principles. His collected works, originally published in 24 volumes between 1910 and 1915, were edited by his daughter Mary (May) Morris (1862–1938), whose introductions to each volume chart with insight and sympathy the development of her father's literary, aesthetic and political passions. Volume 5 contains the third part of *The Earthly Paradise* (1868–70), Morris' ambitious collection of verse tales.

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William Morris

Frontmatter

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)

The Collected Works of William Morris

*With introductions by
his daughter May Morris*

VOLUME 5:
THE EARTHLY PARADISE: A POEM 3

WILLIAM MORRIS



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Frontmatter

[More information](#)

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William Morris

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Cambridge University Press

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William Morris

Frontmatter

[More information](#)



Ernst Walker Ph. sc.

Mrs William Morris

from the painting by D.G. Rossetti

1868

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William Morris

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

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WITH INTRODUCTIONS BY
HIS DAUGHTER MAY MORRIS

VOLUME V
THE EARTHLY PARADISE
A POEM
III

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William Morris

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Cambridge University Press

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May Morris: Volume 5: The Earthly Paradise: A Poem 3

William Morris

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	page xj
SEPTEMBER	1
The Death of Paris	4
The Land East of the Sun and West of the Moon	24
OCTOBER	122
The Story of Acontius and Cydippe	124
The Man who never laughed again	159
NOVEMBER	206
The Story of Rhodope	208
The Lovers of Gudrun	251

ILLUSTRATIONS

Mrs. William Morris, from the painting by Dante Gabriel Rossetti	frontispiece
Kelmscott Manor, from the garden door, from a drawing by F. L. Griggs	to face page xvijj
Facsimile from the draft manuscript of "The Lovers of Gudrun"	to face page xxxij
Facsimile from the manuscript of "The Earthly Paradise:" "The Ring given to Venus"	inset between pages xxxiv, xxxv

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-05119-4 - The Collected Works of William Morris: With Introductions by his Daughter

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William Morris

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Cambridge University Press

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May Morris: Volume 5: The Earthly Paradise: A Poem 3

William Morris

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

INTRODUCTION

PART III of “The Earthly Paradise” was published in December 1869, with the imprint of 1870. The year had been marked by a great output of work; at the end of the previous year my father had begun to study Icelandic, and in January following “The Story of Gunnlaug Worm-tongue,” which he translated with Mr. Eiríkr Magnússon, was published in “The Fortnightly Review;” meanwhile, he had made himself familiar with the larger part of the Sagas under this Icelandic friend’s instruction. Their translation of the Grettis Saga was published in April, and “The Lovers of Gudrun,” based on the Laxdale Saga, was finished for “The Earthly Paradise” by June.

It will be seen that the North is making an imperative call upon him and that he answers with whole-hearted eagerness, for the time giving himself up almost entirely to the delight of this new interest, coming face to face with the Northern literature that until now he had but known in translations and abstracts; his mind is in a ferment with all this fresh material urging him to fresh production; and “The Earthly Paradise” work goes on steadily, while the business claims his close personal attention. To understand how all this can be done in a day of twelve or fifteen hours, one must realize that my father did his writing in rest-hours and on holidays—sometimes working at night when all the household had long since been asleep. The business hours of the day were passed in the ordinary occupations of designing and the hundred and one details of overseeing his work-people. Rossetti made a caricature in these days representing my father in his twofold character of “Bard and Petty Tradesman:” one side of the picture shows him under a tree in classic draperies, charming the beasts of the forest as Orpheus; on the other he is leaning over the counter in a finely expressive “What can I do for you?” attitude.

In the middle of this preoccupation the state of my mother’s health was so disquieting that it was thought neces-

Cambridge University Press

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May Morris: Volume 5: The Earthly Paradise: A Poem 3

William Morris

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

sary for her to try the cure at Ems. We children were sent North to the care of our kind friends Mr. and Mrs. George Howard, and those two months, that for our parents could have been but a time of discomfort and anxiety, were for us an unspeakably happy time—a bright spot even among those happy years.

Just before leaving for Ems, a dinner party was given at Queen Square; it was at once a farewell to the travellers and a rejoicing over the enterprise of “The Earthly Paradise,” now so near completion. Like many other special functions of the kind, it seems to have been rather dull according to the account of those of the party who have described it to me.

I cannot think why some practical friend did not come to the rescue of my inexperienced parents before they launched out on that terrible Ems journey, and at least see that they did not reach a watering place crowded in mid-season, without having even secured an apartment beforehand. As it was they were literally stranded at the station at Ems, and I scarcely know which to be sorrier for, mother waiting there alone in a state of collapse, or father, frantically seeking for accommodation and coming back to her in a positively desperate state of mind. They settled down next day, and in the midst of the suffering and the apprehension, managed to get some amusement out of their surroundings.

