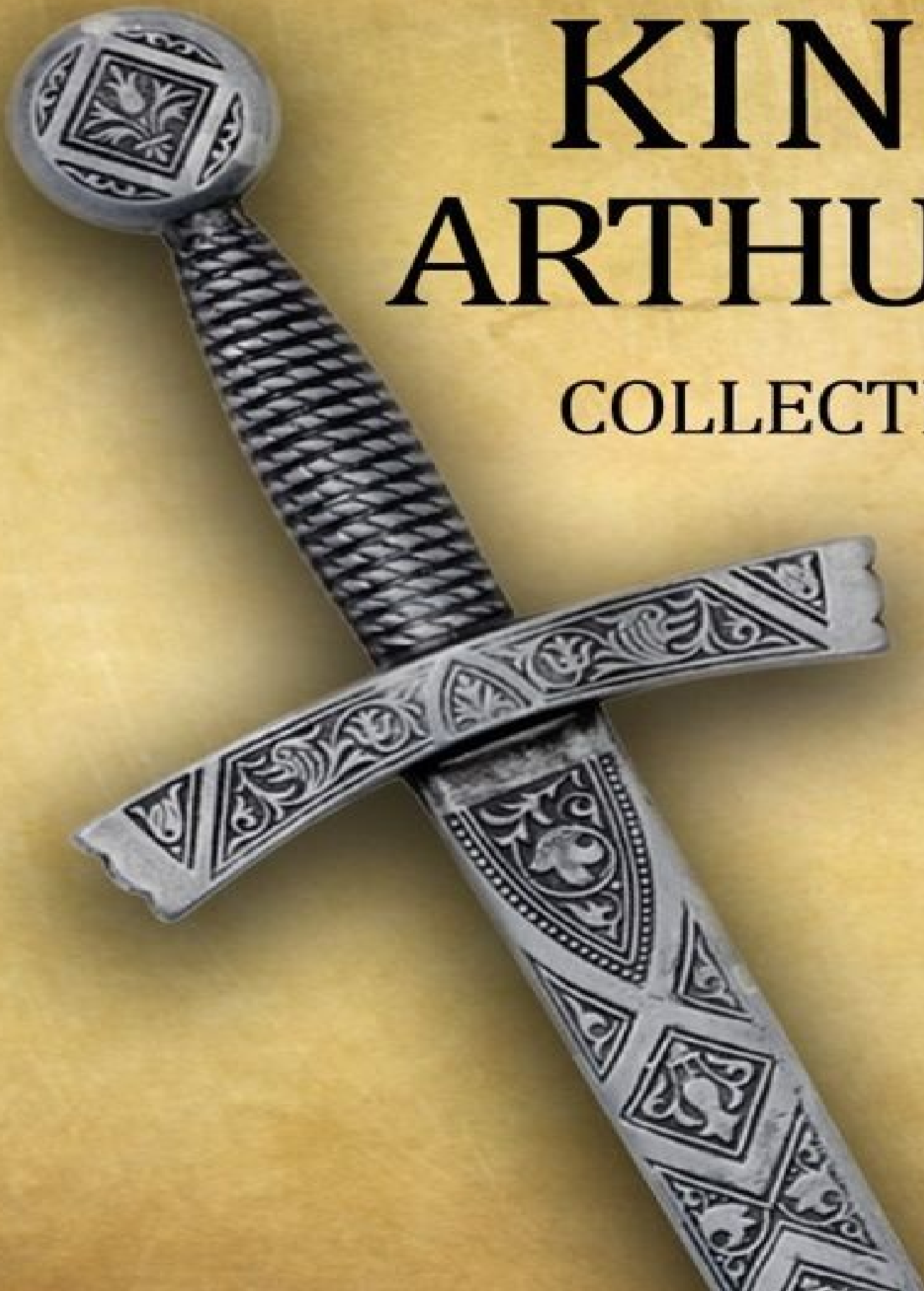


THE  
KING  
ARTHUR  
COLLECTION



**THE KING ARTHUR  
COLLECTION**

*Le Morte d'Arthur*

*King Arthur and His Knights*

*Idylls of the King*

*King Arthur and the Knights of the  
Round Table*

*Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*

*A Connecticut in King Arthur's Court*

Maplewood Books

## THE KING ARTHUR COLLECTION

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*Le Morte d'Arthur* by Sir Thomas Malory was originally published in 1485, *Idylls of the King* by Alfred, Lord Tennyson in 1889, *King Arthur and His Knights* by Maude Radford Warren in 1903, *King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table* by Sir James Knowles in 1919, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* by Anonymous, translated by Charlton Miner Lewis in 1903, and *A Connecticut in King Arthur's Court* by Mark Twain in 1889.

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# Table of Contents

---

- [Copyright](#)
- [Introduction](#)
  
- [Le Morte d'Arthur](#) by Sir Thomas Malory
- [Idylls of the King](#) by Alfred, Lord Tennyson
- [King Arthur and His Knights](#) by Maude Radford Warren
- [King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table](#) by Sir James Knowles
- [Sir Gawain and the Green Knight](#)
- [A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court](#) by Mark Twain
  
- Fan Resources:
  - [The Real King Arthur](#)
  - [Adaptations on Film and TV](#)
  - [Audio Recordings](#)
  
- [Publisher's Note](#)

# INTRODUCTION

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*The Once and Future King* The legends of King Arthur have permeated our culture. Who hasn't heard of the Round Table, Camelot, or Excalibur? Queen Guinevere, Lancelot, or Merlin? These larger-than-life figures have grown from their historical roots to mythological status. Collected here are the basic texts of Arthurian legend, from the definitive *Le Morte d'Arthur* to more accessible overviews like *King Arthur and His Knights* by Maude Radford Warren, each elegantly formatted for ease of use and enjoyment on your e-reader device.

Highlights of this collection:

- *Le Morte d'Arthur* by Sir Thomas Malory, the best-known compilation of Arthurian lore
- *Idylls of the King* by Alfred, Lord Tennyson, a poetic retelling of the Arthurian cycle
- *King Arthur and His Knights* by Maude Radford Warren, a version of the story for children and families
- *King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table* by Sir James Knowles, another popular retelling for the general reader
- *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, a knightly legend related to the Arthur stories
- *A Connecticut in King Arthur's Court* by Mark Twain.

Each book has an individual Table of Contents that is easily accessible from the main Table of Contents and drop-down menus. You are never more than two clicks away from any chapter of any book.

Also included are special features for any Arthurian including:

- The Real King Arthur: an overview of the historical basis for the Once and Future King
- A comprehensive list of the many film, television, and media adaptations of the legends of King Arthur.

- Links to free, full-length audio recordings of the books and stories in this collection.

Grab your sword and turn the page. Camelot awaits.

**LE MORTE D'ARTHUR**  
**King Arthur and of his Noble Knights**  
**of the Round Table**

**by Thomas Malory**

# Table of Contents

[BOOK I](#)

[BOOK II](#)

[BOOK III](#)

[BOOK IV](#)

[BOOK V](#)

[BOOK VI](#)

[BOOK VII](#)

[BOOK VIII](#)

[BOOK IX](#)

[BOOK X](#)

[BOOK XI](#)

[BOOK XII](#)

[BOOK XIII](#)

[BOOK XIV](#)

[BOOK XV](#)

[BOOK XVI](#)

[BOOK XVII](#)

[BOOK XVIII](#)

[BOOK XIX](#)

[BOOK XX](#)

[BOOK XXI](#)



# BOOK I

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## **CHAPTER I. How Uther Pendragon sent for the duke of Cornwall and Igraine his wife, and of their departing suddenly again.**

IT befell in the days of Uther Pendragon, when he was king of all England, and so reigned, that there was a mighty duke in Cornwall that held war against him long time. And the duke was called the Duke of Tintagil. And so by means King Uther sent for this duke, charging him to bring his wife with him, for she was called a fair lady, and a passing wise, and her name was called Igraine.

So when the duke and his wife were come unto the king, by the means of great lords they were accorded both. The king liked and loved this lady well, and he made them great cheer out of measure, and desired to have lain by her. But she was a passing good woman, and would not assent unto the king. And then she told the duke her husband, and said, I suppose that we were sent for that I should be dishonoured; wherefore, husband, I counsel you, that we depart from hence suddenly, that we may ride all night unto our own castle. And in like wise as she said so they departed, that neither the king nor none of his council were ware of their departing. All so soon as King Uther knew of their departing so suddenly, he was wonderly wroth. Then he called to him his privy council, and told them of the sudden departing of the duke and his wife.

Then they advised the king to send for the duke and his wife by a great charge; and if he will not come at your summons, then may ye do your best, then have ye cause to make mighty war upon him. So that was done, and the messengers had their answers; and that was this shortly, that neither he nor his wife would not come at him.

Then was the king wonderly wroth. And then the king sent him plain word again, and bade him be ready and stuff him and garnish him, for within forty days he would fetch him out of the biggest castle that he hath.

When the duke had this warning, anon he went and furnished and garnished two strong castles of his, of the which the one hight Tintagil, and the other castle hight Terrabil. So his wife Dame Igraine he put in the castle of Tintagil, and himself he put in the castle of Terrabil, the which had many issues and posterns out. Then in all haste came Uther with a great host, and laid a siege about the

castle of Terrabil. And there he pight many pavilions, and there was great war made on both parties, and much people slain. Then for pure anger and for great love of fair Igraine the king Uther fell sick. So came to the king Uther Sir Ulfius, a noble knight, and asked the king why he was sick. I shall tell thee, said the king, I am sick for anger and for love of fair Igraine, that I may not be whole. Well, my lord, said Sir Ulfius, I shall seek Merlin, and he shall do you remedy, that your heart shall be pleased. So Ulfius departed, and by adventure he met Merlin in a beggar's array, and there Merlin asked Ulfius whom he sought. And he said he had little ado to tell him. Well, said Merlin, I know whom thou seekest, for thou seekest Merlin; therefore seek no farther, for I am he; and if King Uther will well reward me, and be sworn unto me to fulfil my desire, that shall be his honour and profit more than mine; for I shall cause him to have all his desire. All this will I undertake, said Ulfius, that there shall be nothing reasonable but thou shalt have thy desire. Well, said Merlin, he shall have his intent and desire. And therefore, said Merlin, ride on your way, for I will not be long behind.

## **CHAPTER II. How Uther Pendragon made war on the duke of Cornwall, and how by the mean of Merlin he lay by the duchess and gat Arthur.**

THEN Ulfius was glad, and rode on more than a pace till that he came to King Uther Pendragon, and told him he had met with Merlin. Where is he? said the king. Sir, said Ulfius, he will not dwell long. Therewithal Ulfius was ware where Merlin stood at the porch of the pavilion's door. And then Merlin was bound to come to the king. When King Uther saw him, he said he was welcome. Sir, said Merlin, I know all your heart every deal; so ye will be sworn unto me as ye be a true king anointed, to fulfil my desire, ye shall have your desire. Then the king was sworn upon the Four Evangelists. Sir, said Merlin, this is my desire: the first night that ye shall lie by Igraine ye shall get a child on her, and when that is born, that it shall be delivered to me for to nourish there as I will have it; for it shall be your worship, and the child's avail, as mickle as the child is worth. I will well, said the king, as thou wilt have it. Now make you ready, said Merlin, this night ye shall lie with Igraine in the castle of Tintagil; and ye shall be like the duke her husband, Ulfius shall be like Sir Brastias, a knight of the duke's, and I will be like a knight that hight Sir Jordanus, a knight of the duke's. But wait ye make not many questions with her nor her men, but say ye are diseased, and so hie you to bed, and rise not on the morn till I come to you, for the castle of Tintagil is but ten miles hence; so this was done as they devised. But the duke of Tintagil espied how the king rode from the siege of Terrabil, and

therefore that night he issued out of the castle at a postern for to have distressed the king's host. And so, through his own issue, the duke himself was slain or ever the king came at the castle of Tintagil.

So after the death of the duke, King Uther lay with Igraine more than three hours after his death, and begat on her that night Arthur, and on day came Merlin to the king, and bade him make him ready, and so he kissed the lady Igraine and departed in all haste. But when the lady heard tell of the duke her husband, and by all record he was dead or ever King Uther came to her, then she marvelled who that might be that lay with her in likeness of her lord; so she mourned privily and held her peace. Then all the barons by one assent prayed the king of accord betwixt the lady Igraine and him; the king gave them leave, for fain would he have been accorded with her. So the king put all the trust in Ulfius to entreat between them, so by the entreaty at the last the king and she met together. Now will we do well, said Ulfius, our king is a lusty knight and wifeless, and my lady Igraine is a passing fair lady; it were great joy unto us all, an it might please the king to make her his queen. Unto that they all well accorded and moved it to the king. And anon, like a lusty knight, he assented thereto with good will, and so in all haste they were married in a morning with great mirth and joy.

And King Lot of Lothian and of Orkney then wedded Margawse that was Gawaine's mother, and King Nentres of the land of Garlot wedded Elaine. All this was done at the request of King Uther. And the third sister Morgan le Fay was put to school in a nunnery, and there she learned so much that she was a great clerk of necromancy. And after she was wedded to King Uriens of the land of Gore, that was Sir Ewain's le Blanchemain's father.

### **CHAPTER III. Of the birth of King Arthur and of his nurture.**

THEN Queen Igraine waxed daily greater and greater, so it befell after within half a year, as King Uther lay by his queen, he asked her, by the faith she owed to him, whose was the body; then she sore abashed to give answer. Dismay you not, said the king, but tell me the truth, and I shall love you the better, by the faith of my body. Sir, said she, I shall tell you the truth. The same night that my lord was dead, the hour of his death, as his knights record, there came into my castle of Tintagil a man like my lord in speech and in countenance, and two knights with him in likeness of his two knights Brastias and Jordanus, and so I went unto bed with him as I ought to do with my lord, and the same night, as I shall answer unto God, this child was begotten upon me. That is truth, said the king, as ye say; for it was I myself that came in the likeness, and therefore dismay you not, for I am father of the child; and there he told her all the cause,

how it was by Merlin's counsel. Then the queen made great joy when she knew who was the father of her child.

Soon came Merlin unto the king, and said, Sir, ye must purvey you for the nourishing of your child. As thou wilt, said the king, be it. Well, said Merlin, I know a lord of yours in this land, that is a passing true man and a faithful, and he shall have the nourishing of your child, and his name is Sir Ector, and he is a lord of fair livelihood in many parts in England and Wales; and this lord, Sir Ector, let him be sent for, for to come and speak with you, and desire him yourself, as he loveth you, that he will put his own child to nourishing to another woman, and that his wife nourish yours. And when the child is born let it be delivered to me at yonder privy postern unchristened. So like as Merlin devised it was done. And when Sir Ector was come he made fiancée to the king for to nourish the child like as the king desired; and there the king granted Sir Ector great rewards. Then when the lady was delivered, the king commanded two knights and two ladies to take the child, bound in a cloth of gold, and that ye deliver him to what poor man ye meet at the postern gate of the castle. So the child was delivered unto Merlin, and so he bare it forth unto Sir Ector, and made an holy man to christen him, and named him Arthur; and so Sir Ector's wife nourished him with her own pap.

#### **CHAPTER IV. Of the death of King Uther Pendragon.**

THEN within two years King Uther fell sick of a great malady. And in the meanwhile his enemies usurped upon him, and did a great battle upon his men, and slew many of his people. Sir, said Merlin, ye may not lie so as ye do, for ye must to the field though ye ride on an horse-litter: for ye shall never have the better of your enemies but if your person be there, and then shall ye have the victory. So it was done as Merlin had devised, and they carried the king forth in an horse-litter with a great host towards his enemies. And at St. Albans there met with the king a great host of the North. And that day Sir Ulfius and Sir Brastias did great deeds of arms, and King Uther's men overcame the Northern battle and slew many people, and put the remnant to flight. And then the king returned unto London, and made great joy of his victory. And then he fell passing sore sick, so that three days and three nights he was speechless: wherefore all the barons made great sorrow, and asked Merlin what counsel were best. There is none other remedy, said Merlin, but God will have his will. But look ye all barons be before King Uther to-morn, and God and I shall make him to speak. So on the morn all the barons with Merlin came to-fore the king; then Merlin said aloud unto King Uther, Sir, shall your son Arthur be king after your days, of this realm with all the appurtenance? Then Uther Pendragon turned him, and said in

hearing of them all, I give him God's blessing and mine, and bid him pray for my soul, and righteously and worshipfully that he claim the crown, upon forfeiture of my blessing; and therewith he yielded up the ghost, and then was he interred as longed to a king. Wherefore the queen, fair Igraine, made great sorrow, and all the barons.

#### **CHAPTER V. How Arthur was chosen king, and of wonders and marvels of a sword taken out of a stone by the said Arthur.**

THEN stood the realm in great jeopardy long while, for every lord that was mighty of men made him strong, and many weened to have been king. Then Merlin went to the Archbishop of Canterbury, and counselled him for to send for all the lords of the realm, and all the gentlemen of arms, that they should to London come by Christmas, upon pain of cursing; and for this cause, that Jesus, that was born on that night, that he would of his great mercy show some miracle, as he was come to be king of mankind, for to show some miracle who should be rightwise king of this realm. So the Archbishop, by the advice of Merlin, sent for all the lords and gentlemen of arms that they should come by Christmas even unto London. And many of them made them clean of their life, that their prayer might be the more acceptable unto God. So in the greatest church of London, whether it were Paul's or not the French book maketh no mention, all the estates were long or day in the church for to pray. And when matins and the first mass was done, there was seen in the churchyard, against the high altar, a great stone four square, like unto a marble stone; and in midst thereof was like an anvil of steel a foot on high, and therein stuck a fair sword naked by the point, and letters there were written in gold about the sword that said thus:—Whoso pulleth out this sword of this stone and anvil, is rightwise king born of all England. Then the people marvelled, and told it to the Archbishop. I command, said the Archbishop, that ye keep you within your church and pray unto God still, that no man touch the sword till the high mass be all done. So when all masses were done all the lords went to behold the stone and the sword. And when they saw the scripture some assayed, such as would have been king. But none might stir the sword nor move it. He is not here, said the Archbishop, that shall achieve the sword, but doubt not God will make him known. But this is my counsel, said the Archbishop, that we let purvey ten knights, men of good fame, and they to keep this sword. So it was ordained, and then there was made a cry, that every man should assay that would, for to win the sword. And upon New Year's Day the barons let make a jousts and a tournament, that all knights that would joust or tourney there might play, and all this was ordained for to keep the lords together and the commons, for the Archbishop trusted that God would make him known

that should win the sword.

