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Abstract

Discusses Ruskin's only fairy tale as a successful work, reflecting his interest in Northern landscapes. Notes female symbolism despite a lack of female characters. Recounts how Ruskin's psychological problems made him ambivalent toward, and eventually mistrustful of, fantasy.

Additional Keywords

Ruskin, John—Biography; Ruskin, John—Psychology; Ruskin, John—Relations with children; Ruskin, John—Views on nature; Ruskin, John. *King of the Golden River*—Criticism and interpretation

The Anonymous Fairy Tale

Ruskin's King of the Golden River

Marjorie J. Burns

The German romanticists (Tieck, Novalis, Hoffmann) began creating their haunting, folk-based tales in the last years of the eighteenth century. In England the movement was slower. The earliest well-known English *Kunstmärchen* was *The King of the Golden River*, written in 1841 by the art critic and social prophet John Ruskin at the beginning of his career. The story was Ruskin's first attempt at a fairy tale and remained the only fully conceived work in this genre that he was ever to produce. Written at the request of a twelve year old girl, it was not published until 1851 and then only anonymously.

Ruskin's reticence to acknowledge authorship of the fairy tale is not surprising. It was to a large part the result of the general ambivalence his age felt toward fairy tales and was justified, likely enough, by the conviction that such a work was out of character and too trivial for a young man fresh from Oxford, a young man who had won the Newdigate Prize for poetry in 1839 and had published several articles in the *Architectural Magazine* before he was twenty.

There was, however, in Ruskin's case a further restraint less easily acknowledged. Throughout his life Ruskin remained torn between a fanciful, aesthetic nature and the inhibitions imposed upon him by a rigid, puritanical upbringing. He became moralist and aesthete at once; and though in his art he sometimes found a means of reconciling the two halves of his character, at other times, inevitably, his divided nature troubled the consistency of his writing. Even at the end of his career, when the popular attitude toward fairy tales had become increasingly relaxed, Ruskin maintained a somewhat double attitude toward fairy literature, impulse conflicting with reflection.¹

Ruskin was born in 1819, an only and severely loved child of a late marriage. The rigid isolation of his household was broken only by occasional visits with cousins and by the holiday tours his family began taking through Britain and Europe as his father's wine business became increasingly successful. The holiday tours consisted mostly of a passive exposure to the countryside, witnessed through carriage windows, but the effects, especially of mountain scenery, were extreme. Not surprisingly, *The King of the Golden River* is Alpine in setting and Germanic in characterization.²

But for all the strong ties *The King of the Golden River* has with Ruskin's boyhood, it most likely would never have been written if it had not been privately inspired. Ruskin, like so many men of his century, depended upon contact with children, especially girl children, for a release from the serious role of an adult and male Victorian. Like his mystical and instructional *The Ethics of the Dust*, written in 1866 for the school girls of Winnington Hall, Ruskin's fairy tale *The King of the Golden River* was written for twelve-year-old Effie Gray, the girl who seven years later became his wife.

Ruskin did not intend the story for publication.

Not only was it published anonymously, ten years after it was written, but Ruskin's reluctance to acknowledge the work is made further evident in the advertisement attached to the first edition of the fairy tale:

The Publishers think it due to the Author of this Fairy Tale, to state the circumstances under which it appears.

The King of the Golden River was written in 1841, at the request of a very young lady, and solely for her amusement, without any idea for publication. It has since remained in the possession of a friend, to whose suggestion, and the passive assent of the Author, the Publishers are indebted for the opportunity of printing it. (Works, I, 310)

Even at the end of his life Ruskin remained apologetic about this work of his youth. In his unfinished autobiography *Præterita* he gives *The King of the Golden River* only the briefest mention: "The 'King of the Golden River' was written to amuse a little girl; and being fairly good imitation of Grimm and Dickens, mixed with a little Alpine feeling of my own, has been rightly pleasing to nice children, and good for them. But it is totally valueless, for all that. I can no more write a story than compose a picture." (Works, XXXV, 303-04)

In an age of moral seriousness the urge toward frivolity was hard to justify, and for Ruskin the conflict between desire and duty was particularly and personally incapacitating. It was his private life that most suffered when impulse and passion fell short under the inhibitions of guilt and religious austerity. The deep passion Ruskin expressed to Effie Gray during their engagement was not fulfilled during their marriage, and the similar feelings he later cherished for Rose La Touche were, perhaps fortunately, never put to the test. Significantly, Ruskin reserved one section of his diary for the intellect and another for feeling.