Nowhere is my father’s exuberant vitality so strikingly shown as during this rather melancholy search for health: in spite of the acute anxiety expressed in the letters he writes home nothing checks either his courage or his industry, and nothing chills the warmth of his mental activity for more than a passing moment. The worry and excitement of travel in a foreign country do not present themselves to him as an excuse for idling. He writes to Philip Webb from Ghent on the 22nd of July: “I have done a little work already, and hope to have the little tale done (in rags) by then we are settled at Ems and get it together there. We go on to Mechlin to-day, Liège Saturday, Cologne Sunday.”

A fortnight later he writes to Philip Webb again:

xij

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-05119-4 - The Collected Works of William Morris: With Introductions by his Daughter

May Morris: Volume 5: The Earthly Paradise: A Poem 3

William Morris

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Fortuna, Bad-Ems,
Saturday, July 31st [1869].

Dearest Friend,

That is really my address though it looks like chaff, and I am not likely to move now during the time of our captivity; I am so jolly glad to have got over the journey on no worse terms, once or twice I felt quite inclined to give in, but here we are. . . . I paddled her about the river in a machine like a butter-boat with a knife and fork for oars; this they call a gondola here; it is all very well for a mile or two while the river artificially deepened and widened is without stream (there is a weir and lock about a mile below our lodgings, but none above as far as Nassau at any rate, which is six miles above us) all very well without stream but presently the unlocked river runs like a mill-race; I tried it the first day, and made about twenty yards in half an hour and then began to get back way; so I gave it up with hands blistered: however, there is a nice green bank in shadow after 5 p.m., just this side of the rapids, and I suppose I shall paddle Janey there pretty often; till she gets better it is like to be her principal enjoyment as the carriage business shakes her too much; if ("when" I hope) she gets better there are splendid mokes and mules here, whereon she may climb the hills; bating the company, which is not to my taste, though I've no doubt better than I am, the place is well enough, and $\frac{1}{2}$ a mile out of Ems is quite unsophisticate, except for the woods which look suspiciously like preserves; it is in fact a very lovely valley, though I think not the kind of place I should like to live in, one is so boxed in; it is rather like some of the lake-country but without the sour grow-nothing air of that soaking land. The valley is very narrow; first the river a ragged affair, with gravel-banks and all perhaps as wide as the Thames at Clifton Hampden, then narrow green "eres" sometimes on this side, sometimes on that, then the road on a sort of terrace, and then the hills, sometimes wall-sided cliffs, sometimes roundish well-cultivated downs wooded at the top; the roads have jolly fruit trees each side

xij

Cambridge University Press

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William Morris

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

of them and every good exposure has a vineyard looking very neat and shipshape, for they are just pruning them: everything seems to grow beautifully here, the apricots are stunning; . . . At the top of the gorge-side you come upon the bold uplands of the Rhine country, all covered with grain and oilseed crops; but it is a strong pull to the top and till J. is better I am not like to be able to get fairly up; I had a try yesterday morning and was a sight for a tallow-boiler, but could scarcely get a glimpse and then was not fairly up: however, as I say, the country is a fine one in spite of my teeth; on our drive on Thursday we went through a funny ragged walled village; so German! and so precious precious ragged! not dirty hardly and scarcely squalid, but good lord, how ragged! I couldn't help thinking on our drive though, how you and I and Charley would have enjoyed a tramp up, or pull down this Lahn valley 11 years or so ago. . . . There are a few oldish houses here, our windows look right on to the principal one, a rum old seventeenth century house, the old Kurhaus, I believe. They keep early hours here; the band woke us this morning at 7 with Luther's Hymn played in thundering style . . . this morning I managed to scramble through Acontius and Cydippe; I have now got to knock it into shape; I am not sanguine about it . . .

All through these letters there are delightful descriptions of the surroundings of Ems, and some equally delightful personal touches.

“To-day is a regular wet day and, O lord, can't it rain at Ems. I went a two-hours' walk yesterday up a hill-road; I think the country jolly, I must say: it all runs towards the big gorge in little gorges, the centres of which are all grass and hold the moisture like a cup and are as green as green can be. One little valley I came to was so jolly; a flat green space with alders round two sides of it, the great hills in the distance at one end, and round the other the hills rising steep with great lanky beech woods—as dry as a bone—there is nothing of the commonplace about the ordinary nature here,

xiv

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-05119-4 - The Collected Works of William Morris: With Introductions by his Daughter

May Morris: Volume 5: The Earthly Paradise: A Poem 3

William Morris

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

it is a wonderful country and fit for the breeding of German sentiment. I have been reading Carlyle's 'Wilhelm Meister' and have got thro' a great deal of it; what a queer book it is, and how knowing and deep sometimes amidst what a sea of muddle and platitude! I think Goethe must have been asleep when he wrote it: but 'tis a great work somehow . . . I have been reading 'Esmond' to her lately; it is a pretty book, but weakish, and Thackeray's *style* I think so precious bad."