So upon New Year's Day, when the service was done, the barons rode unto the field, some to joust and some to tourney, and so it happened that Sir Ector, that had great livelihood about London, rode unto the jousts, and with him rode Sir Kay his son, and young Arthur that was his nourished brother; and Sir Kay was made knight at All Hallowmass afore. So as they rode to the jousts-ward, Sir Kay lost his sword, for he had left it at his father's lodging, and so he prayed young Arthur for to ride for his sword. I will well, said Arthur, and rode fast after the sword, and when he came home, the lady and all were out to see the jousting. Then was Arthur wroth, and said to himself, I will ride to the churchyard, and take the sword with me that sticketh in the stone, for my brother Sir Kay shall not be without a sword this day. So when he came to the churchyard, Sir Arthur alighted and tied his horse to the stile, and so he went to the tent, and found no knights there, for they were at the jousting. And so he handled the sword by the handles, and lightly and fiercely pulled it out of the stone, and took his horse and rode his way until he came to his brother Sir Kay, and delivered him the sword. And as soon as Sir Kay saw the sword, he wist well it was the sword of the stone, and so he rode to his father Sir Ector, and said: Sir, lo here is the sword of the stone, wherefore I must be king of this land. When Sir Ector beheld the sword, he returned again and came to the church, and there they alighted all three, and went into the church. And anon he made Sir Kay swear upon a book how he came to that sword. Sir, said Sir Kay, by my brother Arthur, for he brought it to me. How gat ye this sword? said Sir Ector to Arthur. Sir, I will tell you. When I came home for my brother's sword, I found nobody at home to deliver me his sword; and so I thought my brother Sir Kay should not be swordless, and so I came hither eagerly and pulled it out of the stone without any pain. Found ye any knights about this sword? said Sir Ector. Nay, said Arthur. Now, said Sir Ector to Arthur, I understand ye must be king of this land. Wherefore I, said Arthur, and for what cause? Sir, said Ector, for God will have it so; for there should never man have drawn out this sword, but he that shall be rightwise king of this land. Now let me see whether ye can put the sword there as it was, and pull it out again. That is no mastery, said Arthur, and so he put it in the stone; wherewithal Sir Ector assayed to pull out the sword and failed.

#### **CHAPTER VI. How King Arthur pulled out the sword divers times.**

Now assay, said Sir Ector unto Sir Kay. And anon he pulled at the sword with all his might; but it would not be. Now shall ye assay, said Sir Ector to Arthur. I will well, said Arthur, and pulled it out easily. And therewithal Sir

Ector knelt down to the earth, and Sir Kay. Alas, said Arthur, my own dear father and brother, why kneel ye to me? Nay, nay, my lord Arthur, it is not so; I was never your father nor of your blood, but I wot well ye are of an higher blood than I weened ye were. And then Sir Ector told him all, how he was betaken him for to nourish him, and by whose commandment, and by Merlin's deliverance.

Then Arthur made great dole when he understood that Sir Ector was not his father. Sir, said Ector unto Arthur, will ye be my good and gracious lord when ye are king? Else were I to blame, said Arthur, for ye are the man in the world that I am most beholden to, and my good lady and mother your wife, that as well as her own hath fostered me and kept. And if ever it be God's will that I be king as ye say, ye shall desire of me what I may do, and I shall not fail you; God forbid I should fail you Sir, said Sir Ector, I will ask no more of you, but that ye will make my son, your foster brother, Sir Kay, seneschal of all your lands. That shall be done, said Arthur, and more, by the faith of my body, that never man shall have that office but he, while he and I live Therewithal they went unto the Archbishop, and told him how the sword was achieved, and by whom; and on Twelfth-day all the barons came thither, and to assay to take the sword, who that would assay. But there afore them all, there might none take it out but Arthur; wherefore there were many lords wroth, and said it was great shame unto them all and the realm, to be overgoverned with a boy of no high blood born. And so they fell out at that time that it was put off till Candlemas and then all the barons should meet there again; but always the ten knights were ordained to watch the sword day and night, and so they set a pavilion over the stone and the sword, and five always watched. So at Candlemas many more great lords came thither for to have won the sword, but there might none prevail. And right as Arthur did at Christmas, he did at Candlemas, and pulled out the sword easily, whereof the barons were sore aggrieved and put it off in delay till the high feast of Easter. And as Arthur sped before, so did he at Easter; yet there were some of the great lords had indignation that Arthur should be king, and put it off in a delay till the feast of Pentecost.

Then the Archbishop of Canterbury by Merlin's providence let purvey then of the best knights that they might get, and such knights as Uther Pendragon loved best and most trusted in his days. And such knights were put about Arthur as Sir Baudwin of Britain, Sir Kay, Sir Ulfius, Sir Brastias. All these, with many other, were always about Arthur, day and night, till the feast of Pentecost.

## **CHAPTER VII. How King Arthur was crowned, and how he made officers.**

AND at the feast of Pentecost all manner of men assayed to pull at the sword

that would assay; but none might prevail but Arthur, and pulled it out afore all the lords and commons that were there, wherefore all the commons cried at once, We will have Arthur unto our king, we will put him no more in delay, for we all see that it is God's will that he shall be our king, and who that holdeth against it, we will slay him. And therewithal they kneeled at once, both rich and poor, and cried Arthur mercy because they had delayed him so long, and Arthur forgave them, and took the sword between both his hands, and offered it upon the altar where the Archbishop was, and so was he made knight of the best man that was there. And so anon was the coronation made. And there was he sworn unto his lords and the commons for to be a true king, to stand with true justice from thenceforth the days of this life. Also then he made all lords that held of the crown to come in, and to do service as they ought to do. And many complaints were made unto Sir Arthur of great wrongs that were done since the death of King Uther, of many lands that were bereaved lords, knights, ladies, and gentlemen. Wherefore King Arthur made the lands to be given again unto them that owned them.

When this was done, that the king had stablished all the countries about London, then he let make Sir Kay seneschal of England; and Sir Baudwin of Britain was made constable; and Sir Ulfius was made chamberlain; and Sir Brastias was made warden to wait upon the north from Trent forwards, for it was that time the most party the king's enemies. But within few years after Arthur won all the north, Scotland, and all that were under their obeissance. Also Wales, a part of it, held against Arthur, but he overcame them all, as he did the remnant, through the noble prowess of himself and his knights of the Round Table.

### **CHAPTER VIII. How King Arthur held in Wales, at a Pentecost, a great feast, and what kings and lords came to his feast.**

THEN the king removed into Wales, and let cry a great feast that it should be holden at Pentecost after the incoronation of him at the city of Carlion. Unto the feast came King Lot of Lothian and of Orkney, with five hundred knights with him. Also there came to the feast King Uriens of Gore with four hundred knights with him. Also there came to that feast King Nentres of Garlot, with seven hundred knights with him. Also there came to the feast the king of Scotland with six hundred knights with him, and he was but a young man. Also there came to the feast a king that was called the King with the Hundred Knights, but he and his men were passing well beseen at all points. Also there came the king of Carados with five hundred knights. And King Arthur was glad of their coming, for he weened that all the kings and knights had come for great love, and to have



done him worship at his feast; wherefore the king made great joy, and sent the kings and knights great presents. But the kings would none receive, but rebuked the messengers shamefully, and said they had no joy to receive no gifts of a beardless boy that was come of low blood, and sent him word they would none of his gifts, but that they were come to give him gifts with hard swords betwixt the neck and the shoulders: and therefore they came thither, so they told to the messengers plainly, for it was great shame to all them to see such a boy to have a rule of so noble a realm as this land was. With this answer the messengers departed and told to King Arthur this answer. Wherefore, by the advice of his barons, he took him to a strong tower with five hundred good men with him. And all the kings aforesaid in a manner laid a siege to-fore him, but King Arthur was well victualed. And within fifteen days there came Merlin among them into the city of Carlion. Then all the kings were passing glad of Merlin, and asked him, For what cause is that boy Arthur made your king? Sirs, said Merlin, I shall tell you the cause, for he is King Uther Pendragon's son, born in wedlock, gotten on Igraine, the duke's wife of Tintagil. Then is he a bastard, they said all. Nay, said Merlin, after the death of the duke, more than three hours, was Arthur begotten, and thirteen days after King Uther wedded Igraine; and therefore I prove him he is no bastard. And who saith nay, he shall be king and overcome all his enemies; and, or he die, he shall be long king of all England, and have under his obeissance Wales, Ireland, and Scotland, and more realms than I will now rehearse. Some of the kings had marvel of Merlin's words, and deemed well that it should be as he said; and some of them laughed him to scorn, as King Lot; and more other called him a witch. But then were they accorded with Merlin, that King Arthur should come out and speak with the kings, and to come safe and to go safe, such surance there was made. So Merlin went unto King Arthur, and told him how he had done, and bade him fear not, but come out boldly and speak with them, and spare them not, but answer them as their king and chieftain; for ye shall overcome them all, whether they will or nill.

#### **CHAPTER IX. Of the first war that King Arthur had, and how he won the field.**

THEN King Arthur came out of his tower, and had under his gown a jesseraunt of double mail, and there went with him the Archbishop of Canterbury, and Sir Baudwin of Britain, and Sir Kay, and Sir Brastias: these were the men of most worship that were with him. And when they were met there was no meekness, but stout words on both sides; but always King Arthur answered them, and said he would make them to bow an he lived. Wherefore they departed with wrath, and King Arthur bade keep them well, and they bade

the king keep him well. So the king returned him to the tower again and armed him and all his knights. What will ye do? said Merlin to the kings; ye were better for to stint, for ye shall not here prevail though ye were ten times so many. Be we well advised to be afeared of a dream-reader? said King Lot. With that Merlin vanished away, and came to King Arthur, and bade him set on them fiercely; and in the meanwhile there were three hundred good men, of the best that were with the kings, that went straight unto King Arthur, and that comforted him greatly. Sir, said Merlin to Arthur, fight not with the sword that ye had by miracle, till that ye see ye go unto the worse, then draw it out and do your best. So forthwithal King Arthur set upon them in their lodging. And Sir Baudwin, Sir Kay, and Sir Brastias slew on the right hand and on the left hand that it was marvel; and always King Arthur on horseback laid on with a sword, and did marvellous deeds of arms, that many of the kings had great joy of his deeds and hardiness.

Then King Lot brake out on the back side, and the King with the Hundred Knights, and King Carados, and set on Arthur fiercely behind him. With that Sir Arthur turned with his knights, and smote behind and before, and ever Sir Arthur was in the foremost press till his horse was slain underneath him. And therewith King Lot smote down King Arthur. With that his four knights received him and set him on horseback. Then he drew his sword Excalibur, but it was so bright in his enemies' eyes, that it gave light like thirty torches. And therewith he put them a-back, and slew much people. And then the commons of Carlion arose with clubs and staves and slew many knights; but all the kings held them together with their knights that were left alive, and so fled and departed. And Merlin came unto Arthur, and counselled him to follow them no further.

#### **CHAPTER X. How Merlin counselled King Arthur to send for King Ban and King Bors, and of their counsel taken for the war.**

SO after the feast and journey, King Arthur drew him unto London, and so by the counsel of Merlin, the king let call his barons to council, for Merlin had told the king that the six kings that made war upon him would in all haste be awroke on him and on his lands. Wherefore the king asked counsel at them all. They could no counsel give, but said they were big enough. Ye say well, said Arthur; I thank you for your good courage, but will ye all that loveth me speak with Merlin? ye know well that he hath done much for me, and he knoweth many things, and when he is afore you, I would that ye prayed him heartily of his best advice. All the barons said they would pray him and desire him. So Merlin was sent for, and fair desired of all the barons to give them best counsel. I shall say you, said Merlin, I warn you all, your enemies are passing strong for

you, and they are good men of arms as be alive, and by this time they have gotten to them four kings more, and a mighty duke; and unless that our king have more chivalry with him than he may make within the bounds of his own realm, an he fight with them in battle, he shall be overcome and slain. What were best to do in this cause? said all the barons. I shall tell you, said Merlin, mine advice; there are two brethren beyond the sea, and they be kings both, and marvellous good men of their hands; and that one hight King Ban of Benwick, and that other hight King Bors of Gaul, that is France. And on these two kings warreth a mighty man of men, the King Claudas, and striveth with them for a castle, and great war is betwixt them. But this Claudas is so mighty of goods whereof he getteth good knights, that he putteth these two kings most part to the worse; wherefore this is my counsel, that our king and sovereign lord send unto the kings Ban and Bors by two trusty knights with letters well devised, that an they will come and see King Arthur and his court, and so help him in his wars, that he will be sworn unto them to help them in their wars against King Claudas. Now, what say ye unto this counsel? said Merlin. This is well counselled, said the king and all the barons.

Right so in all haste there were ordained to go two knights on the message unto the two kings. So were there made letters in the pleasant wise according unto King Arthur's desire. Ulfius and Brastias were made the messengers, and so rode forth well horsed and well armed and as the guise was that time, and so passed the sea and rode toward the city of Benwick. And there besides were eight knights that espied them, and at a strait passage they met with Ulfius and Brastias, and would have taken them prisoners; so they prayed them that they might pass, for they were messengers unto King Ban and Bors sent from King Arthur. Therefore, said the eight knights, ye shall die or be prisoners, for we be knights of King Claudas. And therewith two of them dressed their spears, and Ulfius and Brastias dressed their spears, and ran together with great raundom. And Claudas' knights brake their spears, and theirs to-held and bare the two knights out of their saddles to the earth, and so left them lying, and rode their ways. And the other six knights rode afore to a passage to meet with them again, and so Ulfius and Brastias smote other two down, and so passed on their ways. And at the fourth passage there met two for two, and both were laid unto the earth; so there was none of the eight knights but he was sore hurt or bruised. And when they come to Benwick it fortuneth there were both kings, Ban and Bors.

And when it was told the kings that there were come messengers, there were sent unto them two knights of worship, the one hight Lionses, lord of the country of Payarne, and Sir Phariance a worshipful knight. Anon they asked from whence they came, and they said from King Arthur, king of England; so they

took them in their arms and made great joy each of other. But anon, as the two kings wist they were messengers of Arthur's, there was made no tarrying, but forthwith they spake with the knights, and welcomed them in the faithfulest wise, and said they were most welcome unto them before all the kings living; and therewith they kissed the letters and delivered them. And when Ban and Bors understood the letters, then they were more welcome than they were before. And after the haste of the letters they gave them this answer, that they would fulfil the desire of King Arthur's writing, and Ulfius and Brastias, tarry there as long as they would, they should have such cheer as might be made them in those marches. Then Ulfius and Brastias told the kings of the adventure at their passages of the eight knights. Ha! ah! said Ban and Bors, they were my good friends. I would I had wist of them; they should not have escaped so. So Ulfius and Brastias had good cheer and great gifts, as much as they might bear away; and had their answer by mouth and by writing, that those two kings would come unto Arthur in all the haste that they might. So the two knights rode on afore, and passed the sea, and came to their lord, and told him how they had sped, whereof King Arthur was passing glad. At what time suppose ye the two kings will be here? Sir, said they, afore All Hallowmass. Then the king let purvey for a great feast, and let cry a great jousts. And by All Hallowmass the two kings were come over the sea with three hundred knights well arrayed both for the peace and for the war. And King Arthur met with them ten mile out of London, and there was great joy as could be thought or made. And on All Hallowmass at the great feast, sat in the hall the three kings, and Sir Kay seneschal served in the hall, and Sir Lucas the butler, that was Duke Corneus' son, and Sir Griflet, that was the son of Cardol, these three knights had the rule of all the service that served the kings. And anon, as they had washen and risen, all knights that would joust made them ready; by then they were ready on horseback there were seven hundred knights. And Arthur, Ban, and Bors, with the Archbishop of Canterbury, and Sir Ector, Kay's father, they were in a place covered with cloth of gold like an hall, with ladies and gentlewomen, for to behold who did best, and thereon to give judgment.

#### **CHAPTER XI. Of a great tourney made by King Arthur and the two kings Ban and Bors, and how they went over the sea.**

AND King Arthur and the two kings let depart the seven hundred knights in two parties. And there were three hundred knights of the realm of Benwick and of Gaul turned on the other side. Then they dressed their shields, and began to couch their spears many good knights. So Griflet was the first that met with a knight, one Ladinus, and they met so eagerly that all men had wonder; and they

so fought that their shields fell to pieces, and horse and man fell to the earth; and both the French knight and the English knight lay so long that all men weened they had been dead. When Lucas the butler saw Griflet so lie, he horsed him again anon, and they two did marvellous deeds of arms with many bachelors. Also Sir Kay came out of an ambushment with five knights with him, and they six smote other six down. But Sir Kay did that day marvellous deeds of arms, that there was none did so well as he that day. Then there came Ladinus and Gracian, two knights of France, and did passing well, that all men praised them.

Then came there Sir Placidus, a good knight, and met with Sir Kay, and smote him down horse and man, where fore Sir Griflet was wroth, and met with Sir Placidus so hard, that horse and man fell to the earth. But when the five knights wist that Sir Kay had a fall, they were wroth out of wit, and therewith each of them five bare down a knight. When King Arthur and the two kings saw them begin to wax wroth on both parties, they leapt on small hackneys, and let cry that all men should depart unto their lodging. And so they went home and unarmed them, and so to evensong and supper. And after, the three kings went into a garden, and gave the prize unto Sir Kay, and to Lucas the butler, and unto Sir Griflet. And then they went unto council, and with them Gwenbaus, the brother unto Sir Ban and Bors, a wise clerk, and thither went Ulfius and Brastias, and Merlin. And after they had been in council, they went unto bed. And on the morn they heard mass, and to dinner, and so to their council, and made many arguments what were best to do. At the last they were concluded, that Merlin should go with a token of King Ban, and that was a ring, unto his men and King Bors'; and Gracian and Placidus should go again and keep their castles and their countries, as for [dread of King Claudas] King Ban of Benwick, and King Bors of Gaul had ordained them, and so passed the sea and came to Benwick. And when the people saw King Ban's ring, and Gracian and Placidus, they were glad, and asked how the kings fared, and made great joy of their welfare and cording, and according unto the sovereign lords desire, the men of war made them ready in all haste possible, so that they were fifteen thousand on horse and foot, and they had great plenty of victual with them, by Merlin's provision. But Gracian and Placidus were left to furnish and garnish the castles, for dread of King Claudas. Right so Merlin passed the sea, well victualled both by water and by land. And when he came to the sea he sent home the footmen again, and took no more with him but ten thousand men on horseback, the most part men of arms, and so shipped and passed the sea into England, and landed at Dover; and through the wit of Merlin, he had the host northward, the priviest way that could be thought, unto the forest of Bedegraine, and there in a valley he lodged them secretly.

Then rode Merlin unto Arthur and the two kings, and told them how he had sped; whereof they had great marvel, that man on earth might speed so soon, and go and come. So Merlin told them ten thousand were in the forest of Bedegraine, well armed at all points. Then was there no more to say, but to horseback went all the host as Arthur had afore purveyed. So with twenty thousand he passed by night and day, but there was made such an ordinance afore by Merlin, that there should no man of war ride nor go in no country on this side Trent water, but if he had a token from King Arthur, where through the king's enemies durst not ride as they did to-fore to espy.