In his published writings, however, Ruskin was not always able to maintain this separation, and in his most sober works a fanciful strain will unexpectedly emerge. In the midst of an essay on art, architecture, or social reform he swells forth, to quote Peter Quennell, with "one of those 'pretty passages,' of which secretly he was always a trifle ashamed -- as of some unseemly indulgence in uncensored, unsanctified feeling -- but which correspond to an important aspect of the writer's divided nature."³

And yet Ruskin is at his best at such moments, at moments when the aesthete and the moralist work for each other, the one strengthening the other. *The King of the Golden River*, in spite of Ruskin's authorial reticence, succeeds in achieving this blend of rightness and fancy which characterizes the best of his works. In his medieval and fairy tale version of *Stiria*, Ruskin has created a magical world (vivid and active), where nature, in all its forces, is in accord

with Christianity and where the ornate and colorful (both in language and description) have shed the strictures of Victorian propriety without becoming incompatible with it.

The opening sentences recreate, with fairy tale simplicity and with a sensuous richness worthy of Keats, the mountain vistas and valley farms that Ruskin had early grown to love. "In a secluded and mountainous part of Stiria there was, in old time, a valley of the most surprising and luxuriant fertility. It was surrounded, on all sides, by steep rocky mountains, rising into peaks, which were always covered with snow, and from which a number of torrents descended in constant cataracts.... The clouds were drawn so constantly to the snowy hills, and rested so softly in the circular hollow, that in time of drought and heat, when all the country round was burnt up, there was still rain in the little valley; and its crops were so heavy, and its hay so high, and its apples so red, and its grapes so blue, and its wine so rich, and its honey so sweet, that it was a marvel to every one who beheld it." (Works, I, 313-14)

This is a vividly sensuous opening, but the sensuousness is limited to forms and fecundity in nature. Ruskin's fairy tale is strikingly devoid of female characters and being so cannot culminate in the traditional fairy tale marriage. The clouds that rest "so softly in the circular hollow," the crops "so heavy," the "honey" so sweet, "the" surprising and luxuriant fertility "have no human parallel, and the happy-ever-after ending that young Gluck earns is apparently one of rich husbandry in a single state.

The story is simple. Gluck, the youngest of three brothers, is left at home tending a roast over an open fire. He hears a knock at the door and, peering out into the rain and storm, sees a strange little man with a tall hat and a long cape blowing out into the wind. It is the Southwest Wind himself, the wind which has brought prosperity to the brothers, even when nearby areas have suffered flood or drought.

"I'm wet, let me in," calls the little man, but Gluck, fearful of his brothers' anger, at first is unwilling, as much as he pities the stranger. At last Gluck fearfully opens the door, inviting the little man to stay "only till the mutton's done," which it nearly is; and while the Southwest Wind sits steaming by the fire, Gluck returns to his turnspit work. "That mutton looks very nice," says the stranger. "Can't you give me a little bit?" But Gluck dares not to until he remembers he had been promised one slice for himself and decides he can give that one piece to the stranger. (Works, I, 317-19)

No sooner does Gluck begin to cut the mutton than his brothers (the scoundrel Black Brothers, Hans and Schwartz) come home, ill-tempered and threatening at the sight of the visitor. Their rudeness and violence are such that the Southwest Wind leaves, promising the two older brothers that because of their inhospitality he will return but once more. This promise is kept. During the night the Southwest Wind brings a storm which destroys the house (all except Gluck's room) and sweeps away cattle, crop, and barn. And now the Wind leaves the valley, bringing no more rain clouds. The land turns dry and infertile; the brothers, fallen from their prosperity, move into town where Hans and Schwartz set up smith work, melting down the remainder of their gold and cheating their customers. Their earnings go into drink, and little Gluck is left once again to tend the fire.

