

THE DOOM OF KING ACRISIUS

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The Doom of King Acrisius by William Morris & Sir Edward Bvrne-Jones

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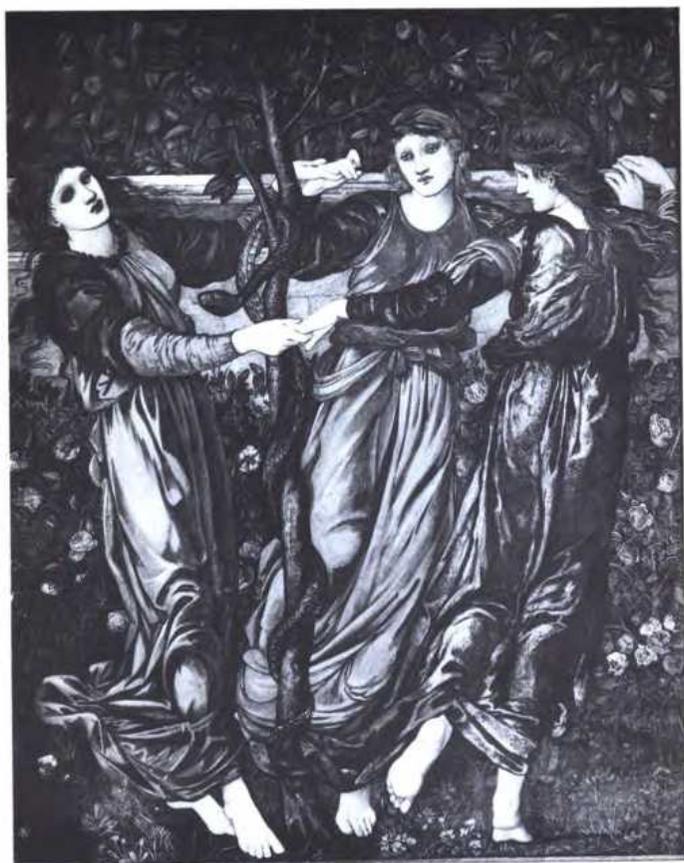
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WILLIAM MORRIS & SIR EDWARD BYRNE-JONES

THE DOOM OF KING ACRISIUS



THE DOOM OF KING
ACRISIUS BY 
WILLIAM MORRIS
ILLVSTRATED WITH
PICTVRES BY SIR ED-
WARD BVRNE-JONES



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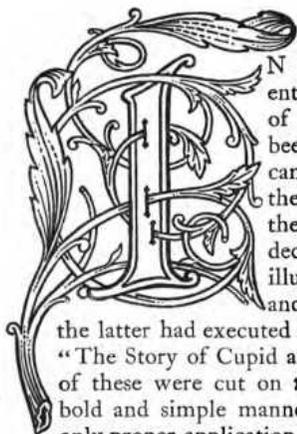
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BY SIR EDWARD BURNE-JONES, BART.

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PERSEA CONSILIO PALLAS MOVEIT INSTRVIT ARMIS
LV MINE PRIVATAE MONSTRANT PENETRALLA GRAIAE
NY MPHARVM HINC ALES FLANTAS CAPV FODITVS VMBRIS
GORCONA MORTALEM DE NON MORTALIBVS VNAM
ENSE FERIT GEMINAE SVRGVNT VRGENT QVE SORORES
SAXEVS EN ATLAS CAESO QVE FREPTA DRACONE
ANDROMEDA ET COMITES IAM SAXEA CORPORA PHINEI
EN VIRGO HORRENDAM IN SPECVLO MIRATA MELVSAM





IN the spring of the year 1868, seventeen out of the twenty-four tales of "The Earthly Paradise" having been completed, William Morris became more and more interested in the problem of how best to issue the work. As early as 1865 he had decided that it should be very fully illustrated by his fellow-countryman and dearest friend, Burne-Jones, and the latter had executed in that year forty-three designs for "The Story of Cupid and Psyche." The greater number of these were cut on the wood-block by Morris, in the bold and simple manner which he maintained to be the only proper application of the art, and although much of the beauty and delicacy of the original drawings had been lost, of necessity, in the cutting, the blocks possessed a strength and colouring very attractive in itself and admirably suited to the antique flavour of the poem. In the following year other drawings were prepared for "The Ring Given to Venus," "Pygmalion," and "The Hill of Venus." Some seventy subjects in all were designed, and such drawings as were not destroyed in the process of cutting passed into the hands of John Ruskin, and are now in the Taylorian Museum at Oxford. Morris's plan was to supplement these seventy drawings with something over four hundred more, also by Burne-Jones, illustrating the various other tales of "The Earthly Paradise," and to issue the completed work, with its five hundred wood-cut illustrations, in one folio volume. Had it been possible to carry out this plan there is little doubt that "The Earthly Paradise" would have surpassed in beauty and in richness of pictorial invention even the superb folio "Chaucer" of 1896, which

remains the supreme achievement of the Kelmscott Press. Unfortunately the time was not ripe for the production of such a volume; the art of printing had sunk to a low level in England, proper type could not be found, and there were, moreover, certain defects in the cutting of the wood-blocks which prevented them from being altogether satisfactory when printed. So with great reluctance the original scheme was abandoned, and the book was issued in the regular way. "To the very last," writes Burne-Jones, "we held to our first idea and hoped yet to see the book published in the Kelmscott Press in all the fulness of its first design." Had William Morris and Burne-Jones lived a few years longer this hope might have been realized, but with the exception of the drawings already spoken of there remain to us now but two series which are in any way complete in themselves, and which are available for reproduction, namely, those for "Pygmalion and the Image" and those for the story of Perseus, entitled "The Doom of King Acrisius" in "The Earthly Paradise." In 1872 Burne-Jones arranged a selection of the designs for "Cupid and Psyche" as a frieze for the morning-room of the Earl of Carlisle's town-house, No. 1, Palace Green, London. The subjects, in some cases slightly altered, were then drawn to the required size on the canvas, and several of them were painted by Burne-Jones himself in that year. For some years afterward, he worked at intervals upon the series, until finding the task too arduous, he called to his assistance Mr. Walter Crane, who completed it. Yet another scheme of interior decoration was commenced in 1875, this time for the drawing-room of the Right Honourable Arthur Balfour, in Carleton Gardens. Burne-Jones's intention was to execute some of the scenes from the story of Perseus in gilt and silvered gesso upon a back-

ground of oak. The decorations representing Pegasus and Chrysaor springing from the headless trunk of Medusa, and Perseus fleeing from the Avenging Gorgons, were carried to some degree of completeness, but a third, showing Perseus about to slay Medusa, never progressed beyond the preliminary stages, and remained unfinished at the death of the artist.



These three decorations are here reproduced.

In some instances more than one representation of a single incident is included in the present book, and this not without reason. In the case of Burne-Jones, although the main idea of a picture might remain the same for years, it was constantly passing through stages of modification, improvement, and selection, and frequently resulted in his treating the same idea from several points of view. His method of work has been described by Malcolm Bell in "Sir Edward Burne-Jones: A Record and Review," as follows: "His first process in the creation of a picture was the crystallization of the floating visions in his mind into a design carefully drawn out in chalk or pencil. This was generally modified from time to time,

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