I have often pictured father and mother in the uncongenial surroundings—amidst the usual banal racket of a foreign watering-place, with the added sense of unrest in the air that the presence of the King of Prussia gave (for I think the French Ambassador was there during their visit, and rumours of war were about). Home life meant so much to them and it was a positive penance to be away from Queen Square—it is the penalty that people pay for being acutely alive to the harmonies and discords of external things. I suppose that we also, "Jenny-and-May," counted for something, and we were far away, leading an open-air life on the Cumberland border, listening to the music of the golden-brown beck in the deep castle-glen, roaming over the moors, and living the child's life of dream and wonder in one of the most romantic places in England. But there they were, and my father's letters to Mr. Webb have at once the strain of wistfulness and depression one so well understands, and the courageous buoyancy that throws it off with determination. Truly, sensitive people are blessed with the "qualities of their defects"! On August 15 he writes:

Fortuna, Bad-Ems,
August 15th [1869].

My Dearest Friend,

. . . A month yesterday we left London, and 3 weeks to-morrow we came here: I have some hopes that we shall be at home again in 3 weeks from to-day, but don't like to think too much about it: though I catch myself now and then

xv

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-05119-4 - The Collected Works of William Morris: With Introductions by his Daughter

May Morris: Volume 5: The Earthly Paradise: A Poem 3

William Morris

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

looking at the time-tables and considering which train we shall go to Cologne by. I get out for a walk every morning now, and if the weather looks well stretch my legs a bit, but always take my pocket book with me and do a little work. This morning I walked to Nassau and back, 12 miles in all; it is a pretty quiet little town higher up the Lahn; Stein, the great Prussian statesman who did for the high tory party in Prussia was born there, was the swell of the place in fact. I also brought Paris' Death to an end roughly; again I'm not very sanguine about the merit of it; but I shall get through the work I set myself to do here in some way, and have a month to turn over the first of the tales before I go to press when I come home . . .

Another day he has been wandering in the woods and takes exception to the ants and slugs: he writes in the same letter:

“I have walked a little through the woods (beech mostly) but they are lonely and dismal except in the brightest weather and so precious full of ants as big as that; item on wet days the slugs there are bigger and uglier than any I have ever seen, 4" long, most of them a brilliant red-lead colour, but some like bad veal with a shell on their backs; the adders are lively too in this wet warm valley: yesterday morning I heard a rustle in the dry leaves behind me and out crept one as long as my umbrella of a yellowish olive colour and wriggled across the path as though he were expected; I kept feeling the legs of my trousers all the way home after that, and feel a little shy of sitting down on green banks now; however, they are always wet. Then I never saw anywhere so many jays all round the edges of the woods, they are at it all day long. Magnússon's Saga* has turned up and I have begun it; it is rather of the monstrous order but I shall go through with it, partly to see what there is good in it, partly to fill up the time—sleeping does a good deal of that . . .”



* This was the Völsunga Saga; see the Introduction to Vol. VII.
xvj

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-05119-4 - The Collected Works of William Morris: With Introductions by his Daughter

May Morris: Volume 5: The Earthly Paradise: A Poem 3

William Morris

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

My father was much struck by the beauty of the country around Ems, as the letters show; he has concentrated his vision of the river and steep green hills and woodland in some beautiful lines of the September introduction in “The Earthly Paradise:”

Withal no promise of the fruitful year
Seemed unfulfilled in that fair autumn-tide;
The level ground along the river-side
Was merry through the day with sounds of those
Who gathered apples; o'er the stream arose
The northward-looking slopes where the swine ranged
Over the fields that hook and scythe had changed
Since the last month; but 'twixt the tree-boles grey
Above them did they see the terraced way,
And over that the vine-stocks, row on row,
Whose dusty leaves, well thinned and yellowing now
But little hid the bright-bloomed vine-bunches.

From the letters one can see that while throughout their visit he is keenly feeling all this beauty, he is bored by the town atmosphere, anxious about my mother and very home-sick.

Fortuna, Bad-Ems,
August 20 [1869].