At last they are reduced to one gold drinking mug, cleverly wrought in the shape of a man's head, a round faced, round nosed man, whose long hair on each side forms the two handles. It is Gluck's own mug, given to him long ago by an uncle, but it too is sacrificed, and Gluck is left in charge of the melting and pouring of his own and only treasured possession.

But out of the melting pot comes another little man, the King of the Golden River. He gives the following advice to Gluck: "Whoever shall climb to the top of that mountain, from which you see the Golden River issue, and shall cast into the stream at its source three drops of holy water, for him, and for him only, the river shall turn to gold. But no one falling in his first, can succeed in a second attempt; and if any one shall cast unholy water into the river, it will overwhelm him, and he will become a black stone." (Works, I, 331) His speech finished, the little man walks into the furnace and evaporates.

One can see in this jovial, rounded figure a nurturing, protective spirit. He is literally the cup that gives, to be contrasted with the angular, long-nosed Southwest Wind, who demands his own due and whose indignation at the Black Brothers' failed hospitality causes Treasure Valley's loss of fertility, a loss which affects Gluck as well as Hans and Schwartz. Unlike the Southwest Wind, the King of the Golden River is a Christian figure, a figure who sets both task and temptation and wins in the end, plays the judge, rewarding or punishing not by how he himself has been treated but according to how those who seek his prize have demonstrated generosity or selfishness toward others.

Schwartz and Hans return and, finding the mug has produced no gold, take to beating Gluck. They will have nothing of his story until his persistence in the face of beating persuades them, and then the two Black Brothers begin quarreling over who should first seek the fortune. The quarreling becomes a brawl; Hans flees and Schwartz is put in jail for disturbing the peace. And now Hans steals a cup of holy water and sets out for the source of the golden river.

The way seems unnaturally long and dangerous. During his climb Hans meets a dog, a child, and an old man, all in agony of thirst. To each he denies the water he is carrying. The sky darkens with each act of selfishness; and when Hans pours the water from his flask into the headwaters, he becomes a black stone.

Schwartz, once out of jail, fares the same. With holy water he has bought from a bad priest he sets out for the mountain. Three times he denies water to three figures he meets, and he too becomes a stone. Only Gluck is left. At last he sets out for the mountain himself. To the old man, the child, and the dog he gives away all the holy water in his flask, water which had been willingly given to him by a good priest who knew Gluck's virtue.

With each act of charity, Gluck's journey becomes easier and the weather more favorable. When he sacrifices the last few drops of his water to the dog, the dog turns into the River King himself. "Why didn't you come before," the little man says, "instead of sending me those rascally brothers of yours, for me to have the trouble of turning into stones? Very hard stones they make too."

And the king gives Gluck a small, though quite Ruskinian, lecture on the meaning of holy water. "Water which has been refused to the cry of the weary and dying is unholy, though it has been blessed by every saint in heaven; and the water which is found in the vessel of mercy is holy, though it had been defiled with corpses." (Works, I, 346) Since Gluck has no more water in his flask, the River King shakes three drops out of a lily into the flask and bids Gluck cast these drops into the source of the stream.

Gluck does so. The river does not literally turn into gold but changes its course, flowing now over the parched valley where Gluck had lived with his brothers. The beauty and fertility return. In the end Gluck prospers; he lives charitably and in plenty. The river truly has brought wealth, the true wealth of beauty, virtue, and natural bounty.

The most frequently encountered theme in Ruskin's writing is this theme of a nature kind to those who act with kindness and forboding to those who have hardened their hearts. Gluck's brothers have misused the true gifts of this world.