## **CHAPTER XII. How eleven kings gathered a great host against King Arthur.**

AND SO within a little space the three kings came unto the castle of Bedegraine, and found there a passing fair fellowship, and well beseen, whereof they had great joy, and victual they wanted none. This was the cause of the northern host: that they were reared for the despite and rebuke the six kings had at Carlion. And those six kings by their means, gat unto them five other kings; and thus they began to gather their people.

And now they sware that for weal nor woe, they should not leave other, till they had destroyed Arthur. And then they made an oath. The first that began the oath was the Duke of Cambenet, that he would bring with him five thousand men of arms, the which were ready on horseback. Then sware King Brandegoris of Stranggore that he would bring five thousand men of arms on horseback. Then sware King Clariance of Northumberland he would bring three thousand men of arms. Then sware the King of the Hundred Knights, that was a passing good man and a young, that he would bring four thousand men of arms on horseback. Then there swore King Lot, a passing good knight, and Sir Gawain's father, that he would bring five thousand men of arms on horseback. Also there swore King Urience, that was Sir Uwain's father, of the land of Gore, and he would bring six thousand men of arms on horseback. Also there swore King Idres of Cornwall, that he would bring five thousand men of arms on horseback. Also there swore King Cradelmas to bring five thousand men on horseback. Also there swore King Agwisance of Ireland to bring five thousand men of arms on horseback. Also there swore King Nentres to bring five thousand men of arms on horseback. Also there swore King Carados to bring five thousand men of arms on horseback. So their whole host was of clean men of arms on horseback fifty thousand, and a-foot ten thousand of good men's bodies. Then were they soon ready, and mounted upon horse and sent forth their fore-riders, for these eleven kings in their ways laid a siege unto the castle of Bedegraine; and so they

departed and drew toward Arthur, and left few to abide at the siege, for the castle of Bedegraine was holden of King Arthur, and the men that were therein were Arthur's.

### **CHAPTER XIII. Of a dream of the King with the Hundred Knights.**

So by Merlin's advice there were sent fore-riders to skim the country, and they met with the fore-riders of the north, and made them to tell which way the host came, and then they told it to Arthur, and by King Ban and Bors' council they let burn and destroy all the country afore them, there they should ride.

The King with the Hundred Knights met a wonder dream two nights afore the battle, that there blew a great wind, and blew down their castles and their towns, and after that came a water and bare it all away. All that heard of the sweven said it was a token of great battle. Then by counsel of Merlin, when they wist which way the eleven kings would ride and lodge that night, at midnight they set upon them, as they were in their pavilions. But the scout-watch by their host cried, Lords! at arms! for here be your enemies at your hand!

### **CHAPTER XIV. How the eleven kings with their host fought against Arthur and his host, and many great feats of the war.**

THEN King Arthur and King Ban and King Bors, with their good and trusty knights, set on them so fiercely that they made them overthrow their pavilions on their heads, but the eleven kings, by manly prowess of arms, took a fair champaign, but there was slain that morrowtide ten thousand good men's bodies. And so they had afore them a strong passage, yet were they fifty thousand of hardy men. Then it drew toward day. Now shall ye do by mine advice, said Merlin unto the three kings: I would that King Ban and King Bors, with their fellowship of ten thousand men, were put in a wood here beside, in an ambushment, and keep them privy, and that they be laid or the light of the day come, and that they stir not till ye and your knights have fought with them long. And when it is daylight, dress your battle even afore them and the passage, that they may see all your host, for then will they be the more hardy, when they see you but about twenty thousand men, and cause them to be the gladder to suffer you and your host to come over the passage. All the three kings and the whole barons said that Merlin said passingly well, and it was done anon as Merlin had devised. So on the morn, when either host saw other, the host of the north was well comforted. Then to Ulfius and Brastias were delivered three thousand men of arms, and they set on them fiercely in the passage, and slew on the right hand and on the left hand that it was wonder to tell.

When that the eleven kings saw that there was so few a fellowship did such

deeds of arms, they were ashamed and set on them again fiercely; and there was Sir Ulfius's horse slain under him, but he did marvellously well on foot. But the Duke Eustace of Cambenet and King Clariance of Northumberland, were alway grievous on Ulfius. Then Brastias saw his fellow fared so withal he smote the duke with a spear, that horse and man fell down. That saw King Clariance and returned unto Brastias, and either smote other so that horse and man went to the earth, and so they lay long astonied, and their horses' knees brast to the hard bone. Then came Sir Kay the seneschal with six fellows with him, and did passing well. With that came the eleven kings, and there was Griflet put to the earth, horse and man, and Lucas the butler, horse and man, by King Brandegoris, and King Idres, and King Agwisanse. Then waxed the medley passing hard on both parties. When Sir Kay saw Griflet on foot, he rode on King Nentres and smote him down, and led his horse unto Sir Griflet, and horsed him again. Also Sir Kay with the same spear smote down King Lot, and hurt him passing sore. That saw the King with the Hundred Knights, and ran unto Sir Kay and smote him down, and took his horse, and gave him King Lot, whereof he said gramercy. When Sir Griflet saw Sir Kay and Lucas the butler on foot, he took a sharp spear, great and square, and rode to Pinel, a good man of arms, and smote horse and man down, and then he took his horse, and gave him unto Sir Kay. Then King Lot saw King Nentres on foot, he ran unto Melot de la Roche, and smote him down, horse and man, and gave King Nentres the horse, and horsed him again. Also the King of the Hundred Knights saw King Idres on foot; then he ran unto Gwiniart de Bloi, and smote him down, horse and man, and gave King Idres the horse, and horsed him again; and King Lot smote down Clariance de la Forest Savage, and gave the horse unto Duke Eustace. And so when they had horsed the kings again they drew them, all eleven kings, together, and said they would be revenged of the damage that they had taken that day. The meanwhile came in Sir Ector with an eager countenance, and found Ulfius and Brastias on foot, in great peril of death, that were foul defoiled under horse-feet.

Then Arthur as a lion, ran unto King Cradelment of North Wales, and smote him through the left side, that the horse and the king fell down; and then he took the horse by the rein, and led him unto Ulfius, and said, Have this horse, mine old friend, for great need hast thou of horse. Gramercy, said Ulfius. Then Sir Arthur did so marvellously in arms, that all men had wonder. When the King with the Hundred Knights saw King Cradelment on foot, he ran unto Sir Ector, that was well horsed, Sir Kay's father, and smote horse and man down, and gave the horse unto the king, and horsed him again. And when King Arthur saw the king ride on Sir Ector's horse, he was wroth and with his sword he smote the king on the helm, that a quarter of the helm and shield fell down, and so the



sword carved down unto the horse's neck, and so the king and the horse fell down to the ground. Then Sir Kay came unto Sir Morganore, seneschal with the King of the Hundred Knights, and smote him down, horse and man, and led the horse unto his father, Sir Ector; then Sir Ector ran unto a knight, hight Lardans, and smote horse and man down, and led the horse unto Sir Brastias, that great need had of an horse, and was greatly defoiled. When Brastias beheld Lucas the butler, that lay like a dead man under the horses' feet, and ever Sir Griflet did marvellously for to rescue him, and there were always fourteen knights on Sir Lucas; then Brastias smote one of them on the helm, that it went to the teeth, and he rode to another and smote him, that the arm flew into the field. Then he went to the third and smote him on the shoulder, that shoulder and arm flew in the field. And when Griflet saw rescues, he smote a knight on the temples, that head and helm went to the earth, and Griflet took the horse of that knight, and led him unto Sir Lucas, and bade him mount upon the horse and revenge his hurts. For Brastias had slain a knight to-fore and horsed Griflet.

#### **CHAPTER XV. Yet of the same battle.**

THEN Lucas saw King Agwisanse, that late had slain Moris de la Roche, and Lucas ran to him with a short spear that was great, that he gave him such a fall, that the horse fell down to the earth. Also Lucas found there on foot, Bloias de La Flandres, and Sir Gwinas, two hardy knights, and in that woodness that Lucas was in, he slew two bachelors and horsed them again. Then waxed the battle passing hard on both parties, but Arthur was glad that his knights were horsed again, and then they fought together, that the noise and sound rang by the water and the wood. Wherefore King Ban and King Bors made them ready, and dressed their shields and harness, and they were so courageous that many knights shook and bevered for eagerness. All this while Lucas, and Gwinas, and Briant, and Bellias of Flanders, held strong medley against six kings, that was King Lot, King Nentres, King Brandegoris, King Idres, King Uriens, and King Agwisanse. So with the help of Sir Kay and of Sir Griflet they held these six kings hard, that unneth they had any power to defend them. But when Sir Arthur saw the battle would not be ended by no manner, he fared wood as a lion, and steered his horse here and there, on the right hand, and on the left hand, that he stinted not till he had slain twenty knights. Also he wounded King Lot sore on the shoulder, and made him to leave that ground, for Sir Kay and Griflet did with King Arthur there great deeds of arms. Then Ulfius, and Brastias, and Sir Ector encountered against the Duke Eustace, and King Cradelment, and King Clariance of Northumberland, and King Carados, and against the King with the Hundred Knights. So these knights encountered with these kings, that they made

them to avoid the ground. Then King Lot made great dole for his damages and his fellows, and said unto the ten kings, But if ye will do as I devise we shall be slain and destroyed; let me have the King with the Hundred Knights, and King Agwisanse, and King Idres, and the Duke of Cambenet, and we five kings will have fifteen thousand men of arms with us, and we will go apart while ye six kings hold medley with twelve thousand; an we see that ye have foughten with them long, then will we come on fiercely, and else shall we never match them, said King Lot, but by this mean. So they departed as they here devised, and six kings made their party strong against Arthur, and made great war long.

In the meanwhile brake the ambushment of King Ban and King Bors, and Lionses and Phariance had the vanguard, and they two knights met with King Idres and his fellowship, and there began a great medley of breaking of spears, and smiting of swords, with slaying of men and horses, and King Idres was near at discomforture.

That saw Agwisanse the king, and put Lionses and Phariance in point of death; for the Duke of Cambenet came on withal with a great fellowship. So these two knights were in great danger of their lives that they were fain to return, but always they rescued themselves and their fellowship marvellously. When King Bors saw those knights put aback, it grieved him sore; then he came on so fast that his fellowship seemed as black as Inde. When King Lot had espied King Bors, he knew him well, then he said, O Jesu, defend us from death and horrible maims! for I see well we be in great peril of death; for I see yonder a king, one of the most worshipfullest men and one of the best knights of the world, is inclined unto his fellowship. What is he? said the King with the Hundred Knights. It is, said King Lot, King Bors of Gaul; I marvel how they came into this country without witting of us all. It was by Merlin's advice, said the knight. As for him, said King Carados, I will encounter with King Bors, an ye will rescue me when myster is. Go on, said they all, we will do all that we may. Then King Carados and his host rode on a soft pace, till that they came as nigh King Bors as bow-draught; then either battle let their horse run as fast as they might. And Bleoberis, that was godson unto King Bors, he bare his chief standard, that was a passing good knight. Now shall we see, said King Bors, how these northern Britons can bear the arms: and King Bors encountered with a knight, and smote him throughout with a spear that he fell dead unto the earth; and after drew his sword and did marvellous deeds of arms, that all parties had great wonder thereof; and his knights failed not, but did their part, and King Carados was smitten to the earth. With that came the King with the Hundred Knights and rescued King Carados mightily by force of arms, for he was a passing good knight of a king, and but a young man.

## CHAPTER XVI. Yet more of the same battle.

BY then came into the field King Ban as fierce as a lion, with bands of green and thereupon gold. Ha! a! said King Lot, we must be discomfited, for yonder I see the most valiant knight of the world, and the man of the most renown, for such two brethren as is King Ban and King Bors are not living, wherefore we must needs void or die; and but if we avoid manly and wisely there is but death. When King Ban came into the battle, he came in so fiercely that the strokes redounded again from the wood and the water; wherefore King Lot wept for pity and dole that he saw so many good knights take their end. But through the great force of King Ban they made both the northern battles that were departed hurtled together for great dread; and the three kings and their knights slew on ever, that it was pity on to behold that multitude of the people that fled. But King Lot, and King of the Hundred Knights, and King Morganore gathered the people together passing knightly, and did great prowess of arms, and held the battle all that day, like hard.

When the King of the Hundred Knights beheld the great damage that King Ban did, he thrust unto him with his horse, and smote him on high upon the helm, a great stroke, and astonied him sore. Then King Ban was wroth with him, and followed on him fiercely; the other saw that, and cast up his shield, and spurred his horse forward, but the stroke of King Ban fell down and carved a cantel off the shield, and the sword slid down by the hauberk behind his back, and cut through the trapping of steel and the horse even in two pieces, that the sword felt the earth. Then the King of the Hundred Knights voided the horse lightly, and with his sword he broached the horse of King Ban through and through. With that King Ban voided lightly from the dead horse, and then King Ban smote at the other so eagerly, and smote him on the helm that he fell to the earth. Also in that ire he felled King Morganore, and there was great slaughter of good knights and much people. By then came into the press King Arthur, and found King Ban standing among dead men and dead horses, fighting on foot as a wood lion, that there came none nigh him, as far as he might reach with his sword, but he caught a grievous buffet; whereof King Arthur had great pity. And Arthur was so bloody, that by his shield there might no man know him, for all was blood and brains on his sword. And as Arthur looked by him he saw a knight that was passingly well horsed, and therewith Sir Arthur ran to him, and smote him on the helm, that his sword went unto his teeth, and the knight sank down to the earth dead, and anon Arthur took the horse by the rein, and led him unto King Ban, and said, Fair brother, have this horse, for he have great myster thereof, and me repenteth sore of your great damage. It shall be soon revenged,

said King Ban, for I trust in God mine ure is not such but some of them may sore repent this. I will well, said Arthur, for I see your deeds full actual; nevertheless, I might not come at you at that time.

But when King Ban was mounted on horseback, then there began new battle, the which was sore and hard, and passing great slaughter. And so through great force King Arthur, King Ban, and King Bors made their knights a little to withdraw them. But alway the eleven kings with their chivalry never turned back; and so withdrew them to a little wood, and so over a little river, and there they rested them, for on the night they might have no rest on the field. And then the eleven kings and knights put them on a heap all together, as men adread and out of all comfort. But there was no man might pass them, they held them so hard together both behind and before, that King Arthur had marvel of their deeds of arms, and was passing wroth. Ah, Sir Arthur, said King Ban and King Bors, blame them not, for they do as good men ought to do. For by my faith, said King Ban, they are the best fighting men, and knights of most prowess, that ever I saw or heard speak of, and those eleven kings are men of great worship; and if they were longing unto you there were no king under the heaven had such eleven knights, and of such worship. I may not love them, said Arthur, they would destroy me. That wot we well, said King Ban and King Bors, for they are your mortal enemies, and that hath been proved aforehand; and this day they have done their part, and that is great pity of their wilfulness.

Then all the eleven kings drew them together, and then said King Lot, Lords, ye must other ways than ye do, or else the great loss is behind; ye may see what people we have lost, and what good men we lose, because we wait always on these footmen, and ever in saving of one of the footmen we lose ten horsemen for him; therefore this is mine advice, let us put our footmen from us, for it is near night, for the noble Arthur will not tarry on the footmen, for they may save themselves, the wood is near hand. And when we horsemen be together, look every each of you kings let make such ordinance that none break upon pain of death. And who that seeth any man dress him to flee, lightly that he be slain, for it is better that we slay a coward, than through a coward all we to be slain. How say ye? said King Lot, answer me all ye kings. It is well said, quoth King Nentres; so said the King of the Hundred Knights; the same said the King Carados, and King Uriens; so did King Idres and King Brandegoris; and so did King Cradelment, and the Duke of Cambenet; the same said King Clariance and King Agwisance, and sware they would never fail other, neither for life nor for death. And whoso that fled, but did as they did, should be slain. Then they amended their harness, and righted their shields, and took new spears and set them on their thighs, and stood still as it had been a plump of wood.

## **CHAPTER XVII. Yet more of the same battle, and how it was ended by Merlin.**

WHEN Sir Arthur and King Ban and Bors beheld them and all their knights, they praised them much for their noble cheer of chivalry, for the hardiest fighters that ever they heard or saw. With that, there dressed them a forty noble knights, and said unto the three kings, they would break their battle; these were their names: Lionses, Phariance, Ulfius, Brastias, Ector, Kay, Lucas the butler, Griflet le Fise de Dieu, Mariet de la Roche, Guinas de Bloi, Briant de la Forest Savage, Bellaus, Morians of the Castle [of] Maidens, Flannedrius of the Castle of Ladies, Annecians that was King Bors' godson, a noble knight, Ladinas de la Rouse, Emerause, Caulas, Graciens le Castlein, one Blois de la Case, and Sir Colgrevaunce de Gorre; all these knights rode on afore with spears on their thighs, and spurred their horses mightily as the horses might run. And the eleven kings with part of their knights rushed with their horses as fast as they might with their spears, and there they did on both parties marvellous deeds of arms. So came into the thick of the press, Arthur, Ban, and Bors, and slew down right on both hands, that their horses went in blood up to the fetlocks. But ever the eleven kings and their host was ever in the visage of Arthur. Wherefore Ban and Bors had great marvel, considering the great slaughter that there was, but at the last they were driven aback over a little river. With that came Merlin on a great black horse, and said unto Arthur, Thou hast never done! Hast thou not done enough? of three score thousand this day hast thou left alive but fifteen thousand, and it is time to say Ho! For God is wroth with thee, that thou wilt never have done; for yonder eleven kings at this time will not be overthrown, but an thou tarry on them any longer, thy fortune will turn and they shall increase. And therefore withdraw you unto your lodging, and rest you as soon as ye may, and reward your good knights with gold and with silver, for they have well deserved it; there may no riches be too dear for them, for of so few men as ye have, there were never men did more of prowess than they have done today, for ye have matched this day with the best fighters of the world. That is truth, said King Ban and Bors. Also said Merlin, withdraw you where ye list, for this three year I dare undertake they shall not dere you; and by then ye shall hear new tidings. And then Merlin said unto Arthur, These eleven kings have more on hand than they are ware of, for the Saracens are landed in their countries, more than forty thousand, that burn and slay, and have laid siege at the castle Wandesborow, and make great destruction; therefore dread you not this three year. Also, sir, all the goods that be gotten at this battle, let it be searched, and when ye have it in your hands, let it be given freely unto these two kings, Ban and Bors, that they may

reward their knights withal; and that shall cause strangers to be of better will to do you service at need. Also you be able to reward your own knights of your own goods whensomever it liketh you. It is well said, quoth Arthur, and as thou hast devised, so shall it be done. When it was delivered to Ban and Bors, they gave the goods as freely to their knights as freely as it was given to them. Then Merlin took his leave of Arthur and of the two kings, for to go and see his master Bleise, that dwelt in Northumberland; and so he departed and came to his master, that was passing glad of his coming; and there he told how Arthur and the two kings had sped at the great battle, and how it was ended, and told the names of every king and knight of worship that was there. And so Bleise wrote the battle word by word, as Merlin told him, how it began, and by whom, and in likewise how it was ended, and who had the worse. All the battles that were done in Arthur's days Merlin did his master Bleise do write; also he did do write all the battles that every worthy knight did of Arthur's court.