My Dearest Friend,

. . . the weather has picked up the last day or two, and to-day is lovely, warm, windy and fresh; and no sulks can quite prejudice me against the country here which is lovely; I went a walk in the uplands this morning about queer winding cart roads through grain fields dotted all over with apple-trees, everything of course being on the slope, and big hills everywhere in the distance, and thought what a delightful country it was if I had any business there. . . . Next week I hope to know something definite as to our getting back, meantime between walking, working and sleeping the time slips away somehow. I havn't taken to fishing yet, and don't think I shall, *pace* Ellis. I fancy I can dawdle about nearly as

xvij

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-05119-4 - The Collected Works of William Morris: With Introductions by his Daughter

May Morris: Volume 5: The Earthly Paradise: A Poem 3

William Morris

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

well without a rod as with one . . . as to me—I am disgustingly well, and quite ashamed of myself; only it is more convenient for the present that I shouldn't be ill, I mean to other people. . .

One of the last letters to Philip Webb is full of general description of their doings.

Fortuna, Bad-Ems.

August 27th [1869.]

My Dearest Friend

. . . I am at work still, I find the Palace East, &c., wanted rewriting rather than tinkering, I want to finish it before we get back, so as to have some time for correcting it before going to press. As you will hear from the Neds, or perhaps from himself, Ellis came here on Tuesday and stayed till Wednesday evening, he had been buying books at Hanover and took me on the way back; he was as placid and jovial as usual, and on Wednesday morning we went a journey on the outside of mules, with some trepidation on his part. I went for the first time into the Kursaal, and saw him stake a mild florin, which he doubled several times to his satisfaction, and then we departed—his luck has not tempted me to go in there again, it looked too dull—his coming rather put a spoke in the cartwheel of my muse; otherwise I was very glad to see him and thought it very kind of him to come. The weather has taken a turn here, and the wind is blowing from the east somewhere, and the sun is very bright and hot—the first day of it (the wind was west still then) reminded me of the 2nd or 3rd September, -58, and Caudebec . . . Humdrum is the style of our life here varied only by a fit of dumps at Janey getting worse now and then; if I could I should like to go on working till the last minute, but I rather doubt my capacity to smother up my impatience to that extent. Ned was so kind as to send me an illustrated copy of the review in "Temple Bar;"* it was very pretty; did you see it before it

*A series of caustic articles on "The Poetry of the Period" had been coming out in "Temple Bar," and Burne-Jones had evidently

xviii

Cambridge University Press

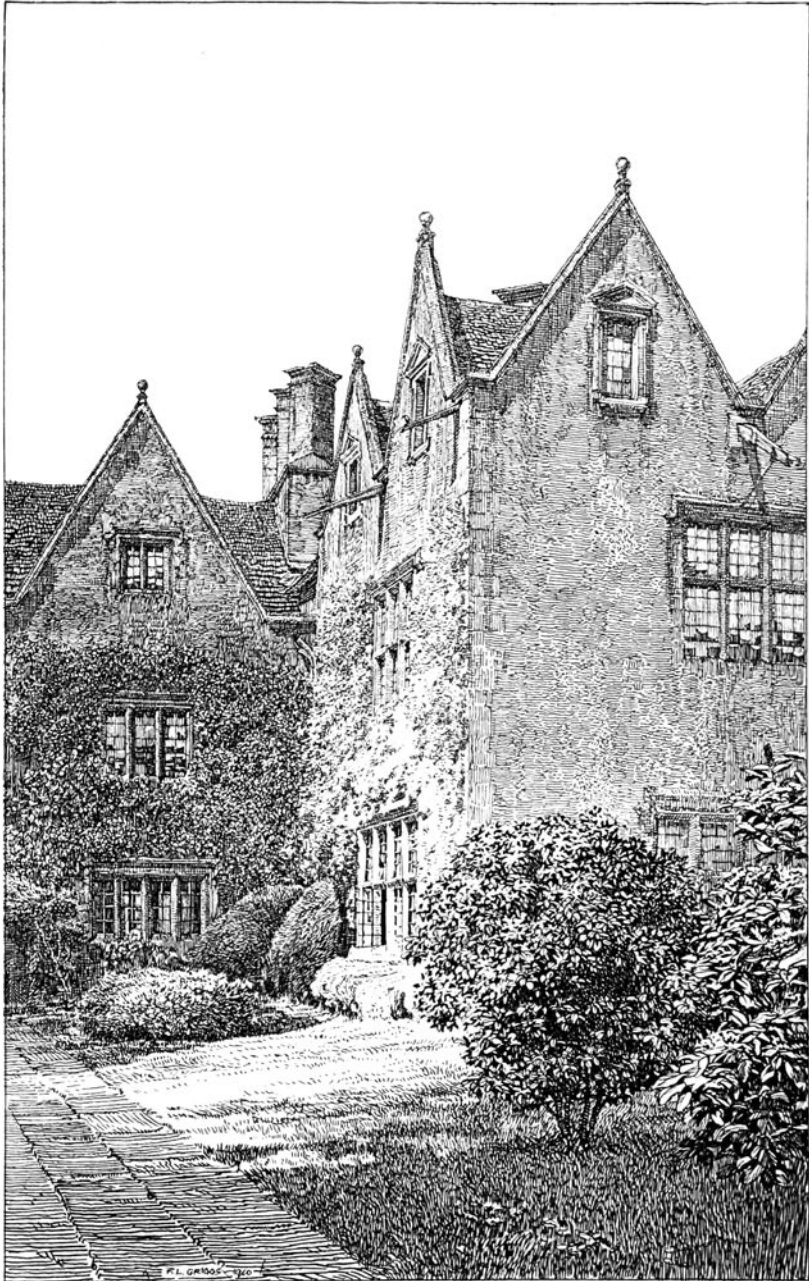
978-1-108-05119-4 - The Collected Works of William Morris: With Introductions by his Daughter