They lived by farming the Treasure Valley, and very good farmers they were. The killed everything that did not pay for its eating. They shot the black-birds, because they pecked the fruit; killed the hedgehogs lest they should suck the cows; they poisoned the crickets for eating the crumbs in the kitchen; and smothered the cicadas, which used to sing all summer in the lime trees. (Works, I, 314)

Hans, climbing with his stolen holy water, finds the mountain fills him with an "oppressive feeling of panic terror." From out of the chasms come wild sounds, "changeable and loud... shrieks, resembling those of human voices in distress or pain" and "myriads of deceitful shadows, and lurid lights" playing and floating "about and through the pale blue pinnacles." (Works, I, 336-37) For Gluck flowers spring up, "pale pink starry flowers, and soft belled gentians, more blue than the sky at its deepest, and pure white transparent lilies." Butterflies, "crimson and purple," dart about and the sky sends "down such pure light" that Gluck is happier than he has ever been in his life. (Works, I, 345) Hans and Schwartz end as black stones. Gluck grows in virtue and humble prosperity. Through Gluck "the Treasure Valley became a garden again, and the inheritance which had been lost by cruelty was regained by love. And Gluck went and dwelt in the valley, and the poor were never driven from his door: so that his barns became full of corn, and his house of treasure. And, for him, the river had, according to the dwarf's promise, become a River of Gold." (Works, I, 347)

The ending of "The Mountain of Gloom" from *Modern Painters* (1856) expresses much the same idea:

Their gulfs of thawless ice, and untarted roar of tormented waves, and deathful falls of fruitless waste, and unredeemed decay, must be the image of the souls of those who have chosen the darkness, and whose cry shall be to the mountains to fall on them, and to the hills to cover them; and still, to the end of time, the clear waters of the unfauling springs, and the white pasture-lilies in their clothed multitude, and the abiding of the burning peaks in their nearness to the opened heaven, shall be the

types, and the blessings, of those who have chosen light, and of whom it is written, "The mountains shall bring peace to the people, and the little hills, righteousness." (Works, VI, 417)

The icy chasms which give forth shrieks of "human voices in distress or pain" in *The King of the Golden River* and the end which comes to the Black Brothers are both here in the "thawless ice" and tormented roar of those souls that have "chosen the darkness." As well, Gluck's mountain flowers and lilies, his peace, and renewed waters are the reward in "The Mountain Gloom" for "those who have chosen light."

The King of the Golden River, then, represents not only all that Ruskin loved, all that he wished his century to know and appreciate, but also all that he wished to warn his century against. Stiria, with its Treasure Valley, fulfilled both Ruskin's need for escape as well as his duty-urged need for sermonizing and dispensing instruction. He could combine his aesthetic and fanciful side with the sterner role of social critic, seeing in modern life the same ruthless greed and disregard of nature that is exemplified in the Black Brothers, Hans and Schwartz. Though he was chary of recognizing its worth, his one fairy tale allowed Ruskin to speak his personal and romanticized form of Christianity; it allowed him to bring into play his love of crafts and simple labor and his passion for a nature both tamed and beneficial (represented by the gardens) and majestically uncontrolled (represented by the mountain and rushing river).

Ruskin would never again after *The King of the Golden River* publish a children's book, but he would continue, throughout his life, to maintain contact with children and children's literature by a number of means, thereby showing not only the continuity of his interest but also demonstrating how necessary it was for him to cover his attachment to childhood by a number of excuses. He not only referred in passing to fairy tales in his adult writing, but he also wrote introductions to books intended for children, emphasizing the value of imaginative literature for the young; he cultivated friendships among the young girl students of Winton Hall and attached himself romantically to girls of increasingly younger ages. And like many Victorians he found a holiday from adulthood in the celebration of Christmas.

