

CHAPTER II

CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

WILLIAM MORRIS was born at Walthamstow on March 24, 1834. There was nothing in the circumstances of his childhood to make him unlike other men of his class. His father was partner in a prosperous firm of bill-brokers and the family remained well-to-do after his death in 1847. Morris's childhood was happy but not remarkable. He gave no special proofs of genius, but showed the same character and tastes as in later years. He liked to wander about Epping Forest and knew the names of birds, learned whatever he wished to learn easily and remembered it exactly, and was both passionate and good-natured.

One story is told of him which shows what he wished to learn and how well he remembered it. At the age of eight he saw the Church of Minster in Thanet, and fifty years afterwards, not having seen it since, he was