After this Merlin departed from his master and came to King Arthur, that was in the castle of Bedegraine, that was one of the castles that stand in the forest of Sherwood. And Merlin was so disguised that King Arthur knew him not, for he was all befurred in black sheep-skins, and a great pair of boots, and a bow and arrows, in a russet gown, and brought wild geese in his hand, and it was on the morn after Candlemas day; but King Arthur knew him not. Sir, said Merlin unto the king, will ye give me a gift? Wherefore, said King Arthur, should I give thee a gift, churl? Sir, said Merlin, ye were better to give me a gift that is not in your hand than to lose great riches, for here in the same place where the great battle was, is great treasure hid in the earth. Who told thee so, churl? said Arthur. Merlin told me so, said he. Then Ulfius and Brastias knew him well enough, and smiled. Sir, said these two knights, it is Merlin that so speaketh unto you. Then King Arthur was greatly abashed, and had marvel of Merlin, and so had King Ban and King Bors, and so they had great disport at him. So in the meanwhile there came a damosel that was an earl's daughter: his name was Sanam, and her name was Lionors, a passing fair damosel; and so she came thither for to do homage, as other lords did after the great battle. And King Arthur set his love greatly upon her, and so did she upon him, and the king had ado with her, and gat on her a child: his name was Borre, that was after a good knight, and of the Table Round. Then there came word that the King Rience of North Wales made great war on King Leodegrance of Cameliard, for the which thing Arthur was wroth, for he loved him well, and hated King Rience, for he was alway against him. So by ordinance of the three kings that were sent home unto Benwick, all they would depart for dread of King Claudas; and Phariance, and Antemes, and Gratian, and Lionses [of] Payarne, with the leaders of those

that should keep the kings' lands.

**CHAPTER XVIII. How King Arthur, King Ban, and King Bors rescued King Leodegrance, and other incidents.**

AND then King Arthur, and King Ban, and King Bors departed with their fellowship, a twenty thousand, and came within six days into the country of Cameliard, and there rescued King Leodegrance, and slew there much people of King Rience, unto the number of ten thousand men, and put him to flight. And then had these three kings great cheer of King Leodegrance, that thanked them of their great goodness, that they would revenge him of his enemies; and there had Arthur the first sight of Guenever, the king's daughter of Cameliard, and ever after he loved her. After they were wedded, as it telleth in the book. So, briefly to make an end, they took their leave to go into their own countries, for King Claudas did great destruction on their lands. Then said Arthur, I will go with you. Nay, said the kings, ye shall not at this time, for ye have much to do yet in these lands, therefore we will depart, and with the great goods that we have gotten in these lands by your gifts, we shall wage good knights and withstand the King Claudas' malice, for by the grace of God, an we have need we will send to you for your succour; and if ye have need, send for us, and we will not tarry, by the faith of our bodies. It shall not, said Merlin, need that these two kings come again in the way of war, but I know well King Arthur may not be long from you, for within a year or two ye shall have great need, and then shall he revenge you on your enemies, as ye have done on his. For these eleven kings shall die all in a day, by the great might and prowess of arms of two valiant knights (as it telleth after); their names be Balin le Savage, and Balan, his brother, that be marvellous good knights as be any living.

Now turn we to the eleven kings that returned unto a city that hight Sorhaute, the which city was within King Uriens', and there they refreshed them as well as they might, and made leeches search their wounds, and sorrowed greatly for the death of their people. With that there came a messenger and told how there was come into their lands people that were lawless as well as Saracens, a forty thousand, and have burnt and slain all the people that they may come by, without mercy, and have laid siege on the castle of Wandesborow. Alas, said the eleven kings, here is sorrow upon sorrow, and if we had not warred against Arthur as we have done, he would soon revenge us. As for King Leodegrance, he loveth Arthur better than us, and as for King Rience, he hath enough to do with Leodegrance, for he hath laid siege unto him. So they consented together to keep all the marches of Cornwall, of Wales, and of the North. So first, they put King Idres in the City of Nautes in Britain, with four thousand men of arms, to watch

both the water and the land. Also they put in the city of Windesan, King Nentres of Garlot, with four thousand knights to watch both on water and on land. Also they had of other men of war more than eight thousand, for to fortify all the fortresses in the marches of Cornwall. Also they put more knights in all the marches of Wales and Scotland, with many good men of arms, and so they kept them together the space of three year, and ever allied them with mighty kings and dukes and lords. And to them fell King Rience of North Wales, the which and Nero that was a mighty man of men. And all this while they furnished them and garnished them of good men of arms, and victual, and of all manner of habiliment that pretendeth to the war, to avenge them for the battle of Bedegraine, as it telleth in the book of adventures following.

### **CHAPTER XIX. How King Arthur rode to Carlion, and of his dream, and how he saw the questing beast.**

THEN after the departing of King Ban and of King Bors, King Arthur rode into Carlion. And thither came to him, King Lot's wife, of Orkney, in manner of a message, but she was sent thither to espy the court of King Arthur; and she came richly beseen, with her four sons, Gawaine, Gaheris, Agravine, and Gareth, with many other knights and ladies. For she was a passing fair lady, therefore the king cast great love unto her, and desired to lie by her; so they were agreed, and he begat upon her Mordred, and she was his sister, on his mother's side, Igraine. So there she rested her a month, and at the last departed. Then the king dreamed a marvellous dream whereof he was sore adread. But all this time King Arthur knew not that King Lot's wife was his sister. Thus was the dream of Arthur: Him thought there was come into this land griffins and serpents, and him thought they burnt and slew all the people in the land, and then him thought he fought with them, and they did him passing great harm, and wounded him full sore, but at the last he slew them. When the king awaked, he was passing heavy of his dream, and so to put it out of thoughts, he made him ready with many knights to ride a-hunting. As soon as he was in the forest the king saw a great hart afore him. This hart will I chase, said King Arthur, and so he spurred the horse, and rode after long, and so by fine force oft he was like to have smitten the hart; whereas the king had chased the hart so long, that his horse lost his breath, and fell down dead. Then a yeoman fetched the king another horse.

So the king saw the hart enbushed, and his horse dead, he set him down by a fountain, and there he fell in great thoughts. And as he sat so, him thought he heard a noise of hounds, to the sum of thirty. And with that the king saw coming toward him the strangest beast that ever he saw or heard of; so the beast went to the well and drank, and the noise was in the beast's belly like unto the questing



of thirty couple hounds; but all the while the beast drank there was no noise in the beast's belly: and there with the beast departed with a great noise, whereof the king had great marvel. And so he was in a great thought, and therewith he fell asleep. Right so there came a knight afoot unto Arthur and said, Knight full of thought and sleepy, tell me if thou sawest a strange beast pass this way. Such one saw I, said King Arthur, that is past two mile; what would ye with the beast? said Arthur. Sir, I have followed that beast long time, and killed mine horse, so would God I had another to follow my quest. Right so came one with the king's horse, and when the knight saw the horse, he prayed the king to give him the horse: for I have followed this quest this twelvemonth, and either I shall achieve him, or bleed of the best blood of my body. Pellinore, that time king, followed the Questing Beast, and after his death Sir Palamides followed it.

#### **CHAPTER XX. How King Pellinore took Arthur's horse and followed the Questing Beast, and how Merlin met with Arthur.**

SIR knight, said the king, leave that quest, and suffer me to have it, and I will follow it another twelvemonth. Ah, fool, said the knight unto Arthur, it is in vain thy desire, for it shall never be achieved but by me, or my next kin. Therewith he started unto the king's horse and mounted into the saddle, and said, Gramercy, this horse is my own. Well, said the king, thou mayst take my horse by force, but an I might prove thee whether thou were better on horseback or I.—Well, said the knight, seek me here when thou wilt, and here nigh this well thou shalt find me, and so passed on his way. Then the king sat in a study, and bade his men fetch his horse as fast as ever they might. Right so came by him Merlin like a child of fourteen year of age, and saluted the king, and asked him why he was so pensive. I may well be pensive, said the king, for I have seen the marvelliest sight that ever I saw. That know I well, said Merlin, as well as thyself, and of all thy thoughts, but thou art but a fool to take thought, for it will not amend thee. Also I know what thou art, and who was thy father, and of whom thou wert begotten; King Uther Pendragon was thy father, and begat thee on Igraine. That is false, said King Arthur, how shouldest thou know it, for thou art not so old of years to know my father? Yes, said Merlin, I know it better than ye or any man living. I will not believe thee, said Arthur, and was wroth with the child. So departed Merlin, and came again in the likeness of an old man of fourscore year of age, whereof the king was right glad, for he seemed to be right wise.

Then said the old man, Why are ye so sad? I may well be heavy, said Arthur, for many things. Also here was a child, and told me many things that meseemeth he should not know, for he was not of age to know my father. Yes, said the old man, the child told you truth, and more would he have told you an ye would

have suffered him. But ye have done a thing late that God is displeased with you, for ye have lain by your sister, and on her ye have gotten a child that shall destroy you and all the knights of your realm. What are ye, said Arthur, that tell me these tidings? I am Merlin, and I was he in the child's likeness. Ah, said King Arthur, ye are a marvellous man, but I marvel much of thy words that I must die in battle. Marvel not, said Merlin, for it is God's will your body to be punished for your foul deeds; but I may well be sorry, said Merlin, for I shall die a shameful death, to be put in the earth quick, and ye shall die a worshipful death. And as they talked this, came one with the king's horse, and so the king mounted on his horse, and Merlin on another, and so rode unto Carlion. And anon the king asked Ector and Ulfius how he was begotten, and they told him Uther Pendragon was his father and Queen Igraine his mother. Then he said to Merlin, I will that my mother be sent for that I may speak with her; and if she say so herself then will I believe it. In all haste, the queen was sent for, and she came and brought with her Morgan le Fay, her daughter, that was as fair a lady as any might be, and the king welcomed Igraine in the best manner.

**CHAPTER XXI. How Ulfius impeached Queen Igraine, Arthur's mother, of treason; and how a knight came and desired to have the death of his master**

revenged.

RIGHT SO came Ulfius, and said openly, that the king and all might hear that were feasted that day, Ye are the falsest lady of the world, and the most traitress unto the king's person. Beware, said Arthur, what thou sayest; thou speakest a great word. I am well ware, said Ulfius, what I speak, and here is my glove to prove it upon any man that will say the contrary, that this Queen Igraine is causer of your great damage, and of your great war. For, an she would have uttered it in the life of King Uther Pendragon, of the birth of you, and how ye were begotten ye had never had the mortal wars that ye have had; for the most part of your barons of your realm knew never whose son ye were, nor of whom ye were begotten; and she that bare you of her body should have made it known openly in excusing of her worship and yours, and in like wise to all the realm, wherefore I prove her false to God and to you and to all your realm, and who will say the contrary I will prove it on his body.

Then spake Igraine and said, I am a woman and I may not fight, but rather than I should be dishonoured, there would some good man take my quarrel. More, she said, Merlin knoweth well, and ye Sir Ulfius, how King Uther came to me in the Castle of Tintagil in the likeness of my lord, that was dead three hours to-fore, and thereby gat a child that night upon me. And after the thirteenth day

King Uther wedded me, and by his commandment when the child was born it was delivered unto Merlin and nourished by him, and so I saw the child never after, nor wot not what is his name, for I knew him never yet. And there, Ulfius said to the queen, Merlin is more to blame than ye. Well I wot, said the queen, I bare a child by my lord King Uther, but I wot not where he is become. Then Merlin took the king by the hand, saying, This is your mother. And therewith Sir Ector bare witness how he nourished him by Uther's commandment. And therewith King Arthur took his mother, Queen Igraine, in his arms and kissed her, and either wept upon other. And then the king let make a feast that lasted eight days.

Then on a day there came in the court a squire on horseback, leading a knight before him wounded to the death, and told him how there was a knight in the forest had reared up a pavilion by a well, and hath slain my master, a good knight, his name was Miles; wherefore I beseech you that my master may be buried, and that some knight may revenge my master's death. Then the noise was great of that knight's death in the court, and every man said his advice. Then came Griflet that was but a squire, and he was but young, of the age of the king Arthur, so he besought the king for all his service that he had done him to give the order of knighthood.

## **CHAPTER XXII. How Griflet was made knight, and jousted with a knight**

THOU art full young and tender of age, said Arthur, for to take so high an order on thee. Sir, said Griflet, I beseech you make me knight. Sir, said Merlin, it were great pity to lose Griflet, for he will be a passing good man when he is of age, abiding with you the term of his life. And if he adventure his body with yonder knight at the fountain, it is in great peril if ever he come again, for he is one of the best knights of the world, and the strongest man of arms. Well, said Arthur. So at the desire of Griflet the king made him knight. Now, said Arthur unto Sir Griflet, sith I have made you knight thou must give me a gift. What ye will, said Griflet. Thou shalt promise me by the faith of thy body, when thou hast jousted with the knight at the fountain, whether it fall ye be on foot or on horseback, that right so ye shall come again unto me without making any more debate. I will promise you, said Griflet, as you desire. Then took Griflet his horse in great haste, and dressed his shield and took a spear in his hand, and so he rode a great wallop till he came to the fountain, and thereby he saw a rich pavilion, and thereby under a cloth stood a fair horse well saddled and bridled, and on a tree a shield of divers colours and a great spear. Then Griflet smote on the shield with the butt of his spear, that the shield fell down to the ground. With

that the knight came out of the pavilion, and said, Fair knight, why smote ye down my shield? For I will joust with you, said Griflet. It is better ye do not, said the knight, for ye are but young, and late made knight, and your might is nothing to mine. As for that, said Griflet, I will joust with you. That is me loath, said the knight, but sith I must needs, I will dress me thereto. Of whence be ye? said the knight. Sir, I am of Arthur's court. So the two knights ran together that Griflet's spear all to-shivered; and there withal he smote Griflet through the shield and the left side, and brake the spear that the truncheon stuck in his body, that horse and knight fell down.

### **CHAPTER XXIII. How twelve knights came from Rome and asked truage for this land of Arthur, and how Arthur fought with a knight.**

WHEN the knight saw him lie so on the ground, he alighted, and was passing heavy, for he weened he had slain him, and then he unlaced his helm and gat him wind, and so with the truncheon he set him on his horse, and so betook him to God, and said he had a mighty heart, and if he might live he would prove a passing good knight. And so Sir Griflet rode to the court, where great dole was made for him. But through good leeches he was healed and saved. Right so came into the court twelve knights, and were aged men, and they came from the Emperor of Rome, and they asked of Arthur truage for this realm, other else the emperor would destroy him and his land. Well, said King Arthur, ye are messengers, therefore ye may say what ye will, other else ye should die therefore. But this is mine answer: I owe the emperor no truage, nor none will I hold him, but on a fair field I shall give him my truage that shall be with a sharp spear, or else with a sharp sword, and that shall not be long, by my father's soul, Uther Pendragon. And therewith the messengers departed passingly wroth, and King Arthur as wroth, for in evil time came they then; for the king was passingly wroth for the hurt of Sir Griflet. And so he commanded a privy man of his chamber that or it be day his best horse and armour, with all that longeth unto his person, be without the city or to-morrow day. Right so or to-morrow day he met with his man and his horse, and so mounted up and dressed his shield and took his spear, and bade his chamberlain tarry there till he came again. And so Arthur rode a soft pace till it was day, and then was he ware of three churls chasing Merlin, and would have slain him. Then the king rode unto them, and bade them: Flee, churls! then were they afeard when they saw a knight, and fled. O Merlin, said Arthur, here hadst thou been slain for all thy crafts had I not been. Nay, said Merlin, not so, for I could save myself an I would; and thou art more near thy death than I am, for thou goest to the deathward, an God be not thy friend.

So as they went thus talking they came to the fountain, and the rich pavilion

there by it. Then King Arthur was ware where sat a knight armed in a chair. Sir knight, said Arthur, for what cause abidest thou here, that there may no knight ride this way but if he joust with thee? said the king. I rede thee leave that custom, said Arthur. This custom, said the knight, have I used and will use maugre who saith nay, and who is grieved with my custom let him amend it that will. I will amend it, said Arthur. I shall defend thee, said the knight. Anon he took his horse and dressed his shield and took a spear, and they met so hard either in other's shields, that all to-shivered their spears. Therewith anon Arthur pulled out his sword. Nay, not so, said the knight; it is fairer, said the knight, that we twain run more together with sharp spears. I will well, said Arthur, an I had any more spears. I have enow, said the knight; so there came a squire and brought two good spears, and Arthur chose one and he another; so they spurred their horses and came together with all their mights, that either brake their spears to their hands. Then Arthur set hand on his sword. Nay, said the knight, ye shall do better, ye are a passing good jouter as ever I met withal, and once for the love of the high order of knighthood let us joust once again. I assent me, said Arthur. Anon there were brought two great spears, and every knight gat a spear, and therewith they ran together that Arthur's spear all to-shivered. But the other knight hit him so hard in midst of the shield, that horse and man fell to the earth, and therewith Arthur was eager, and pulled out his sword, and said, I will assay thee, sir knight, on foot, for I have lost the honour on horseback. I will be on horseback, said the knight. Then was Arthur wroth, and dressed his shield toward him with his sword drawn. When the knight saw that, he alighted, for him thought no worship to have a knight at such avail, he to be on horseback and he on foot, and so he alighted and dressed his shield unto Arthur. And there began a strong battle with many great strokes, and so hewed with their swords that the cantels flew in the fields, and much blood they bled both, that all the place there as they fought was overbled with blood, and thus they fought long and rested them, and then they went to the battle again, and so hurtled together like two rams that either fell to the earth. So at the last they smote together that both their swords met even together. But the sword of the knight smote King Arthur's sword in two pieces, wherefore he was heavy. Then said the knight unto Arthur, Thou art in my daunger whether me list to save thee or slay thee, and but thou yield thee as overcome and recreant, thou shalt die. As for death, said King Arthur, welcome be it when it cometh, but to yield me unto thee as recreant I had liefer die than to be so shamed. And therewithal the king leapt unto Pellinore, and took him by the middle and threw him down, and rased off his helm. When the knight felt that he was adread, for he was a passing big man of might, and anon he brought Arthur under him, and rased off his helm and would have

smitten off his head.