May Morris: Volume 5: The Earthly Paradise: A Poem 3

William Morris

Frontmatter

[More information](#)



F.L. Griggs del. 1910

Ernest Walker sc.

*Kelmscott Manor
from the garden door*

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-05119-4 - The Collected Works of William Morris: With Introductions by his Daughter

May Morris: Volume 5: The Earthly Paradise: A Poem 3

William Morris

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-05119-4 - The Collected Works of William Morris: With Introductions by his Daughter

May Morris: Volume 5: The Earthly Paradise: A Poem 3

William Morris

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

went off? There is really nothing at all to tell you, at least when such a clumsy letter-writer as myself holds the pen . . .

In the last letter his growing impatience to be off expresses itself in “the fidgetts:”

Bad-Ems.

August 29 [1869.]

My dearest Friend,

. . . I am at work still but have got the fidgetts; I went a long walk in the heat of the day yesterday to get rid of them; walked over the uplands till I came to a wood through wh: I had a lonely walk of an hour, taking a forest road at hazard: I thought I had fairly lost my way but it befel that I took the right turning, for at last I came upon a green-painted seat which showed I was near Ems; I drank a small lake of Seltzer water and white wine afterwards and got rid of my thirst, but not my fidgetts. However, to-day much against the grain I wrote 120 lines but have still got the fidgetts. I will write once at least again from here before we start and then from Cologne or Ghent or both.

Your most affectionate

W. M.

And so in due time they got back home to Queen Square, to their infinite relief and comfort.

An interesting personality came into the Queen Square life for a few years at this time. Warrington Taylor was a young gentleman of good family, who having got through his own fortune roaming about the world and enjoying himself, inherited money a second time and dispersed that also. By the time he made my father's acquaintance, he was in poverty. That is one side of him; another is that he was an earnest lover of the Pre-Raphaelites, and on grounds of mu-drawn some of his delightful illustrations on the margins—a habit of his which gave much joy to his friends. The August number dealt with Matthew Arnold and my father.

xix

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-05119-4 - The Collected Works of William Morris: With Introductions by his Daughter

May Morris: Volume 5: The Earthly Paradise: A Poem 3

William Morris

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

tual sympathies introduced himself to my father before we left Red House—for, I suppose, he felt he could not keep away from him and the set. He was an amateur of music and generally speaking a man of knowledge and of intuitive taste. When he first came into the circle, he was employed as a check-taker at the Opera House in the Haymarket. This strange young man—he was barely thirty when he died of consumption in 1870—was very soon entrusted with the management of the firm's business, which he handled with an intelligence and industry that ought perhaps to surprise one in a person who had let two fortunes slip through his own fingers, but that these contradictions are just what do happen in real life. His verve and originality were a delight to my father, and Taylor's sayings, Taylor's comments are among the unwritten annals of the Morris family.*

At this long distance of time there is an indescribable something that touches me in the picture of the gaunt young man with hook nose, eager eyes and emphatic speech, coming and going in that busy house. He was poor, he was sick, he was not a worldly success, but in my mind I have placed him in that serene company of men and women who "do service" in the world for no mere earthly consideration. There was perhaps an amateurish element in the conduct of the business of the firm in those days, and it was due to Mr. Taylor's keen comprehension of the situation and the ability with which he pulled things together and put them on a firmer footing that the enterprise did not come to an abrupt finish. He was there because he loved my father: the two men had much in common, in little as well as in big things; and he forwarded my father's interests in a simple whole-hearted way, the service being accepted as simply as it was offered. They certainly got much satisfaction out of each other, and