In this season of particular indulgence in sentimentality, in the time of year when it was fitting to drop one's Scrooge and look back in fondness to old memories and old beliefs, the nineteenth-century found one more means of temporarily shedding the role of serious, responsible adulthood. The child's realm and childhood itself became dominant. Adults, along with their children, delighted in the Christmas pantomimes. Like Thackeray, Ruskin would attend the same production several times in one season. In 1874 he writes of having attended *Cinderella* five times, noting that at Hengler's and Drury Lane "the whole of the pleasure of life depends on the existence of Princes, Princesses, and Fairies," and adding that the audience seems to "understand that though it is not every good little housemaid who can marry a prince, the world would not be the least pleasant, for the rest, if there were no princes to marry."*

In effect, pantomimes granted adults the privilege of childhood and Ruskin, in speaking of them, calls himself a child (something that Thackeray and MacDonal often do as well) and speculates upon the

impression they make on the "minds of her innocent children, like me, who would fain see something magical and pretty on the occasion -- if the good angels would bring it us, and our nurses, and mammas, and governesses would allow us to believe in magic, or in wisdom, any more."⁶

The pose of playing at childhood, of calling oneself an "innocent child," allowed a temporary equality between children and adults; and because of this equality, close and private friendships between certain Victorian men and (most frequently) girl children were not uncommon. In order to write *The King of the Golden River* Ruskin needed the private world established between him and Effie Gray; Thackeray had his own two daughters and other children friends; Charles Dodgson, the Victorian most often mentioned for his friendships with girl children, had his Alice. True to their century's evaluation of the girl child, these men were strongly drawn to and most free in the company of immature females.

This dependency upon friendships with children, upon close contact with immature females, was as excessive with Ruskin as it was with Dodgson. It is even possible that Ruskin's failed marriage would not have occurred if he had not had the opportunity of falling for Effie when she was still a child. "Love for him was always nympholeptic," writes Peter Quennell. "He wrote of women -- or rather of girls: youth, frequently extreme youth, was part of the provocation -- as witches or fairies or delusive, mocking spirits. There was pain in the immediate rapture, and, mixed with the pleasure of loving, a sense of impending loss." (Quennell, p. 25) In writing of Effie, Ruskin says, "You are like a fair mirage in the desert -- which people follow with weary feet and longing eyes -- until they faint on the burning sands -- or come to some dark salt lake of tears -- You are like the bright -- soft -- swelling -- lovely fields of a high glacier covered with fresh morning snow -- which is heavenly to the eye -- and soft and winning on the foot -- but beneath, there are winding clefts and dark places in its cold -- cold ice -- where men fall and rise and rise not again -- And then you say you 'don't know how it is.'"⁷ Here again is the mountain, soft, receiving, and female as in the opening sentences of *The King of the Golden River* and treacherous and cold as it becomes during Hans' and Schwartz's journey. In this fairy tale in which no single female character is depicted, the female is still strongly present, alluring, seductive, and eternally destructive.

Effie was a dream which became too real. Ruskin fared better with romance from a distance and with romantic fancies that were never tested against reality.⁸ In 1858, at age of forty, Ruskin met Rose La Touche (then age nine), the girl, and later woman, who was most to influence him, most to haunt him. Ruskin wrote no special tale for his "wild Rose," as he had done for Effie Gray, but their correspondence for years (especially when Rose was quite young) was regular and intimate, and after her death at age twenty-six she remained, for Ruskin, a sainted memory, romantic and safely distant.

Years before, as a young man at Oxford, Ruskin had shown signs of mental disturbance. In his middle years such periods recurred with increased intensity. To the girls at Winton he related his dreams as though they were visionary truths. It is to them he confessed "some dreams are truer than some wakings." During 1871 he experienced an illness which brought

with it curious but inspiring and exciting dreams; he was a brother of St. Francis and heard in his dream an Italian woman sing with a voice more divine than any he had ever known in waking life, and he saw the golden horses of St. Mark's put on their harness. But by 1878 his dreams became increasingly disturbing. Guilt haunts him in these dreams; gardens are empty; landscapes are filled with ugliness and modern machinery.