#### **CHAPTER XXIV. How Merlin saved Arthur's life, and threw an enchantment on King Pellinore and made him to sleep.**

THEREWITHAL came Merlin and said, Knight, hold thy hand, for an thou slay that knight thou puttest this realm in the greatest damage that ever was realm: for this knight is a man of more worship than thou wotest of. Why, who is he? said the knight. It is King Arthur. Then would he have slain him for dread of his wrath, and heaved up his sword, and therewith Merlin cast an enchantment to the knight, that he fell to the earth in a great sleep. Then Merlin took up King Arthur, and rode forth on the knight's horse. Alas! said Arthur, what hast thou done, Merlin? hast thou slain this good knight by thy crafts? There liveth not so worshipful a knight as he was; I had liefer than the stint of my land a year that he were alive. Care ye not, said Merlin, for he is wholer than ye; for he is but asleep, and will awake within three hours. I told you, said Merlin, what a knight he was; here had ye been slain had I not been. Also there liveth not a bigger knight than he is one, and he shall hereafter do you right good service; and his name is Pellinore, and he shall have two sons that shall be passing good men; save one they shall have no fellow of prowess and of good living, and their names shall be Percivale of Wales and Lamerake of Wales, and he shall tell you the name of your own son, begotten of your sister, that shall be the destruction of all this realm.

#### **CHAPTER XXV. How Arthur by the mean of Merlin gat Excalibur his sword of the Lady of the Lake.**

RIGHT SO the king and he departed, and went unto an hermit that was a good man and a great leech. So the hermit searched all his wounds and gave him good salves; so the king was there three days, and then were his wounds well amended that he might ride and go, and so departed. And as they rode, Arthur said, I have no sword. No force, said Merlin, hereby is a sword that shall be yours, an I may. So they rode till they came to a lake, the which was a fair water and broad, and in the midst of the lake Arthur was ware of an arm clothed in white samite, that held a fair sword in that hand. Lo! said Merlin, yonder is that sword that I spake of. With that they saw a damosel going upon the lake. What damosel is that? said Arthur. That is the Lady of the Lake, said Merlin; and within that lake is a rock, and therein is as fair a place as any on earth, and richly beseen; and this damosel will come to you anon, and then speak ye fair to her that she will give you that sword. Anon withal came the damosel unto Arthur, and saluted him, and he her again. Damosel, said Arthur, what sword is that, that

yonder the arm holdeth above the water? I would it were mine, for I have no sword. Sir Arthur, king, said the damosel, that sword is mine, and if ye will give me a gift when I ask it you, ye shall have it. By my faith, said Arthur, I will give you what gift ye will ask. Well! said the damosel, go ye into yonder barge, and row yourself to the sword, and take it and the scabbard with you, and I will ask my gift when I see my time. So Sir Arthur and Merlin alighted and tied their horses to two trees, and so they went into the ship, and when they came to the sword that the hand held, Sir Arthur took it up by the handles, and took it with him, and the arm and the hand went under the water. And so [they] came unto the land and rode forth, and then Sir Arthur saw a rich pavilion. What signifieth yonder pavilion? It is the knight's pavilion, said Merlin, that ye fought with last, Sir Pellinore; but he is out, he is not there. He hath ado with a knight of yours that hight Egglame, and they have foughten together, but at the last Egglame fled, and else he had been dead, and he hath chased him even to Carlion, and we shall meet with him anon in the highway. That is well said, said Arthur, now have I a sword, now will I wage battle with him, and be avenged on him. Sir, you shall not so, said Merlin, for the knight is weary of fighting and chasing, so that ye shall have no worship to have ado with him; also he will not be lightly matched of one knight living, and therefore it is my counsel, let him pass, for he shall do you good service in short time, and his sons after his days. Also ye shall see that day in short space, you shall be right glad to give him your sister to wed. When I see him, I will do as ye advise, said Arthur.

Then Sir Arthur looked on the sword, and liked it passing well. Whether liketh you better, said Merlin, the sword or the scabbard? Me liketh better the sword, said Arthur. Ye are more unwise, said Merlin, for the scabbard is worth ten of the swords, for whiles ye have the scabbard upon you, ye shall never lose no blood, be ye never so sore wounded; therefore keep well the scabbard always with you. So they rode unto Carlion, and by the way they met with Sir Pellinore; but Merlin had done such a craft, that Pellinore saw not Arthur, and he passed by without any words. I marvel, said Arthur, that the knight would not speak. Sir, said Merlin, he saw you not, for an he had seen you, ye had not lightly departed. So they came unto Carlion, whereof his knights were passing glad. And when they heard of his adventures, they marvelled that he would jeopard his person so, alone. But all men of worship said it was merry to be under such a chieftain, that would put his person in adventure as other poor knights did.

**CHAPTER XXVI. How tidings came to Arthur that King Rience had overcome eleven kings, and how he desired Arthur's beard to trim his mantle.**

THIS meanwhile came a messenger from King Rience of North Wales, and king he was of all Ireland, and of many isles. And this was his message, greeting well King Arthur in this manner wise, saying that King Rience had discomfited and overcome eleven kings, and everych of them did him homage, and that was this, they gave him their beards clean flayed off, as much as there was; wherefore the messenger came for King Arthur's beard. For King Rience had purfled a mantle with kings' beards, and there lacked one place of the mantle; wherefore he sent for his beard, or else he would enter into his lands, and burn and slay, and never leave till he have the head and the beard. Well, said Arthur, thou hast said thy message, the which is the most villainous and lewdest message that ever man heard sent unto a king; also thou mayest see my beard is full young yet to make a purple of it. But tell thou thy king this: I owe him none homage, nor none of mine elders; but or it be long to, he shall do me homage on both his knees, or else he shall lose his head, by the faith of my body, for this is the most shamefulest message that ever I heard speak of. I have espied thy king met never yet with worshipful man, but tell him, I will have his head without he do me homage. Then the messenger departed.

Now is there any here, said Arthur, that knoweth King Rience? Then answered a knight that hight Naram, Sir, I know the king well; he is a passing good man of his body, as few be living, and a passing proud man, and Sir, doubt ye not he will make war on you with a mighty puissance. Well, said Arthur, I shall ordain for him in short time.

#### **CHAPTER XXVII. How all the children were sent for that were born on May-day, and how Mordred was saved.**

THEN King Arthur let send for all the children born on May-day, begotten of lords and born of ladies; for Merlin told King Arthur that he that should destroy him should be born on May-day, wherefore he sent for them all, upon pain of death; and so there were found many lords' sons, and all were sent unto the king, and so was Mordred sent by King Lot's wife, and all were put in a ship to the sea, and some were four weeks old, and some less. And so by fortune the ship drave unto a castle, and was all to-riven, and destroyed the most part, save that Mordred was cast up, and a good man found him, and nourished him till he was fourteen year old, and then he brought him to the court, as it rehearseth afterward, toward the end of the Death of Arthur. So many lords and barons of this realm were displeased, for their children were so lost, and many put the wite on Merlin more than on Arthur; so what for dread and for love, they held their peace. But when the messenger came to King Rience, then was he wood out of measure, and purveyed him for a great host, as it rehearseth after in the book of



Balin le Savage, that followeth next after, how by adventure Balin gat the sword.  
Explicit liber primus. Incipit liber secundus

## BOOK II

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### **CHAPTER I. Of a damosel which came girt with a sword for to find a man of such virtue to draw it out of the scabbard.**

AFTER the death of Uther Pendragon reigned Arthur his son, the which had great war in his days for to get all England into his hand. For there were many kings within the realm of England, and in Wales, Scotland, and Cornwall. So it befell on a time when King Arthur was at London, there came a knight and told the king tidings how that the King Rience of North Wales had reared a great number of people, and were entered into the land, and burnt and slew the king's true liege people. If this be true, said Arthur, it were great shame unto mine estate but that he were mightily withstood. It is truth, said the knight, for I saw the host myself. Well, said the king, let make a cry, that all the lords, knights, and gentlemen of arms, should draw unto a castle called Camelot in those days, and there the king would let make a council-general and a great jousts.

So when the king was come thither with all his baronage, and lodged as they seemed best, there was come a damosel the which was sent on message from the great lady Lile of Avelion. And when she came before King Arthur, she told from whom she came, and how she was sent on message unto him for these causes. Then she let her mantle fall that was richly furred; and then was she girt with a noble sword whereof the king had marvel, and said, Damosel, for what cause are ye girt with that sword? it beseemeth you not. Now shall I tell you, said the damosel; this sword that I am girt withal doth me great sorrow and cumbrance, for I may not be delivered of this sword but by a knight, but he must be a passing good man of his hands and of his deeds, and without villainy or treachery, and without treason. And if I may find such a knight that hath all these virtues, he may draw out this sword out of the sheath, for I have been at King Rience's it was told me there were passing good knights, and he and all his knights have assayed it and none can speed. This is a great marvel, said Arthur, if this be sooth; I will myself assay to draw out the sword, not presuming upon myself that I am the best knight, but that I will begin to draw at your sword in giving example to all the barons that they shall assay everych one after other when I have assayed it. Then Arthur took the sword by the sheath and by the

girdle and pulled at it eagerly, but the sword would not out.

Sir, said the damosel, you need not to pull half so hard, for he that shall pull it out shall do it with little might. Ye say well, said Arthur; now assay ye all my barons; but beware ye be not defiled with shame, treachery, nor guile. Then it will not avail, said the damosel, for he must be a clean knight without villainy, and of a gentle strain of father side and mother side. Most of all the barons of the Round Table that were there at that time assayed all by row, but there might none speed; wherefore the damosel made great sorrow out of measure, and said, Alas! I weened in this court had been the best knights without treachery or treason. By my faith, said Arthur, here are good knights, as I deem, as any be in the world, but their grace is not to help you, wherefore I am displeased.

## **CHAPTER II. How Balin, arrayed like a poor knight, pulled out the sword, which afterward was the cause of his death.**

THEN fell it so that time there was a poor knight with King Arthur, that had been prisoner with him half a year and more for slaying of a knight, the which was cousin unto King Arthur. The name of this knight was called Balin, and by good means of the barons he was delivered out of prison, for he was a good man named of his body, and he was born in Northumberland. And so he went privily into the court, and saw this adventure, whereof it raised his heart, and he would assay it as other knights did, but for he was poor and poorly arrayed he put him not far in press. But in his heart he was fully assured to do as well, if his grace happed him, as any knight that there was. And as the damosel took her leave of Arthur and of all the barons, so departing, this knight Balin called unto her, and said, Damosel, I pray you of your courtesy, suffer me as well to assay as these lords; though that I be so poorly clothed, in my heart meseemeth I am fully assured as some of these others, and meseemeth in my heart to speed right well. The damosel beheld the poor knight, and saw he was a likely man, but for his poor arrayment she thought he should be of no worship without villainy or treachery. And then she said unto the knight, Sir, it needeth not to put me to more pain or labour, for it seemeth not you to speed there as other have failed. Ah! fair damosel, said Balin, worthiness, and good tatches, and good deeds, are not only in arrayment, but manhood and worship is hid within man's person, and many a worshipful knight is not known unto all people, and therefore worship and hardiness is not in arrayment. By God, said the damosel, ye say sooth; therefore ye shall assay to do what ye may. Then Balin took the sword by the girdle and sheath, and drew it out easily; and when he looked on the sword it pleased him much. Then had the king and all the barons great marvel that Balin had done that adventure, and many knights had great despite of Balin. Certes,

said the damosel, this is a passing good knight, and the best that ever I found, and most of worship without treason, treachery, or villainy, and many marvels shall he do. Now, gentle and courteous knight, give me the sword again. Nay, said Balin, for this sword will I keep, but it be taken from me with force. Well, said the damosel, ye are not wise to keep the sword from me, for ye shall slay with the sword the best friend that ye have, and the man that ye most love in the world, and the sword shall be your destruction. I shall take the adventure, said Balin, that God will ordain me, but the sword ye shall not have at this time, by the faith of my body. Ye shall repent it within short time, said the damosel, for I would have the sword more for your avail than for mine, for I am passing heavy for your sake; for ye will not believe that sword shall be your destruction, and that is great pity. With that the damosel departed, making great sorrow.

Anon after, Balin sent for his horse and armour, and so would depart from the court, and took his leave of King Arthur. Nay, said the king, I suppose ye will not depart so lightly from this fellowship, I suppose ye are displeased that I have shewed you unkindness; blame me the less, for I was misinformed against you, but I weened ye had not been such a knight as ye are, of worship and prowess, and if ye will abide in this court among my fellowship, I shall so advance you as ye shall be pleased. God thank your highness, said Balin, your bounty and highness may no man praise half to the value; but at this time I must needs depart, beseeching you alway of your good grace. Truly, said the king, I am right wroth for your departing; I pray you, fair knight, that ye tarry not long, and ye shall be right welcome to me, and to my barons, and I shall amend all miss that I have done against you; God thank your great lordship, said Balin, and therewith made him ready to depart. Then the most part of the knights of the Round Table said that Balin did not this adventure all only by might, but by witchcraft.

### **CHAPTER III. How the Lady of the Lake demanded the knight's head that had won the sword, or the maiden's head.**

THE meanwhile, that this knight was making him ready to depart, there came into the court a lady that hight the Lady of the Lake. And she came on horseback, richly beseen, and saluted King Arthur, and there asked him a gift that he promised her when she gave him the sword. That is sooth, said Arthur, a gift I promised you, but I have forgotten the name of my sword that ye gave me. The name of it, said the lady, is Excalibur, that is as much to say as Cut-steel. Ye say well, said the king; ask what ye will and ye shall have it, an it lie in my power to give it. Well, said the lady, I ask the head of the knight that hath won the sword, or else the damosel's head that brought it; I take no force though I

have both their heads, for he slew my brother, a good knight and a true, and that gentlewoman was causer of my father's death. Truly, said King Arthur, I may not grant neither of their heads with my worship, therefore ask what ye will else, and I shall fulfil your desire. I will ask none other thing, said the lady. When Balin was ready to depart, he saw the Lady of the Lake, that by her means had slain Balin's mother, and he had sought her three years; and when it was told him that she asked his head of King Arthur, he went to her straight and said, Evil be you found; ye would have my head, and therefore ye shall lose yours, and with his sword lightly he smote off her head before King Arthur. Alas, for shame! said Arthur, why have ye done so? ye have shamed me and all my court, for this was a lady that I was beholden to, and hither she came under my safe-conduct; I shall never forgive you that trespass. Sir, said Balin, me forthinketh of your displeasure, for this same lady was the untriest lady living, and by enchantment and sorcery she hath been the destroyer of many good knights, and she was causer that my mother was burnt, through her falsehood and treachery. What cause soever ye had, said Arthur, ye should have forborne her in my presence; therefore, think not the contrary, ye shall repent it, for such another despite had I never in my court; therefore withdraw you out of my court in all haste ye may.

Then Balin took up the head of the lady, and bare it with him to his hostelry, and there he met with his squire, that was sorry he had displeased King Arthur and so they rode forth out of the town. Now, said Balin, we must depart, take thou this head and bear it to my friends, and tell them how I have sped, and tell my friends in Northumberland that my most foe is dead. Also tell them how I am out of prison, and what adventure befell me at the getting of this sword. Alas! said the squire, ye are greatly to blame for to displease King Arthur. As for that, said Balin, I will hie me, in all the haste that I may, to meet with King Rience and destroy him, either else to die therefore; and if it may hap me to win him, then will King Arthur be my good and gracious lord. Where shall I meet with you? said the squire. In King Arthur's court, said Balin. So his squire and he departed at that time. Then King Arthur and all the court made great dole and had shame of the death of the Lady of the Lake. Then the king buried her richly.

#### **CHAPTER IV. How Merlin told the adventure of this damosel.**

AT that time there was a knight, the which was the king's son of Ireland, and his name was Lanceor, the which was an orgulous knight, and counted himself one of the best of the court; and he had great despite at Balin for the achieving of the sword, that any should be accounted more hardy, or more of prowess; and he asked King Arthur if he would give him leave to ride after Balin and to revenge the despite that he had done. Do your best, said Arthur, I am right wroth with

Balin; I would he were quit of the despite that he hath done to me and to my court. Then this Lanceor went to his hostelry to make him ready. In the meanwhile came Merlin unto the court of King Arthur, and there was told him the adventure of the sword, and the death of the Lady of the Lake. Now shall I say you, said Merlin; this same damosel that here standeth, that brought the sword unto your court, I shall tell you the cause of her coming: she was the falsest damosel that liveth. Say not so, said they. She hath a brother, a passing good knight of prowess and a full true man; and this damosel loved another knight that held her to paramour, and this good knight her brother met with the knight that held her to paramour, and slew him by force of his hands. When this false damosel understood this, she went to the Lady Lile of Avelion, and besought her of help, to be avenged on her own brother.

#### **CHAPTER V. How Balin was pursued by Sir Lanceor, knight of Ireland, and how he jousted and slew him.**

AND so this Lady Lile of Avelion took her this sword that she brought with her, and told there should no man pull it out of the sheath but if he be one of the best knights of this realm, and he should be hard and full of prowess, and with that sword he should slay her brother. This was the cause that the damosel came into this court. I know it as well as ye. Would God she had not come into this court, but she came never in fellowship of worship to do good, but always great harm; and that knight that hath achieved the sword shall be destroyed by that sword, for the which will be great damage, for there liveth not a knight of more prowess than he is, and he shall do unto you, my Lord Arthur, great honour and kindness; and it is great pity he shall not endure but a while, for of his strength and hardiness I know not his match living.

So the knight of Ireland armed him at all points, and dressed his shield on his shoulder, and mounted upon horseback, and took his spear in his hand, and rode after a great pace, as much as his horse might go; and within a little space on a mountain he had a sight of Balin, and with a loud voice he cried, Abide, knight, for ye shall abide whether ye will or nill, and the shield that is to-fore you shall not help. When Balin heard the noise, he turned his horse fiercely, and said, Fair knight, what will ye with me, will ye joust with me? Yea, said the Irish knight, therefore come I after you. Peradventure, said Balin, it had been better to have holden you at home, for many a man weeneth to put his enemy to a rebuke, and oft it falleth to himself. Of what court be ye sent from? said Balin. I am come from the court of King Arthur, said the knight of Ireland, that come hither for to revenge the despite ye did this day to King Arthur and to his court. Well, said Balin, I see well I must have ado with you, that me forthinketh for to grieve King

Arthur, or any of his court; and your quarrel is full simple, said Balin, unto me, for the lady that is dead, did me great damage, and else would I have been loath as any knight that liveth for to slay a lady. Make you ready, said the knight Lanceor, and dress you unto me, for that one shall abide in the field. Then they took their spears, and came together as much as their horses might drive, and the Irish knight smote Balin on the shield, that all went shivers off his spear, and Balin hit him through the shield, and the hauberk perished, and so pierced through his body and the horse's croup, and anon turned his horse fiercely, and drew out his sword, and wist not that he had slain him; and then he saw him lie as a dead corpse.