* One of the legends is of a rough draft-estimate found years after his death in which after the usual careful notes of cost of material, labour, trade-profit, &c., he had doubled the amount by another entry: "To ordering a piece of useless extravagance when so many thousands are starving."

xx

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-05119-4 - The Collected Works of William Morris: With Introductions by his Daughter

May Morris: Volume 5: The Earthly Paradise: A Poem 3

William Morris

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

I think the end of Warrington Taylor's life cannot have been unhappy. I might withdraw my remark "not a worldly success:" a man whose name is remembered with gratitude and a half-sad, wholly affectionate inclination to laughter, will not be ranked among the failures.

I have the following notes on the sources of the tales in Parts III and IV of "The Earthly Paradise."

For "The Land East of the Sun and West of the Moon" my father has followed rather closely the imaginative opening of the tale in Thorpe's "Yuletide Stories;" but it will be seen that directly the time-worn elements come into the old tale—the trivial explanations, the three gifts and all of what one might call the commonplace of fairy story (so far removed from the true magic of fairyland), directly all this machinery appears, the poet leaves the tale. He goes to Marie de France's "Lai of Lanval" for an incident in his own far more complicated tale, and there is possibly a suggestion of the search for his Bird-lady in "Hassan of El-Basrah:" all the rest of it, and more especially the curiously arresting framework of Gregory the Star-gazer, is his own.

"The Man who never laughed again" is taken bodily from the Arabian Nights, where it appears as "The Story of the King and his Son and the Damsel and the Seven Wezeers."* "The Ring given to Venus" is the tale told by William of Malmesbury—the earliest version of the legend so often repeated in the Middle Ages. Nothing is altered in it, but the violent ending of Palumbus is suppressed.

"The Hill of Venus" is taken from Tieck's "Trusty Eckhart" as regards the central motive of Tannhäuser, and through all the changes the poem underwent one can recognize something of Tieck's atmosphere and even of his detail.

"The Lovers of Gudrun" is taken directly from the Laxdale Saga.

"The Fostering of Aslaug," the lovely tale of the daugh-

* Lane's "Thousand and One Nights," Vol. III, notes to chap. 21.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-05119-4 - The Collected Works of William Morris: With Introductions by his Daughter

May Morris: Volume 5: The Earthly Paradise: A Poem 3

William Morris

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

ter of Sigurd and Brynhild, follows the summarized account of the Ragnar Lodbrok Saga in Thorpe's "Northern Mythology." It is characteristic of my father's handling of his material that he did not care to intrude on the harmony of his poem the grotesque incident of the riddles* by which Ragnar proved the wisdom of Aslaug—a world-old device again and again utilized by medieval story-tellers.

The classical tales in Parts III and IV of the "The Earthly Paradise" are, I think, frankly Lempriere. In "The Story of Rhodope" that friendly companion of poets and tale-tellers seems to have led my father astray in the matter of the maiden's name: "Rhödöpe" or "Rhodöpis" he gives as the heroine of the pretty story, and our poet may easily have stumbled—surely not troubling about "sources" as we do for him to-day! Modern men of letters show a lofty disregard for the volume from which those of the past generation who "have not had the advantage of a classical education" gleaned much useful information with little trouble, and I will here indulge my sympathy with this neglected author by quoting part of his epitome of the Rhodopis story: "Ælian says that as Rhodope was one day bathing herself an eagle carried away one of her sandals and dropped it near Psammetichus King of Egypt at Memphis. The monarch was struck with the beauty of the sandal: strict enquiry was made to find the owner, and Rhodope, when discovered, married Psammetichus."

"The Death of Paris," as will be remembered from the Ems letters, was written there, and my father was not very happy over it. Neither was "Acontius and Cydippe" a favourite with him: "I managed to scramble through Acontius and Cydippe. . . . I am not sanguine about it." A draft sheet giving the opening of this poem has something of an air of abstraction and effort about it one way and another; it contains a song which obviously did not satisfy him. I give the first two verses (which are the best) to show the form used.

* That she should come to him not alone but not in company, neither clad nor naked, neither full nor fasting.

xxij

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May Morris: Volume 5: The Earthly Paradise: A Poem 3

William Morris

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Weary heart and weary feet,
Is the land of love so sweet
That thou fearest not to meet
All (On) the horror of the wild.