By the end of Ruskin's life the dream world took over almost entirely. He spoke infrequently in the last ten years of his life and then rarely coherently and often profanely. But even before the dreams began to take over, either as visionary inspiration or nightmare-ish horror, periods of depression had come upon Ruskin. It was then that he saw the English countryside and the freshness of Switzerland turned dull and foreboding. To the workmen of England he wrote in *Fors Clavigera* (1871) of a Europe covered by "a dry black veil, which no ray of sunshine can pierce.... And everywhere the leaves of the trees are shaking fitfully, as they do before a thunderstorm."⁹ Thirty years after the writing of *The King of the Golden River*, the "Black Brother" vision had become to Ruskin a horrifying reality.

This fear of fantasy-run-wild increased as Ruskin aged. As the imagination became more threatening to Ruskin himself, he fell to warning his readers against the misuse of the imaginative powers. By 1884 in *The Art of England* in the section entitled "Fairy Land" Ruskin is warning his readers about "states of gloomy fantasy, natural, though too often fatal, to men of real imagination, -- the spectra which appear, whether they desire it or not." (Works, XXXIII, 334)

By the end Ruskin was less and less able to reach out to others; even letters, which had given him both intimacy and distance, became too difficult. He drew more and more into himself and slipped increasingly back toward his own youth. The world becomes more and more modern, writes Ruskin, while "I go back to live with my Father and my Mother and my Nurse, and one more, -- all waiting for me in the Land of the Leal."¹⁰

He wrote, in his last years, several small verses for the young, slight, somewhat insane pieces combining traditional nursery rhymes with a moral or practical twist. Some were written for "St. George's Schools." The following, written in 1881 and entitled "The Song of the Queen's Garden: Nausicaa," is a strange mixture of nursery, classical myth, and social reform in the manner of St. George's Guild:

The King was in his counting-house
Counting out his money;
The Queen was in the -- garden
Giving bread and honey.
The maid along the beach to bleach
Was laying out the linen;
At home, her handmaids, each to each,
Had a dainty room to spin in.
(Works, II, 527)

It is as though he had come full cycle, back to pieces that resemble the stumbling rhymes of his boyhood, and yet, moving through his life and work, from early to late, are the same consistent themes: social reform, a belief in the simple natural world, a passion for clouds and mountains and streams.

He ended in madness, overcome by his own

visions, visions of exquisite revelation and visions of depravity and horror, beyond his own control. To the end he loved small children but they, understandably, found his presence disturbing.

The man who loved children and childhood, natural splendor and quiet gardens, and -- with some hesitation -- fairies (personifying spirits, he might have preferred to have called them) ended as a lost and blasphemous soul. Better to remember the dream-builder he was, gently and severely urging us, by his own inner vision, to love the earth and, for the children, to hold it in trust. "Suppose," he tells us,

you had each, at the back of your houses, a garden, large enough for your children to play in, with just as much lawn as would give them room to run, -- no more -- and that you could not change your abode; but that, if you chose, you could double your income, or quadruple it by digging a coal shaft in the middle of the lawn and turning the flower-beds into heaps of coke. Would you do it? I hope not. I can tell you, you would be wrong if you did, though it gave you income sixty-fold instead of four-fold.

Yet this is what you are doing with all England. The whole country is but a little garden, not more than enough for your children to run in the lawns of, if you would let them all run there. And this little garden you will turn into furnace ground, and fill with heaps of cinders, if you can; and those children of yours, not you, will suffer for it. For the fairies will not be all banished; there are fairies of the furnace as of the wood, and their first gifts seem to be "sharp arrows of the mighty;" but their last gifts are "coals of juniper."¹⁰

NOTES

¹ In *Arrows of the Chace* (1886), for example, Ruskin's speaks of having read the *Arabian Nights* "many times over" but now wishes he "had been better employed." In the same essay he praises Lear's *Book of Nonsense* and laments the adulteration of Andersen, who "has been minced up, and washed up, and squeezed up, and rolled out, till one knows him no more." John Ruskin, *The Works of John Ruskin*, ed. E.T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn (London: George Allen, 1903-1912) XXXIV, 585-586. Quotations taken from Cook and Wedderburn's 39-volume edition of Ruskin's works will hereafter be cited as (Works).