**CHAPTER VI. How a damosel, which was love to Lanceor, slew herself for love, and how Balin met with his brother Balan.**

THEN he looked by him, and was ware of a damosel that came riding full fast as the horse might ride, on a fair palfrey. And when she espied that Lanceor was slain, she made sorrow out of measure, and said, O Balin, two bodies thou hast slain and one heart, and two hearts in one body, and two souls thou hast lost. And therewith she took the sword from her love that lay dead, and fell to the ground in a swoon. And when she arose she made great dole out of measure, the which sorrow grieved Balin passingly sore, and he went unto her for to have taken the sword out of her hand, but she held it so fast he might not take it out of her hand unless he should have hurt her, and suddenly she set the pommel to the ground, and rove herself through the body. When Balin espied her deeds, he was passing heavy in his heart, and ashamed that so fair a damosel had destroyed herself for the love of his death. Alas, said Balin, me repenteth sore the death of this knight, for the love of this damosel, for there was much true love betwixt them both, and for sorrow might not longer behold him, but turned his horse and looked toward a great forest, and there he was ware, by the arms, of his brother Balan. And when they were met they put off their helms and kissed together, and wept for joy and pity. Then Balan said, I little weened to have met with you at this sudden adventure; I am right glad of your deliverance out of your dolorous prisonment, for a man told me, in the castle of Four Stones, that ye were delivered, and that man had seen you in the court of King Arthur, and therefore I came hither into this country, for here I supposed to find you. Anon the knight Balin told his brother of his adventure of the sword, and of the death of the Lady of the Lake, and how King Arthur was displeased with him. Wherefore he sent this knight after me, that lieth here dead, and the death of this damosel grieveth me sore. So doth it me, said Balan, but ye must take the adventure that God will ordain you. Truly, said Balin, I am right heavy that my Lord Arthur is displeased

with me, for he is the most worshipful knight that reigneth now on earth, and his love will I get or else will I put my life in adventure. For the King Rience lieth at a siege at the Castle Terrabil, and thither will we draw in all haste, to prove our worship and prowess upon him. I will well, said Balan, that we do, and we will help each other as brethren ought to do.

**CHAPTER VII. How a dwarf reproved Balin for the death of Lancelor, and how King Mark of Cornwall found them, and made a tomb over them.**

Now go we hence, said Balin, and well be we met. The meanwhile as they talked, there came a dwarf from the city of Camelot on horseback, as much as he might; and found the dead bodies, wherefore he made great dole, and pulled out his hair for sorrow, and said, Which of you knights have done this deed? Whereby askest thou it? said Balan. For I would wit it, said the dwarf. It was I, said Balin, that slew this knight in my defence, for hither he came to chase me, and either I must slay him or he me; and this damosel slew herself for his love, which repenteth me, and for her sake I shall owe all women the better love. Alas, said the dwarf, thou hast done great damage unto thyself, for this knight that is here dead was one of the most valiantest men that lived, and trust well, Balin, the kin of this knight will chase you through the world till they have slain you. As for that, said Balin, I fear not greatly, but I am right heavy that I have displeased my lord King Arthur, for the death of this knight. So as they talked together, there came a king of Cornwall riding, the which hight King Mark. And when he saw these two bodies dead, and understood how they were dead, by the two knights above said, then made the king great sorrow for the true love that was betwixt them, and said, I will not depart till I have on this earth made a tomb, and there he pight his pavilions and sought through all the country to find a tomb, and in a church they found one was fair and rich, and then the king let put them both in the earth, and put the tomb upon them, and wrote the names of them both on the tomb. How here lieth Lancelor the king's son of Ireland, that at his own request was slain by the hands of Balin; and how his lady, Colombe, and paramour, slew herself with her love's sword for dole and sorrow.

**CHAPTER VIII. How Merlin prophesied that two the best knights of the world should fight there, which were Sir Lancelot and Sir Tristram.**

THE meanwhile as this was a-doing, in came Merlin to King Mark, and seeing all his doing, said, Here shall be in this same place the greatest battle betwixt two knights that was or ever shall be, and the truest lovers, and yet none of them shall slay other. And there Merlin wrote their names upon the tomb with letters of gold that should fight in that place, whose names were Launcelot de



Lake, and Tristram. Thou art a marvellous man, said King Mark unto Merlin, that speakest of such marvels, thou art a boistous man and an unlikely to tell of such deeds. What is thy name? said King Mark. At this time, said Merlin, I will not tell, but at that time when Sir Tristram is taken with his sovereign lady, then ye shall hear and know my name, and at that time ye shall hear tidings that shall not please you. Then said Merlin to Balin, Thou hast done thyself great hurt, because that thou savest not this lady that slew herself, that might have saved her an thou wouldest. By the faith of my body, said Balin, I might not save her, for she slew herself suddenly. Me repenteth, said Merlin; because of the death of that lady thou shalt strike a stroke most dolorous that ever man struck, except the stroke of our Lord, for thou shalt hurt the truest knight and the man of most worship that now liveth, and through that stroke three kingdoms shall be in great poverty, misery and wretchedness twelve years, and the knight shall not be whole of that wound for many years. Then Merlin took his leave of Balin. And Balin said, If I wist it were sooth that ye say I should do such a perilous deed as that, I would slay myself to make thee a liar. Therewith Merlin vanished away suddenly. And then Balin and his brother took their leave of King Mark. First, said the king, tell me your name. Sir, said Balin, ye may see he beareth two swords, thereby ye may call him the Knight with the Two Swords. And so departed King Mark unto Camelot to King Arthur, and Balin took the way toward King Rience; and as they rode together they met with Merlin disguised, but they knew him not. Whither ride you? said Merlin. We have little to do, said the two knights, to tell thee. But what is thy name? said Balin. At this time, said Merlin, I will not tell it thee. It is evil seen, said the knights, that thou art a true man that thou wilt not tell thy name. As for that, said Merlin, be it as it be may, I can tell you wherefore ye ride this way, for to meet King Rience; but it will not avail you without ye have my counsel. Ah! said Balin, ye are Merlin; we will be ruled by your counsel. Come on, said Merlin, ye shall have great worship, and look that ye do knightly, for ye shall have great need. As for that, said Balin, dread you not, we will do what we may.

#### **CHAPTER IX. How Balin and his brother, by the counsel of Merlin, took King Rience and brought him to King Arthur.**

THEN Merlin lodged them in a wood among leaves beside the highway, and took off the bridles of their horses and put them to grass and laid them down to rest them till it was nigh midnight. Then Merlin bade them rise, and make them ready, for the king was nigh them, that was stolen away from his host with a three score horses of his best knights, and twenty of them rode to-fore to warn the Lady de Vance that the king was coming; for that night King Rience should

have lain with her. Which is the king? said Balin. Abide, said Merlin, here in a strait way ye shall meet with him; and therewith he showed Balin and his brother where he rode.

Anon Balin and his brother met with the king, and smote him down, and wounded him fiercely, and laid him to the ground; and there they slew on the right hand and the left hand, and slew more than forty of his men, and the remnant fled. Then went they again to King Rience and would have slain him had he not yielded him unto their grace. Then said he thus: Knights full of prowess, slay me not, for by my life ye may win, and by my death ye shall win nothing. Then said these two knights, Ye say sooth and truth, and so laid him on a horse-litter. With that Merlin was vanished, and came to King Arthur aforehand, and told him how his most enemy was taken and discomfited. By whom? said King Arthur. By two knights, said Merlin, that would please your lordship, and to-morrow ye shall know what knights they are. Anon after came the Knight with the Two Swords and Balan his brother, and brought with them King Rience of North Wales, and there delivered him to the porters, and charged them with him; and so they two returned again in the dawning of the day. King Arthur came then to King Rience, and said, Sir king, ye are welcome: by what adventure come ye hither? Sir, said King Rience, I came hither by an hard adventure. Who won you? said King Arthur. Sir, said the king, the Knight with the Two Swords and his brother, which are two marvellous knights of prowess. I know them not, said Arthur, but much I am beholden to them. Ah, said Merlin, I shall tell you: it is Balin that achieved the sword, and his brother Balan, a good knight, there liveth not a better of prowess and of worthiness, and it shall be the greatest dole of him that ever I knew of knight, for he shall not long endure. Alas, said King Arthur, that is great pity; for I am much beholden unto him, and I have ill deserved it unto him for his kindness. Nay, said Merlin, he shall do much more for you, and that shall ye know in haste. But, sir, are ye purveyed, said Merlin, for to-morn the host of Nero, King Rience's brother, will set on you or noon with a great host, and therefore make you ready, for I will depart from you.

#### **CHAPTER X. How King Arthur had a battle against Nero and King Lot of Orkney, and how King Lot was deceived by Merlin, and how twelve kings were slain.**

THEN King Arthur made ready his host in ten battles and Nero was ready in the field afore the Castle Terrabil with a great host, and he had ten battles, with many more people than Arthur had. Then Nero had the vanguard with the most part of his people, and Merlin came to King Lot of the Isle of Orkney, and held

him with a tale of prophecy, till Nero and his people were destroyed. And there Sir Kay the seneschal did passingly well, that the days of his life the worship went never from him; and Sir Hervis de Revel did marvellous deeds with King Arthur, and King Arthur slew that day twenty knights and maimed forty. At that time came in the Knight with the Two Swords and his brother Balan, but they two did so marvellously that the king and all the knights marvelled of them, and all they that beheld them said they were sent from heaven as angels, or devils from hell; and King Arthur said himself they were the best knights that ever he saw, for they gave such strokes that all men had wonder of them.

In the meanwhile came one to King Lot, and told him while he tarried there Nero was destroyed and slain with all his people. Alas, said King Lot, I am ashamed, for by my default there is many a worshipful man slain, for an we had been together there had been none host under the heaven that had been able for to have matched with us; this faiter with his prophecy hath mocked me. All that did Merlin, for he knew well that an King Lot had been with his body there at the first battle, King Arthur had been slain, and all his people destroyed; and well Merlin knew that one of the kings should be dead that day, and loath was Merlin that any of them both should be slain; but of the twain, he had liefer King Lot had been slain than King Arthur. Now what is best to do? said King Lot of Orkney; whether is me better to treat with King Arthur or to fight, for the greater part of our people are slain and destroyed? Sir, said a knight, set on Arthur for they are weary and forfoughten and we be fresh. As for me, said King Lot, I would every knight would do his part as I would do mine. And then they advanced banners and smote together and all to-shivered their spears; and Arthur's knights, with the help of the Knight with the Two Swords and his brother Balan put King Lot and his host to the worse. But always King Lot held him in the foremost front, and did marvellous deeds of arms, for all his host was borne up by his hands, for he abode all knights. Alas he might not endure, the which was great pity, that so worthy a knight as he was one should be overmatched, that of late time afore had been a knight of King Arthur's, and wedded the sister of King Arthur; and for King Arthur lay by King Lot's wife, the which was Arthur's sister, and gat on her Mordred, therefore King Lot held against Arthur. So there was a knight that was called the Knight with the Strange Beast, and at that time his right name was called Pellinore, the which was a good man of prowess, and he smote a mighty stroke at King Lot as he fought with all his enemies, and he failed of his stroke, and smote the horse's neck, that he fell to the ground with King Lot. And therewith anon Pellinore smote him a great stroke through the helm and head unto the brows. And then all the host of Orkney fled for the death of King Lot, and there were slain many mothers' sons.

But King Pellinore bare the wite of the death of King Lot, wherefore Sir Gawaine revenged the death of his father the tenth year after he was made knight, and slew King Pellinore with his own hands. Also there were slain at that battle twelve kings on the side of King Lot with Nero, and all were buried in the Church of Saint Stephen's in Camelot, and the remnant of knights and of others were buried in a great rock.

### **CHAPTER XI. Of the interment of twelve kings, and of the prophecy of Merlin, and how Balin should give the dolorous stroke.**

SO at the interment came King Lot's wife Margawse with her four sons, Gawaine, Agravaine, Gaheris, and Gareth. Also there came thither King Uriens, Sir Ewaine's father, and Morgan le Fay his wife that was King Arthur's sister. All these came to the interment. But of all these twelve kings King Arthur let make the tomb of King Lot passing richly, and made his tomb by his own; and then Arthur let make twelve images of latten and copper, and over-gilt it with gold, in the sign of twelve kings, and each one of them held a taper of wax that burnt day and night; and King Arthur was made in sign of a figure standing above them with a sword drawn in his hand, and all the twelve figures had countenance like unto men that were overcome. All this made Merlin by his subtle craft, and there he told the king, When I am dead these tapers shall burn no longer, and soon after the adventures of the Sangreal shall come among you and be achieved. Also he told Arthur how Balin the worshipful knight shall give the dolorous stroke, whereof shall fall great vengeance. Oh, where is Balin and Balan and Pellinore? said King Arthur. As for Pellinore, said Merlin, he will meet with you soon; and as for Balin he will not be long from you; but the other brother will depart, ye shall see him no more. By my faith, said Arthur, they are two marvellous knights, and namely Balin passeth of prowess of any knight that ever I found, for much beholden am I unto him; would God he would abide with me. Sir, said Merlin, look ye keep well the scabbard of Excalibur, for ye shall lose no blood while ye have the scabbard upon you, though ye have as many wounds upon you as ye may have. So after, for great trust, Arthur betook the scabbard to Morgan le Fay his sister, and she loved another knight better than her husband King Uriens or King Arthur, and she would have had Arthur her brother slain, and therefore she let make another scabbard like it by enchantment, and gave the scabbard Excalibur to her love; and the knight's name was called Accolon, that after had near slain King Arthur. After this Merlin told unto King Arthur of the prophecy that there should be a great battle beside Salisbury, and Mordred his own son should be against him. Also he told him that Bagdemagus was his cousin, and germain unto King Uriens.

## **CHAPTER XII. How a sorrowful knight came before Arthur, and how Balin fetched him, and how that knight was slain by a knight invisible.**

WITHIN a day or two King Arthur was somewhat sick, and he let pitch his pavilion in a meadow, and there he laid him down on a pallet to sleep, but he might have no rest. Right so he heard a great noise of an horse, and therewith the king looked out at the porch of the pavilion, and saw a knight coming even by him, making great dole. Abide, fair sir, said Arthur, and tell me wherefore thou makest this sorrow. Ye may little amend me, said the knight, and so passed forth to the castle of Meliot. Anon after there came Balin, and when he saw King Arthur he alighted off his horse, and came to the King on foot, and saluted him. By my head, said Arthur, ye be welcome. Sir, right now came riding this way a knight making great mourn, for what cause I cannot tell; wherefore I would desire of you of your courtesy and of your gentleness to fetch again that knight either by force or else by his good will. I will do more for your lordship than that, said Balin; and so he rode more than a pace, and found the knight with a damosel in a forest, and said, Sir knight, ye must come with me unto King Arthur, for to tell him of your sorrow. That will I not, said the knight, for it will scathe me greatly, and do you none avail. Sir, said Balin, I pray you make you ready, for ye must go with me, or else I must fight with you and bring you by force, and that were me loath to do. Will ye be my warrant, said the knight, an I go with you? Yea, said Balin, or else I will die therefore. And so he made him ready to go with Balin, and left the damosel still. And as they were even afore King Arthur's pavilion, there came one invisible, and smote this knight that went with Balin throughout the body with a spear. Alas, said the knight, I am slain under your conduct with a knight called Garlon; therefore take my horse that is better than yours, and ride to the damosel, and follow the quest that I was in as she will lead you, and revenge my death when ye may. That shall I do, said Balin, and that I make vow unto knighthood; and so he departed from this knight with great sorrow. So King Arthur let bury this knight richly, and made a mention on his tomb, how there was slain Herlews le Berbeus, and by whom the treachery was done, the knight Garlon. But ever the damosel bare the truncheon of the spear with her that Sir Herlews was slain withal.

## **CHAPTER XIII. How Balin and the damosel met with a knight which was in likewise slain, and how the damosel bled for the custom of a castle.**

So Balin and the damosel rode into a forest, and there met with a knight that had been a-hunting, and that knight asked Balin for what cause he made so great sorrow. Me list not to tell you, said Balin. Now, said the knight, an I were armed

as ye be I would fight with you. That should little need, said Balin, I am not afear'd to tell you, and told him all the cause how it was. Ah, said the knight, is this all? here I ensure you by the faith of my body never to depart from you while my life lasteth. And so they went to the hostelry and armed them, and so rode forth with Balin. And as they came by an hermitage even by a churchyard, there came the knight Garlon invisible, and smote this knight, Perin de Mountbeliard, through the body with a spear. Alas, said the knight, I am slain by this traitor knight that rideth invisible. Alas, said Balin, it is not the first despite he hath done me; and there the hermit and Balin buried the knight under a rich stone and a tomb royal. And on the morn they found letters of gold written, how Sir Gawaine shall revenge his father's death, King Lot, on the King Pellinore. Anon after this Balin and the damosel rode till they came to a castle, and there Balin alighted, and he and the damosel went to go into the castle, and anon as Balin came within the castle's gate the portcullis fell down at his back, and there fell many men about the damosel, and would have slain her. When Balin saw that, he was sore aggrieved, for he might not help the damosel. Then he went up into the tower, and leapt over walls into the ditch, and hurt him not; and anon he pulled out his sword and would have foughten with them. And they all said nay, they would not fight with him, for they did nothing but the old custom of the castle; and told him how their lady was sick, and had lain many years, and she might not be whole but if she had a dish of silver full of blood of a clean maid and a king's daughter; and therefore the custom of this castle is, there shall no damosel pass this way but she shall bleed of her blood in a silver dish full. Well, said Balin, she shall bleed as much as she may bleed, but I will not lose the life of her whiles my life lasteth. And so Balin made her to bleed by her good will, but her blood helped not the lady. And so he and she rested there all night, and had there right good cheer, and on the morn they passed on their ways. And as it telleth after in the Sangreal, that Sir Percivale's sister helped that lady with her blood, whereof she was dead.

#### **CHAPTER XIV. How Balin met with that knight named Garlon at a feast, and there he slew him, to have his blood to heal therewith the son of his host.**

THEN they rode three or four days and never met with adventure, and by hap they were lodged with a gentle man that was a rich man and well at ease. And as they sat at their supper Balin overheard one complain grievously by him in a chair. What is this noise? said Balin. Forsooth, said his host, I will tell you. I was but late at a jousting, and there I jousted with a knight that is brother unto King Pellam, and twice smote I him down, and then he promised to quit me on

my best friend; and so he wounded my son, that cannot be whole till I have of that knight's blood, and he rideth alway invisible; but I know not his name. Ah! said Balin, I know that knight, his name is Garlon, he hath slain two knights of mine in the same manner, therefore I had liefer meet with that knight than all the gold in this realm, for the despite he hath done me. Well, said his host, I shall tell you, King Pellam of Listeneise hath made do cry in all this country a great feast that shall be within these twenty days, and no knight may come there but if he bring his wife with him, or his paramour; and that knight, your enemy and mine, ye shall see that day. Then I behote you, said Balin, part of his blood to heal your son withal. We will be forward to-morn, said his host. So on the morn they rode all three toward Pellam, and they had fifteen days' journey or they came thither; and that same day began the great feast. And so they alighted and stabled their horses, and went into the castle; but Balin's host might not be let in because he had no lady. Then Balin was well received and brought unto a chamber and unarmed him; and there were brought him robes to his pleasure, and would have had Balin leave his sword behind him. Nay, said Balin, that do I not, for it is the custom of my country a knight always to keep his weapon with him, and that custom will I keep, or else I will depart as I came. Then they gave him leave to wear his sword, and so he went unto the castle, and was set among knights of worship, and his lady afore him.