Mayest thou not come back again
And lie long in bitter pain
Till thou diest because in vain
Thou of joy hast been beguiled.

“The Land East of the Sun and West of the Moon” was originally called “The Palace East” &c. In the first draft of this poem the story itself appears with an opening in the author’s earlier and looser narrative verse:

In Norway in old time did dwell
A certain carle who lived full well
And with him were three sons living
And thereof two were stout enow
Betwixt the handles of the plough.

This tale was written with apparent ease and little alteration in the early manuscript I have before me, in spite of what he says in one of the letters above mentioned, “The Palace East &c. wants re-writing rather than tinkering.” Like so many of the drafts, it is written very closely with no margin, on both sides of blue foolscap (partly in pencil).

It is characteristic of these early drafts that the story all runs on with scarcely any break or spacing. And at the end he notes “310 (lines) after 10 o’clock.”

The last two lines (somewhat altered)

So twain are one and all is bliss,
For lo, an idle dream is this.

were originally the end of the story itself, the portion which brings us back to Gregory having been added afterwards. A fine variation of a world-wide motive comes into the tale when John, after discovering his beloved in the enchanted land, and in despair at his failure to arouse her, tells over the

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-05119-4 - The Collected Works of William Morris: With Introductions by his Daughter

May Morris: Volume 5: The Earthly Paradise: A Poem 3

William Morris

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

whole history of their love. He at last repeats the words with which she left him: “East of the Sun, West of the Moon:” this is the magic that awakes her. Whatever snatches of legend my father may have recalled in the course of this tale, the end of it is his own. The spell-bound life into which the wandering lover can make no entry, the people who are blind to the sight of him and deaf to his voice, the sudden awaking through the coming of love—all this is new and masterly, while the device of Gregory the Star-gazer, who wakes to fall again into his dream so that we the listeners shall never come out of the dream-country throughout the telling of the tale, is handled in a manner individual to the author. I mentioned the Arabian tale doubtfully as a possible source, for the resemblance is very slight, the feather dress is not peculiar to it, and the longing to return home after a period of happiness not being in it at all—the most striking resemblance being the search through the world. I do not think my father used this story; the whole atmosphere in his version is essentially of the North and far removed from even “traveller’s tales” of the East and the wonders of the Isles of Wak.

But he went directly to the East for another of the tales: in “The Man who never laughed again” he has told over the story from the Arabian Nights, creating around it a different atmosphere, and, while reproducing the sense of the Predestined, has transposed it all into a higher key. Indeed he makes out a far better case for Bharam than the original story-teller does for his young man, who is impelled to open the Hundredth Door through a surmise of incredible meanness; whereas the curiosity of Bharam receives a certain dignity from his absorbing passion for the absent mistress, and from his wistful

“Perchance these words she did but say to me
To try my heart—did she not give the key?”

Human nature fulfilling its destiny—the restless longing for the unknown, this is the undercurrent of most of these wonder-tales of the Western poet.

xxiv

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-05119-4 - The Collected Works of William Morris: With Introductions by his Daughter

May Morris: Volume 5: The Earthly Paradise: A Poem 3

William Morris

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

The working-out of “The Man who never laughed again” in the different manuscripts presents some interesting points. The story was a good deal turned about and altered; where Bharam comes to the fateful door in the cave whose mystery the dead Firuz has forbidden him to seek out, the story was originally planned on somewhat other lines. The poem as it stands is closer knit, more concentrated, but the rejected portion contains a graceful lyric and is cast in such a different atmosphere that I am giving the best of it.

When Bharam goes into the cave, his wanderings there are described at some length and in detail, and instead of swooning and finding himself in a new country he goes to sleep and wakes up hungry but happy, hearing the song of birds beyond the cave through which he gropes into the open. Then he walks down the great river amid a lovely fruitful land, listening to the far-off sound of pipes and voices.

The charm of this fragment, to my mind, lies in its particularly English character; the East is forgotten, and we have been spirited to the banks of a sweet stream where the wind in the rushes mingles with birds’ song, and the folk who live there are grave and simple and remote from all adventure.

And still amid the gurgle of the stream
 He heard that music beating round the hill,
 And went well pleased, for surely did he deem
 In such a land that sound forbode no ill,
 And to his heart there gathered great good will
 Unto the singers, whoso they might be,
 For in his soul grew up felicity.

But now they ceased, the happy notes of men:
 The reed-chat’s warble and the late bee’s drone
 The chuckle of the light-foot water-hen
 But made the lonely river yet more lone
 When the sweet cheery music was all done;
 Then faster still he hastened, till he saw
 That backward from the stream the hill ’gan draw.

