

Tapestries designed by Sir E. Burne-Jones and J. H. Dearle



"THE FAILURE OF SIR LANCELOT"
("HOLY GRAIL" SERIES)

DESIGNED BY SIR E. BURNE-JONES
EXECUTED BY MORRIS & CO., LTD.

SOME EXAMPLES OF TAPESTRY
DESIGNED BY SIR E. BURNE-
JONES AND MR. J. H. DEARLE.

THERE exists a document which would seem hitherto to have eluded the vigilance of the late William Morris's bibliographers, and that is a letter over his signature, published in the sixteenth volume of "The Journal of the Derbyshire Archaeological Society." Dated 5th April, 1893, it is valuable as giving a brief epitome of the tapestry work executed by Morris's firm up to that period. "It may interest you to know," the letter begins, "that I wove a piece of ornament with my own hands, the chief merit of which, I take it, lies in the fact that I learned the art of doing it, with no other help than what I could get from a very little eighteenth-century book, one of the series of '*Arts & Métiers*,' published by the Government." This, his first piece of arras, Morris calls in his diary the

"Cabbage and Vine Tapestry." It was begun, as recorded in the same diary, on May 10th, 1879. It contained foliage and birds, but no figures; in short it was a *verdura*. But nothing less than figure-work could content him; and after fifteen years of untiring effort the firm were engaged, under Morris's direction, on the now world-famed "Holy Grail" series for Mr. D'Arcy, at Stanmore. To have made thus a dead art live again was a gigantic achievement for one man to accomplish; and no other was capable of doing it but William Morris.

The earliest specimen of figure work woven at Merton was Mr. Walter Crane's "Goose Girl." The original cartoon, now at the Victoria and Albert Museum, bears the date 1880. The tapestry itself was executed in the following year. From that time forward, however (with one exception, presently to be noted), Morris always secured Sir Edward Burne-Jones to design the figures, the accessories being arranged, at first by Morris himself, subsequently by his gifted pupil, Mr. J. H. Dearle.