Soon Balin asked a knight, Is there not a knight in this court whose name is Garlon? Yonder he goeth, said a knight, he with the black face; he is the marvellest knight that is now living, for he destroyeth many good knights, for he goeth invisible. Ah well, said Balin, is that he? Then Balin advised him long: If I slay him here I shall not escape, and if I leave him now, peradventure I shall never meet with him again at such a steven, and much harm he will do an he live. Therewith this Garlon espied that this Balin beheld him, and then he came and smote Balin on the face with the back of his hand, and said, Knight, why beholdest me so? for shame therefore, eat thy meat and do that thou came for. Thou sayest sooth, said Balin, this is not the first despite that thou hast done me, and therefore I will do what I came for, and rose up fiercely and clave his head to the shoulders. Give me the truncheon, said Balin to his lady, wherewith he slew your knight. Anon she gave it him, for alway she bare the truncheon with her. And therewith Balin smote him through the body, and said openly, With that truncheon thou hast slain a good knight, and now it sticketh in thy body. And then Balin called unto him his host, saying, Now may ye fetch blood enough to heal your son withal.

## **CHAPTER XV. How Balin fought with King Pellam, and how his sword**

**brake, and how he gat a spear wherewith he smote the dolorous stroke.**

ANON all the knights arose from the table for to set on Balin, and King Pellam himself arose up fiercely, and said, Knight, hast thou slain my brother? thou shalt die therefore or thou depart. Well, said Balin, do it yourself. Yes, said King Pellam, there shall no man have ado with thee but myself, for the love of my brother. Then King Pellam caught in his hand a grim weapon and smote eagerly at Balin; but Balin put the sword betwixt his head and the stroke, and therewith his sword burst in sunder. And when Balin was weaponless he ran into a chamber for to seek some weapon, and so from chamber to chamber, and no weapon he could find, and always King Pellam after him. And at the last he entered into a chamber that was marvellously well dight and richly, and a bed arrayed with cloth of gold, the richest that might be thought, and one lying therein, and thereby stood a table of clean gold with four pillars of silver that bare up the table, and upon the table stood a marvellous spear strangely wrought. And when Balin saw that spear, he gat it in his hand and turned him to King Pellam, and smote him passingly sore with that spear, that King Pellam fell down in a swoon, and therewith the castle roof and walls brake and fell to the earth, and Balin fell down so that he might not stir foot nor hand. And so the most part of the castle, that was fallen down through that dolorous stroke, lay upon Pellam and Balin three days.

**CHAPTER XVI. How Balin was delivered by Merlin, and saved a knight that would have slain himself for love.**

THEN Merlin came thither and took up Balin, and gat him a good horse, for his was dead, and bade him ride out of that country. I would have my damosel, said Balin. Lo, said Merlin, where she lieth dead. And King Pellam lay so, many years sore wounded, and might never be whole till Galahad the haut prince healed him in the quest of the Sangreal, for in that place was part of the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, that Joseph of Arimathea brought into this land, and there himself lay in that rich bed. And that was the same spear that Longius smote our Lord to the heart; and King Pellam was nigh of Joseph's kin, and that was the most worshipful man that lived in those days, and great pity it was of his hurt, for through that stroke, turned to great dole, tray and tene. Then departed Balin from Merlin, and said, In this world we meet never no more. So he rode forth through the fair countries and cities, and found the people dead, slain on every side. And all that were alive cried, O Balin, thou hast caused great damage in these countries; for the dolorous stroke thou gavest unto King Pellam three countries are destroyed, and doubt not but the vengeance will fall on thee at the last. When Balin was past those countries he was passing fain.



So he rode eight days or he met with adventure. And at the last he came into a fair forest in a valley, and was ware of a tower, and there beside he saw a great horse of war, tied to a tree, and there beside sat a fair knight on the ground and made great mourning, and he was a likely man, and a well made. Balin said, God save you, why be ye so heavy? tell me and I will amend it, an I may, to my power. Sir knight, said he again, thou dost me great grief, for I was in merry thoughts, and now thou putttest me to more pain. Balin went a little from him, and looked on his horse; then heard Balin him say thus: Ah, fair lady, why have ye broken my promise, for thou promisest me to meet me here by noon, and I may curse thee that ever ye gave me this sword, for with this sword I slay myself, and pulled it out. And therewith Balin stert unto him and took him by the hand. Let go my hand, said the knight, or else I shall slay thee. That shall not need, said Balin, for I shall promise you my help to get you your lady, an ye will tell me where she is. What is your name? said the knight. My name is Balin le Savage. Ah, sir, I know you well enough, ye are the Knight with the Two Swords, and the man of most prowess of your hands living. What is your name? said Balin. My name is Garnish of the Mount, a poor man's son, but by my prowess and hardiness a duke hath made me knight, and gave me lands; his name is Duke Hermel, and his daughter is she that I love, and she me as I deemed. How far is she hence? said Balin. But six mile, said the knight. Now ride we hence, said these two knights. So they rode more than a pace, till that they came to a fair castle well walled and ditched. I will into the castle, said Balin, and look if she be there. So he went in and searched from chamber to chamber, and found her bed, but she was not there. Then Balin looked into a fair little garden, and under a laurel tree he saw her lie upon a quilt of green samite and a knight in her arms, fast halsing either other, and under their heads grass and herbs. When Balin saw her lie so with the foulest knight that ever he saw, and she a fair lady, then Balin went through all the chambers again, and told the knight how he found her as she had slept fast, and so brought him in the place there she lay fast sleeping.

**CHAPTER XVII. How that knight slew his love and a knight lying by her, and after, how he slew himself with his own sword, and how Balin rode toward a**

castle where he lost his life.

AND when Garnish beheld her so lying, for pure sorrow his mouth and nose burst out a-bleeding, and with his sword he smote off both their heads, and then he made sorrow out of measure, and said, O Balin, much sorrow hast thou brought unto me, for hadst thou not shewed me that sight I should have passed

my sorrow. Forsooth, said Balin, I did it to this intent that it should better thy courage, and that ye might see and know her falsehood, and to cause you to leave love of such a lady; God knoweth I did none other but as I would ye did to me. Alas, said Garnish, now is my sorrow double that I may not endure, now have I slain that I most loved in all my life; and therewith suddenly he rove himself on his own sword unto the hilts. When Balin saw that, he dressed him thenceward, lest folk would say he had slain them; and so he rode forth, and within three days he came by a cross, and thereon were letters of gold written, that said, It is not for no knight alone to ride toward this castle. Then saw he an old hoar gentleman coming toward him, that said, Balin le Savage, thou passest thy bounds to come this way, therefore turn again and it will avail thee. And he vanished away anon; and so he heard an horn blow as it had been the death of a beast. That blast, said Balin, is blown for me, for I am the prize and yet am I not dead. Anon withal he saw an hundred ladies and many knights, that welcomed him with fair semblant, and made him passing good cheer unto his sight, and led him into the castle, and there was dancing and minstrelsy and all manner of joy. Then the chief lady of the castle said, Knight with the Two Swords, ye must have ado and joust with a knight hereby that keepeth an island, for there may no man pass this way but he must joust or he pass. That is an unhappy custom, said Balin, that a knight may not pass this way but if he joust. Ye shall not have ado but with one knight, said the lady.

Well, said Balin, since I shall thereto I am ready, but travelling men are oft weary and their horses too, but though my horse be weary my heart is not weary, I would be fain there my death should be. Sir, said a knight to Balin, methinketh your shield is not good, I will lend you a bigger. Thereof I pray you. And so he took the shield that was unknown and left his own, and so rode unto the island, and put him and his horse in a great boat; and when he came on the other side he met with a damosel, and she said, O knight Balin, why have ye left your own shield? alas ye have put yourself in great danger, for by your shield ye should have been known; it is great pity of you as ever was of knight, for of thy prowess and hardiness thou hast no fellow living. Me repenteth, said Balin, that ever I came within this country, but I may not turn now again for shame, and what adventure shall fall to me, be it life or death, I will take the adventure that shall come to me. And then he looked on his armour, and understood he was well armed, and therewith blessed him and mounted upon his horse.

### **CHAPTER XVIII. How Balin met with his brother Balan, and how each of them slew other unknown, till they were wounded to death.**

THEN afore him he saw come riding out of a castle a knight, and his horse

trapped all red, and himself in the same colour. When this knight in the red beheld Balin, him thought it should be his brother Balin by cause of his two swords, but by cause he knew not his shield he deemed it was not he. And so they aventryd their spears and came marvellously fast together, and they smote each other in the shields, but their spears and their course were so big that it bare down horse and man, that they lay both in a swoon. But Balin was bruised sore with the fall of his horse, for he was weary of travel. And Balan was the first that rose on foot and drew his sword, and went toward Balin, and he arose and went against him; but Balan smote Balin first, and he put up his shield and smote him through the shield and tamed his helm. Then Balin smote him again with that unhappy sword, and well-nigh had felled his brother Balan, and so they fought there together till their breaths failed. Then Balin looked up to the castle and saw the towers stand full of ladies. So they went unto battle again, and wounded everych other dolefully, and then they breathed oftentimes, and so went unto battle that all the place there as they fought was blood red. And at that time there was none of them both but they had either smitten other seven great wounds, so that the least of them might have been the death of the mightiest giant in this world.

Then they went to battle again so marvellously that doubt it was to hear of that battle for the great blood-shedding, and their hauberks unnailed that naked they were on every side. At last Balan the younger brother withdrew him a little and laid him down. Then said Balin le Savage, What knight art thou? for or now I found never no knight that matched me. My name is, said he, Balan, brother unto the good knight, Balin. Alas, said Balin, that ever I should see this day, and therewith he fell backward in a swoon. Then Balan yede on all four feet and hands, and put off the helm off his brother, and might not know him by the visage it was so ful hewn and bled; but when he awoke he said, O Balan, my brother, thou hast slain me and I thee, wherefore all the wide world shall speak of us both. Alas, said Balan, that ever I saw this day, that through mishap I might not know you, for I espied well your two swords, but by cause ye had another shield I deemed ye had been another knight. Alas, said Balin, all that made an unhappy knight in the castle, for he caused me to leave my own shield to our both's destruction, and if I might live I would destroy that castle for ill customs. That were well done, said Balan, for I had never grace to depart from them since that I came hither, for here it happed me to slay a knight that kept this island, and since might I never depart, and no more should ye, brother, an ye might have slain me as ye have, and escaped yourself with the life.

Right so came the lady of the tower with four knights and six ladies and six yeomen unto them, and there she heard how they made their moan either to other, and said, We came both out of one tomb, that is to say one mother's belly,

and so shall we lie both in one pit. So Balan prayed the lady of her gentleness, for his true service, that she would bury them both in that same place there the battle was done. And she granted them, with weeping, it should be done richly in the best manner. Now, will ye send for a priest, that we may receive our sacrament, and receive the blessed body of our Lord Jesus Christ? Yea, said the lady, it shall be done; and so she sent for a priest and gave them their rights. Now, said Balin, when we are buried in one tomb, and the mention made over us how two brethren slew each other, there will never good knight, nor good man, see our tomb but they will pray for our souls. And so all the ladies and gentlewomen wept for pity. Then anon Balan died, but Balin died not till the midnight after, and so were they buried both, and the lady let make a mention of Balan how he was there slain by his brother's hands, but she knew not Balin's name.

### **CHAPTER XIX. How Merlin buried them both in one tomb, and of Balin's sword.**

IN the morn came Merlin and let write Balin's name on the tomb with letters of gold, that Here lieth Balin le Savage that was the Knight with the Two Swords, and he that smote the Dolorous Stroke. Also Merlin let make there a bed, that there should never man lie therein but he went out of his wit, yet Launcelot de Lake fordid that bed through his noblesse. And anon after Balin was dead, Merlin took his sword, and took off the pommel and set on another pommel. So Merlin bade a knight that stood afore him handle that sword, and he assayed, and he might not handle it. Then Merlin laughed. Why laugh ye? said the knight. This is the cause, said Merlin: there shall never man handle this sword but the best knight of the world, and that shall be Sir Launcelot or else Galahad his son, and Launcelot with this sword shall slay the man that in the world he loved best, that shall be Sir Gawaine. All this he let write in the pommel of the sword. Then Merlin let make a bridge of iron and of steel into that island, and it was but half a foot broad, and there shall never man pass that bridge, nor have hardiness to go over, but if he were a passing good man and a good knight without treachery or villainy. Also the scabbard of Balin's sword Merlin left it on this side the island, that Galahad should find it. Also Merlin let make by his subtilty that Balin's sword was put in a marble stone standing upright as great as a mill stone, and the stone hoved always above the water and did many years, and so by adventure it swam down the stream to the City of Camelot, that is in English Winchester. And that same day Galahad the haut prince came with King Arthur, and so Galahad brought with him the scabbard and achieved the sword that was there in the marble stone hoving upon the

water. And on Whitsunday he achieved the sword as it is rehearsed in the book of Sangreal.

Soon after this was done Merlin came to King Arthur and told him of the dolorous stroke that Balin gave to King Pellam, and how Balin and Balan fought together the marvellest battle that ever was heard of, and how they were buried both in one tomb. Alas, said King Arthur, this is the greatest pity that ever I heard tell of two knights, for in the world I know not such two knights. Thus endeth the tale of Balin and of Balan, two brethren born in Northumberland, good knights.

Sequitur iii liber.

## BOOK III

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### **CHAPTER I. How King Arthur took a wife, and wedded Guenever, daughter to Leodegrance, King of the Land of Cameliard, with whom he had the Round Table.**

IN the beginning of Arthur, after he was chosen king by adventure and by grace; for the most part of the barons knew not that he was Uther Pendragon's son, but as Merlin made it openly known. But yet many kings and lords held great war against him for that cause, but well Arthur overcame them all, for the most part the days of his life he was ruled much by the counsel of Merlin. So it fell on a time King Arthur said unto Merlin, My barons will let me have no rest, but needs I must take a wife, and I will none take but by thy counsel and by thine advice. It is well done, said Merlin, that ye take a wife, for a man of your bounty and noblesse should not be without a wife. Now is there any that ye love more than another? Yea, said King Arthur, I love Guenever the king's daughter, Leodegrance of the land of Cameliard, the which holdeth in his house the Table Round that ye told he had of my father Uther. And this damosel is the most valiant and fairest lady that I know living, or yet that ever I could find. Sir, said Merlin, as of her beauty and fairness she is one of the fairest alive, but, an ye loved her not so well as ye do, I should find you a damosel of beauty and of goodness that should like you and please you, an your heart were not set; but there as a man's heart is set, he will be loath to return. That is truth, said King Arthur. But Merlin warned the king covertly that Guenever was not wholesome for him to take to wife, for he warned him that Launcelot should love her, and she him again; and so he turned his tale to the adventures of Sangreal.

Then Merlin desired of the king for to have men with him that should enquire of Guenever, and so the king granted him, and Merlin went forth unto King Leodegrance of Cameliard, and told him of the desires of the king that he would have unto his wife Guenever his daughter. That is to me, said King Leodegrance, the best tidings that ever I heard, that so worthy a king of prowess and noblesse will wed my daughter. And as for my lands, I will give him, wist I it might please him, but he hath lands enow, him needeth none; but I shall send him a gift shall please him much more, for I shall give him the Table Round, the

which Uther Pendragon gave me, and when it is full complete, there is an hundred knights and fifty. And as for an hundred good knights I have myself, but I faute fifty, for so many have been slain in my days. And so Leodegrance delivered his daughter Guenever unto Merlin, and the Table Round with the hundred knights, and so they rode freshly, with great royalty, what by water and what by land, till that they came nigh unto London.

## **CHAPTER II. How the Knights of the Round Table were ordained and their sieges blessed by the Bishop of Canterbury.**

WHEN King Arthur heard of the coming of Guenever and the hundred knights with the Table Round, then King Arthur made great joy for her coming, and that rich present, and said openly, This fair lady is passing welcome unto me, for I have loved her long, and therefore there is nothing so lief to me. And these knights with the Round Table please me more than right great riches. And in all haste the king let ordain for the marriage and the coronation in the most honourable wise that could be devised. Now, Merlin, said King Arthur, go thou and espy me in all this land fifty knights which be of most prowess and worship. Within short time Merlin had found such knights that should fulfil twenty and eight knights, but no more he could find. Then the Bishop of Canterbury was fetched, and he blessed the sieges with great royalty and devotion, and there set the eight and twenty knights in their sieges. And when this was done Merlin said, Fair sirs, ye must all arise and come to King Arthur for to do him homage; he will have the better will to maintain you. And so they arose and did their homage, and when they were gone Merlin found in every sieges letters of gold that told the knights' names that had sitten therein. But two sieges were void. And so anon came young Gawaine and asked the king a gift. Ask, said the king, and I shall grant it you. Sir, I ask that ye will make me knight that same day ye shall wed fair Guenever. I will do it with a good will, said King Arthur, and do unto you all the worship that I may, for I must by reason ye are my nephew, my sister's son.

## **CHAPTER III. How a poor man riding upon a lean mare desired King Arthur to make his son knight.**

FORTHWITHAL there came a poor man into the court, and brought with him a fair young man of eighteen years of age riding upon a lean mare; and the poor man asked all men that he met, Where shall I find King Arthur? Yonder he is, said the knights, wilt thou anything with him? Yea, said the poor man, therefore I came hither. Anon as he came before the king, he saluted him and said: O King Arthur, the flower of all knights and kings, I beseech Jesu save

thee. Sir, it was told me that at this time of your marriage ye would give any man the gift that he would ask, out except that were unreasonable. That is truth, said the king, such cries I let make, and that will I hold, so it apair not my realm nor mine estate. Ye say well and graciously, said the poor man; Sir, I ask nothing else but that ye will make my son here a knight. It is a great thing thou askest of me, said the king. What is thy name? said the king to the poor man. Sir, my name is Aries the cowherd. Whether cometh this of thee or of thy son? said the king. Nay, sir, said Aries, this desire cometh of my son and not of me, for I shall tell you I have thirteen sons, and all they will fall to what labour I put them, and will be right glad to do labour, but this child will not labour for me, for anything that my wife or I may do, but always he will be shooting or casting darts, and glad for to see battles and to behold knights, and always day and night he desireth of me to be made a knight. What is thy name? said the king unto the young man. Sir, my name is Tor. The king beheld him fast, and saw he was passingly well-visaged and passingly well made of his years. Well, said King Arthur unto Aries the cowherd, fetch all thy sons afore me that I may see them. And so the poor man did, and all were shaped much like the poor man. But Tor was not like none of them all in shape nor in countenance, for he was much more than any of them. Now, said King Arthur unto the cow herd, where is the sword he shall be made knight withal? It is here, said Tor. Take it out of the sheath, said the king, and require me to make you a knight.