XXV

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-05119-4 - The Collected Works of William Morris: With Introductions by his Daughter

May Morris: Volume 5: The Earthly Paradise: A Poem 3

William Morris

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

But now again, through the fresh lovely eve,
Grown nigher now he heard the music sound
And suddenly the wayward stream did leave
The vine-clad hill, that Bharam followed round
Leaving a level grassy spot of ground
Twixt stream and hill; a very paradise
To Bharam's weary heart and dazzled eyes:

Because a long low rustic house of wood
Was at the end of the green flowery bay
And huge old trees about the meadow stood
And little closes hedged with trellis grey
Cast forth sweet odours on that end of day.
Green was the place, unburnt by any sun,
And scarce could know when showery spring was done.

But midway twixt the river and the house
E'en in the greenest place could Bharam see,
Beneath the over-shadowing elm-tree boughs
Strewn here and there, a goodly company,
And hidden by a thick-leaved bushy tree
He stayed awhile their manner to behold
Striving to make his beating heart more bold.

The music even as these came in sight
Had ceased once more, and he beheld indeed
Garlanded maids in girt-up raiment light
And eager youths, unarmed, in simple weed,
Just ceasing from the dance, as though for need
Of rest awhile, and sighing on the ground
The piper dropped beside his purse of sound.

But from grave elders rose a mingled voice,
And from the dancers laughter lacking breath,
Until the very wind must needs rejoice
At seeing folk so far removed from death,
Since he too much of woe remembereth,
The tireless traveller over town and plain
The bearer of ill news and plague and pain.
xxvj

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-05119-4 - The Collected Works of William Morris: With Introductions by his Daughter

May Morris: Volume 5: The Earthly Paradise: A Poem 3

William Morris

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

But now as Bharam gained a little heart
 To go to them, somewhat an elder said,
 And to his feet the piping man did start,
 A damsel set the garland on her head
 Cast-down erewhile, and took the flute that led
 The dancers, and rose up and 'gainst a tree
 Stood leaning, waiting for the minstrelsy.

And all about the fair young people stirred,
 And some maids blushing rose unto their feet,
 Some sitting still turned with a whispered word
 The dear support of some loved arm to meet,
 And smiled, remembering the soft song and sweet
 That in a while throughout the clear air rung
 Alternately 'twixt youths and maidens flung.

SONG*

PUERI

O WINTER, O white winter, wert thou gone
 No more within the wilds were I alone
 Leaping with bent bow over stock and stone,
 No more alone my love the lamp should burn
 Watching the weary spindle twist and turn,
 Or o'er the web hold back her tears and yearn.
 O winter, O white winter, wert thou gone!

PUELLÆ

Swift thoughts fly swiffler than the drifting snow
 And with the twisting thread sweet longings grow,
 And o'er the web sweet pictures come and go,
 For no white winter are we long alone.

PUERI

O stream so changed, what hast thou done to me
 That I thy glittering ripples no more see
 Wreathing with white her fair feet lovingly?

* This song with a few alterations and considerable additions was afterwards included in "Poems by the Way."

xxvij

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-05119-4 - The Collected Works of William Morris: With Introductions by his Daughter

May Morris: Volume 5: The Earthly Paradise: A Poem 3

William Morris

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

See in the rain she stands, and looking down
 With frightened eyes upon thy whirlpools brown
 Drops to her feet again her girded gown.
 O hurrying turbid stream, what hast thou done?

PUELLÆ

The clouds lift, telling of a happier day
 When through the thin stream I shall take my way
 Girt round with gold and garlanded with may:
 What rushing stream can keep us long alone?

PUERI

O scorching Sun, O master of unrest!
 Why must we toiling cast away the best,
 Now when the bird sleeps by his empty nest?
 See with my garland lying at her feet
 In lonely labour stands my own, my sweet,
 Above the quern half-filled with half-ground wheat.
 O red taskmaster, that thy flames were done!

PUELLÆ

O love, to-night across the half-shorn plain
 Shall I not go to meet the yellow wain,
 A look of love at end of toil to gain,
 What fiery sun can keep us long alone?

PUERI

O wilt thou ne'er depart, thou heavy night?
 When will thy slaying bring on the morning bright
 That leads my heavy feet to my delight,
 Why lingerest thou to fill with wandering fears
 My lone love's tired heart, her eyes with tears
 Of pensive sorrow for the dying years;
 Weaver of ill thoughts, when wilt thou begone?

PUELLÆ

Love, to the east are thine eyes turned as mine
 In patient watching for the night's decline,
 And hast thou seen like me this thin grey line,
 Can any darkness keep us long alone?

xxviii