² Of mountains, he writes elsewhere, "These mightier and stranger glories should become the objects of adventure, -- at once the cynosures of the fancies of childhood, and the themes of the happy memory, and the winter's tale of age" (Works, VI, 168).

³ Peter Quennell, *John Ruskin: The Portrait of a Prophet* (London: Collins, 1949), pp. 79-80.

⁴ *Fors Clavigera*, Letter 39, Works, XXVIII, 53.

⁵ *Fors Clavigera*, Letter 60, (Dec. 1875), Works, XXVIII, 462.

⁶ *The Order of Release: The Story of John Ruskin, Effie Gray and John Everett Millais Told for the First Time in Their Unpublished Letters*, ed. Sir William Milburne James (London: John Murray, 1948), p. 68.

⁷ "For, so natural is it to the human heart," writes

Ruskin, "to fix itself in hope rather than in present possession, and so subtle is the charm which the imagination casts over what is distant or denied, that there is often a more touching power in the scenes which contain far-away promise of something greater than themselves, than in those which exhaust the treasures and powers of Nature in an unconquerable and excellent glory, leaving nothing more to be by the fancy pictured, or pursued" (Works, VI, 168).

⁸ Letter 8 (Aug. 1871), Works, XXVII, 132.

⁹ In a letter to Dr. John Brown, 29 March 1881, Works, XXXVII, 348.

¹⁰ *Sesame and Lilies*, Works, XVIII, 133-134.

GREENMAN, continued from page 25

- 487 --Turin goes to Nargothrond & becomes chief under Orodreth; he builds bridge over River Narog to aid military sorties
- 495 --Tuor sent by Ulmo to Gondolin with message to depart to the sea; Turgon refuses; Tuor stays & marries Turgon's daughter Idril
- 501 --Turin kills Glaurung; deaths of Turin & his wife/sister Nienor; Hurin, freed from Angband, finds Nauglamir in ruins of Nargothrond, brings it to Thingol who has Silmaril set in it; Hurin meets dying wife Morwen; Hurin casts self into the sea
- 502 --Thingol killed by Dwarves in dispute over the Nauglamir; Melian departs for Valinor
- 503 --Earendil born (son of Tuor & Idril)
- 505 --Dwarves return to Menegroth in Doriath & attempt to recover the Nauglamir; they are routed by Beren and Ents in the Battle by Sarn Athrad
- 506 --Dior reigns in Menegroth
- 508 --Beren & Luthien die; the Nauglamir comes into Dior's possession
- 509 --Second Kinslaying: sons of Feanor attack & kill Dior -- they want the Silmaril inset in the Nauglamir -- some of the brothers are killed; Elwing, daughter of Dior escapes with the jewels
- 511 --Balrogs attack Gondolin via treachery of Maeglin; Turgon killed; Ecthelion & Glorfindel slay Balrogs out are slain also; Tuor & Idril & Earendil escape; they join Elwing; Gil-Galad named High King of Noldor (he is son of Fingon who was son of Fingolfin)

In the following century a new Elven kingdom sprouts up at the mouth of River Sirion; Tuor & Idril sail over the sea; Earendil marries Elwing & begets Elrond & Elros; 3rd Kinslaying: Maedhros & Maglor (son of Feanor) attack the Sirion kingdom but Earendil & Elwing escape with the Silmaril; Maglor fosters Elrond & Elros; over 100 years after the Nirnaeth the Valar receive Earendil who sailed west to Valinor; Valar unleash forces and destroy Angband; Morgoth cast permanently into outer darkness; Sauron escapes; Maedhros & Maglor steal other Silmarils but can't keep them --Maedhros leaps into a volcano with his and Maglor casts his into the sea; the other Silmaril is on Earendil's brow as he sails the heavens in his boat; Most Elves leave Beleriand (which has been inundated by the sea) & go to Valinor; some remain in Middle Earth under kingship of Gil-Galad; Elros becomes first king of Numenor; The First Age of Middle Earth ends.