Then Tor alighted off his mare and pulled out his sword, kneeling, and requiring the king that he would make him knight, and that he might be a knight of the Table Round. As for a knight I will make you, and therewith smote him in the neck with the sword, saying, Be ye a good knight, and so I pray to God so ye may be, and if ye be of prowess and of worthiness ye shall be a knight of the Table Round. Now Merlin, said Arthur, say whether this Tor shall be a good knight or no. Yea, sir, he ought to be a good knight, for he is come of as good a man as any is alive, and of kings' blood. How so, sir? said the king. I shall tell you, said Merlin: This poor man, Aries the cowherd, is not his father; he is nothing sib to him, for King Pellinore is his father. I suppose nay, said the cowherd. Fetch thy wife afore me, said Merlin, and she shall not say nay. Anon the wife was fetched, which was a fair housewife, and there she answered Merlin full womanly, and there she told the king and Merlin that when she was a maid, and went to milk kine, there met with her a stern knight, and half by force he had my maidenhead, and at that time he begat my son Tor, and he took away from me my greyhound that I had that time with me, and said that he would keep the greyhound for my love. Ah, said the cowherd, I weened not this, but I may believe it well, for he had never no tatches of me. Sir, said Tor unto Merlin,



dishonour not my mother. Sir, said Merlin, it is more for your worship than hurt, for your father is a good man and a king, and he may right well advance you and your mother, for ye were begotten or ever she was wedded. That is truth, said the wife. It is the less grief unto me, said the cowherd.

#### **CHAPTER IV. How Sir Tor was known for son of King Pellinore, and how Gawaine was made knight.**

SO on the morn King Pellinore came to the court of King Arthur, which had great joy of him, and told him of Tor, how he was his son, and how he had made him knight at the request of the cowherd. When Pellinore beheld Tor, he pleased him much. So the king made Gawaine knight, but Tor was the first he made at the feast. What is the cause, said King Arthur, that there be two places void in the sieges? Sir, said Merlin, there shall no man sit in those places but they that shall be of most worship. But in the Siege Perilous there shall no man sit therein but one, and if there be any so hardy to do it he shall be destroyed, and he that shall sit there shall have no fellow. And therewith Merlin took King Pellinore by the hand, and in the one hand next the two sieges and the Siege Perilous he said, in open audience, This is your place and best ye are worthy to sit therein of any that is here. Thereat sat Sir Gawaine in great envy and told Gaheris his brother, yonder knight is put to great worship, the which grieveth me sore, for he slew our father King Lot, therefore I will slay him, said Gawaine, with a sword that was sent me that is passing trenchant. Ye shall not so, said Gaheris, at this time, for at this time I am but a squire, and when I am made knight I will be avenged on him, and therefore, brother, it is best ye suffer till another time, that we may have him out of the court, for an we did so we should trouble this high feast. I will well, said Gawaine, as ye will.

#### **CHAPTER V. How at feast of the wedding of King Arthur to Guenever, a white hart came into the hall, and thirty couple hounds, and how a brachet**

pinched the hart which was taken away.

THEN was the high feast made ready, and the king was wedded at Camelot unto Dame Guenever in the church of Saint Stephen's, with great solemnity. And as every man was set after his degree, Merlin went to all the knights of the Round Table, and bade them sit still, that none of them remove. For ye shall see a strange and a marvellous adventure. Right so as they sat there came running in a white hart into the hall, and a white brachet next him, and thirty couple of black running hounds came after with a great cry, and the hart went about the Table Round as he went by other boards. The white brachet bit him by the

buttock and pulled out a piece, wherethrough the hart leapt a great leap and overthrew a knight that sat at the board side; and therewith the knight arose and took up the brachet, and so went forth out of the hall, and took his horse and rode his way with the brachet. Right so anon came in a lady on a white palfrey, and cried aloud to King Arthur, Sir, suffer me not to have this despite, for the brachet was mine that the knight led away. I may not do therewith, said the king.

With this there came a knight riding all armed on a great horse, and took the lady away with him with force, and ever she cried and made great dole. When she was gone the king was glad, for she made such a noise. Nay, said Merlin, ye may not leave these adventures so lightly; for these adventures must be brought again or else it would be disworship to you and to your feast. I will, said the king, that all be done by your advice. Then, said Merlin, let call Sir Gawaine, for he must bring again the white hart. Also, sir, ye must let call Sir Tor, for he must bring again the brachet and the knight, or else slay him. Also let call King Pellinore, for he must bring again the lady and the knight, or else slay him. And these three knights shall do marvellous adventures or they come again. Then were they called all three as it rehearseth afore, and each of them took his charge, and armed them surely. But Sir Gawaine had the first request, and therefore we will begin at him.

## **CHAPTER VI. How Sir Gawaine rode for to fetch again the hart, and how two brethren fought each against other for the hart.**

SIR GAWAINE rode more than a pace, and Gaheris his brother that rode with him instead of a squire to do him service. So as they rode they saw two knights fight on horseback passing sore, so Sir Gawaine and his brother rode betwixt them, and asked them for what cause they fought so. The one knight answered and said, We fight for a simple matter, for we two be two brethren born and begotten of one man and of one woman. Alas, said Sir Gawaine, why do ye so? Sir, said the elder, there came a white hart this way this day, and many hounds chased him, and a white brachet was alway next him, and we understood it was adventure made for the high feast of King Arthur, and therefore I would have gone after to have won me worship; and here my younger brother said he would go after the hart, for he was better knight than I: and for this cause we fell at debate, and so we thought to prove which of us both was better knight. This is a simple cause, said Sir Gawaine; uncouth men ye should debate withal, and not brother with brother; therefore but if you will do by my counsel I will have ado with you, that is ye shall yield you unto me, and that ye go unto King Arthur and yield you unto his grace. Sir knight, said the two brethren, we are forfoughten and much blood have we lost through our wilfulness, and therefore we would be

loath to have ado with you. Then do as I will have you, said Sir Gawaine. We will agree to fulfil your will; but by whom shall we say that we be thither sent? Ye may say, By the knight that followeth the quest of the hart that was white. Now what is your name? said Gawaine. Sorlouse of the Forest, said the elder. And my name is, said the younger, Brian of the Forest. And so they departed and went to the king's court, and Sir Gawaine on his quest.

And as Gawaine followed the hart by the cry of the hounds, even afore him there was a great river, and the hart swam over; and as Sir Gawaine would follow after, there stood a knight over the other side, and said, Sir knight, come not over after this hart but if thou wilt joust with me. I will not fail as for that, said Sir Gawaine, to follow the quest that I am in, and so made his horse to swim over the water. And anon they gat their spears and ran together full hard; but Sir Gawaine smote him off his horse, and then he turned his horse and bade him yield him. Nay, said the knight, not so, though thou have the better of me on horseback. I pray thee, valiant knight, alight afoot, and match we together with swords. What is your name? said Sir Gawaine. Allardin of the Isles, said the other. Then either dressed their shields and smote together, but Sir Gawaine smote him so hard through the helm that it went to the brains, and the knight fell down dead. Ah! said Gaheris, that was a mighty stroke of a young knight.

### **CHAPTER VII How the hart was chased into a castle and there slain, and how Sir Gawaine slew a lady.**

THEN Gawaine and Gaheris rode more than a pace after the white hart, and let slip at the hart three couple of greyhounds, and so they chased the hart into a castle, and in the chief place of the castle they slew the hart; Sir Gawaine and Gaheris followed after. Right so there came a knight out of a chamber with a sword drawn in his hand and slew two of the greyhounds, even in the sight of Sir Gawaine, and the remnant he chased them with his sword out of the castle. And when he came again, he said, O my white hart, me repenteth that thou art dead, for my sovereign lady gave thee to me, and evil have I kept thee, and thy death shall be dear bought an I live. And anon he went into his chamber and armed him, and came out fiercely, and there met he with Sir Gawaine. Why have ye slain my hounds? said Sir Gawaine, for they did but their kind, and liefer I had ye had wroken your anger upon me than upon a dumb beast. Thou sayest truth, said the knight, I have avenged me on thy hounds, and so I will on thee or thou go. Then Sir Gawaine alighted afoot and dressed his shield, and struck together mightily, and clave their shields, and stoned their helms, and brake their hauberks that the blood ran down to their feet.

At the last Sir Gawaine smote the knight so hard that he fell to the earth, and

then he cried mercy, and yielded him, and besought him as he was a knight and gentleman, to save his life. Thou shalt die, said Sir Gawaine, for slaying of my hounds. I will make amends, said the knight, unto my power. Sir Gawaine would no mercy have, but unlaced his helm to have stricken off his head. Right so came his lady out of a chamber and fell over him, and so he smote off her head by misadventure. Alas, said Gaheris, that is foully and shamefully done, that shame shall never from you; also ye should give mercy unto them that ask mercy, for a knight without mercy is without worship. Sir Gawaine was so stoned of the death of this fair lady that he wist not what he did, and said unto the knight, Arise, I will give thee mercy. Nay, nay, said the knight, I take no force of mercy now, for thou hast slain my love and my lady that I loved best of all earthly things. Me sore repenteth it, said Sir Gawaine, for I thought to strike unto thee; but now thou shalt go unto King Arthur and tell him of thine adventures, and how thou art overcome by the knight that went in the quest of the white hart. I take no force, said the knight, whether I live or I die; but so for dread of death he swore to go unto King Arthur, and he made him to bear one greyhound before him on his horse, and another behind him. What is your name? said Sir Gawaine, or we depart. My name is, said the knight, Ablamar of the Marsh. So he departed toward Camelot.

### **CHAPTER VIII. How four knights fought against Gawaine and Gaheris, and how they were overcome, and their lives saved at request of four ladies.**

AND Sir Gawaine went into the castle, and made him ready to lie there all night, and would have unarmed him. What will ye do, said Gaheris, will ye unarm you in this country? Ye may think ye have many enemies here. They had not sooner said that word but there came four knights well armed, and assailed Sir Gawaine hard, and said unto him, Thou new-made knight, thou hast shamed thy knighthood, for a knight without mercy is dishonoured. Also thou hast slain a fair lady to thy great shame to the world's end, and doubt thou not thou shalt have great need of mercy or thou depart from us. And therewith one of them smote Sir Gawaine a great stroke that nigh he fell to the earth, and Gaheris smote him again sore, and so they were on the one side and on the other, that Sir Gawaine and Gaheris were in jeopardy of their lives; and one with a bow, an archer, smote Sir Gawaine through the arm that it grieved him wonderly sore. And as they should have been slain, there came four fair ladies, and besought the knights of grace for Sir Gawaine; and goodly at request of the ladies they gave Sir Gawaine and Gaheris their lives, and made them to yield them as prisoners. Then Gawaine and Gaheris made great dole. Alas! said Sir Gawaine, mine arm

grieveth me sore, I am like to be maimed; and so made his complaint piteously.

Early on the morrow there came to Sir Gawaine one of the four ladies that had heard all his complaint, and said, Sir knight, what cheer? Not good, said he. It is your own default, said the lady, for ye have done a passing foul deed in the slaying of the lady, the which will be great villainy unto you. But be ye not of King Arthur's kin? said the lady. Yes truly, said Sir Gawaine. What is your name? said the lady, ye must tell it me or ye pass. My name is Gawaine, the King Lot of Orkney's son, and my mother is King Arthur's sister. Ah! then are ye nephew unto King Arthur, said the lady, and I shall so speak for you that ye shall have conduct to go to King Arthur for his love. And so she departed and told the four knights how their prisoner was King Arthur's nephew, and his name is Sir Gawaine, King Lot's son of Orkney. And they gave him the hart's head because it was in his quest. Then anon they delivered Sir Gawaine under this promise, that he should bear the dead lady with him in this manner; the head of her was hanged about his neck, and the whole body of her lay before him on his horse's mane. Right so rode he forth unto Camelot. And anon as he was come, Merlin desired of King Arthur that Sir Gawaine should be sworn to tell of all his adventures, and how he slew the lady, and how he would give no mercy unto the knight, wherethrough the lady was slain. Then the king and the queen were greatly displeased with Sir Gawaine for the slaying of the lady. And there by ordinance of the queen there was set a quest of ladies on Sir Gawaine, and they judged him for ever while he lived to be with all ladies, and to fight for their quarrels; and that ever he should be courteous, and never to refuse mercy to him that asketh mercy. Thus was Gawaine sworn upon the Four Evangelists that he should never be against lady nor gentlewoman, but if he fought for a lady and his adversary fought for another. And thus endeth the adventure of Sir Gawaine that he did at the marriage of King Arthur. Amen.

#### **CHAPTER IX. How Sir Tor rode after the knight with the brachet, and of his adventure by the way.**

WHEN Sir Tor was ready, he mounted upon his horseback, and rode after the knight with the brachet. So as he rode he met with a dwarf suddenly that smote his horse on the head with a staff, that he went backward his spear length. Why dost thou so? said Sir Tor. For thou shalt not pass this way, but if thou joust with yonder knights of the pavilions. Then was Tor ware where two pavilions were, and great spears stood out, and two shields hung on trees by the pavilions. I may not tarry, said Sir Tor, for I am in a quest that I must needs follow. Thou shalt not pass, said the dwarf, and therewithal he blew his horn. Then there came one armed on horseback, and dressed his shield, and came fast toward Tor, and

he dressed him against him, and so ran together that Tor bare him from his horse. And anon the knight yielded him to his mercy. But, sir, I have a fellow in yonder pavilion that will have ado with you anon. He shall be welcome, said Sir Tor. Then was he ware of another knight coming with great raundon, and each of them dressed to other, that marvel it was to see; but the knight smote Sir Tor a great stroke in midst of the shield that his spear all to-shivered. And Sir Tor smote him through the shield below of the shield that it went through the cost of the knight, but the stroke slew him not. And therewith Sir Tor alighted and smote him on the helm a great stroke, and therewith the knight yielded him and besought him of mercy. I will well, said Sir Tor, but thou and thy fellow must go unto King Arthur, and yield you prisoners unto him. By whom shall we say are we thither sent? Ye shall say by the knight that went in the quest of the knight that went with the brachet. Now, what be your two names? said Sir Tor. My name is, said the one, Sir Felot of Langduk; and my name is, said the other, Sir Petipase of Winchelsea. Now go ye forth, said Sir Tor, and God speed you and me. Then came the dwarf and said unto Sir Tor, I pray you give me a gift. I will well, said Sir Tor, ask. I ask no more, said the dwarf, but that ye will suffer me to do you service, for I will serve no more recreant knights. Take an horse, said Sir Tor, and ride on with me. I wot ye ride after the knight with the white brachet, and I shall bring you where he is, said the dwarf. And so they rode throughout a forest, and at the last they were ware of two pavilions, even by a priory, with two shields, and the one shield was enewed with white, and the other shield was red.

#### **CHAPTER X. How Sir Tor found the brachet with a lady, and how a knight assailed him for the said brachet.**

THEREWITH Sir Tor alighted and took the dwarf his glaive, and so he came to the white pavilion, and saw three damosels lie in it, on one pallet, sleeping, and so he went to the other pavilion, and found a lady lying sleeping therein, but there was the white brachet that bayed at her fast, and therewith the lady yede out of the pavilion and all her damosels. But anon as Sir Tor espied the white brachet, he took her by force and took her to the dwarf. What, will ye so, said the lady, take my brachet from me? Yea, said Sir Tor, this brachet have I sought from King Arthur's court hither. Well, said the lady, knight, ye shall not go far with her, but that ye shall be met and grieved. I shall abide what adventure that cometh by the grace of God, and so mounted upon his horse, and passed on his way toward Camelot; but it was so near night he might not pass but little further. Know ye any lodging? said Tor. I know none, said the dwarf, but here beside is an hermitage, and there ye must take lodging as ye find. And within a while they

came to the hermitage and took lodging; and was there grass, oats and bread for their horses; soon it was sped, and full hard was their supper; but there they rested them all night till on the morn, and heard a mass devoutly, and took their leave of the hermit, and Sir Tor prayed the hermit to pray for him. He said he would, and betook him to God. And so mounted upon horseback and rode towards Camelot a long while.

With that they heard a knight call loud that came after them, and he said, Knight, abide and yield my brachet that thou took from my lady. Sir Tor returned again, and beheld him how he was a seemly knight and well horsed, and well armed at all points; then Sir Tor dressed his shield, and took his spear in his hands, and the other came fiercely upon him, and smote both horse and man to the earth. Anon they arose lightly and drew their swords as eagerly as lions, and put their shields afore them, and smote through the shields, that the cantels fell off both parties. Also they tamed their helms that the hot blood ran out, and the thick mails of their hauberks they carved and rove in sunder that the hot blood ran to the earth, and both they had many wounds and were passing weary. But Sir Tor espied that the other knight fainted, and then he sued fast upon him, and doubled his strokes, and gart him go to the earth on the one side. Then Sir Tor bade him yield him. That will I not, said Abelleus, while my life lasteth and the soul is within my body, unless that thou wilt give me the brachet. That will I not do, said Sir Tor, for it was my quest to bring again thy brachet, thee, or both.

### **CHAPTER XI. How Sir Tor overcame the knight, and how he lost his head at the request of a lady.**

WITH that came a damosel riding on a palfrey as fast as she might drive, and cried with a loud voice unto Sir Tor. What will ye with me? said Sir Tor. I beseech thee, said the damosel, for King Arthur's love, give me a gift; I require thee, gentle knight, as thou art a gentleman. Now, said Tor, ask a gift and I will give it you. Gramercy, said the damosel; now I ask the head of the false knight Abelleus, for he is the most outrageous knight that liveth, and the greatest murderer. I am loath, said Sir Tor, of that gift I have given you; let him make amends in that he hath trespassed unto you. Now, said the damosel, he may not, for he slew mine own brother before mine own eyes, that was a better knight than he, an he had had grace; and I kneeled half an hour afore him in the mire for to save my brother's life, that had done him no damage, but fought with him by adventure of arms, and so for all that I could do he struck off his head; wherefore I require thee, as thou art a true knight, to give me my gift, or else I shall shame thee in all the court of King Arthur; for he is the falsest knight living, and a great destroyer of good knights. Then when Abelleus heard this, he was more afeard,

and yielded him and asked mercy. I may not now, said Sir Tor, but if I should be found false of my promise; for while I would have taken you to mercy ye would none ask, but if ye had the brachet again, that was my quest. And therewith he took off his helm, and he arose and fled, and Sir Tor after him, and smote off his head quite.

Now sir, said the damosel, it is near night; I pray you come and lodge with me here at my place, it is here fast by. I will well, said Sir Tor, for his horse and he had fared evil since they departed from Camelot, and so he rode with her, and had passing good cheer with her; and she had a passing fair old knight to her husband that made him passing good cheer, and well eased both his horse and him. And on the morn he heard his mass, and brake his fast, and took his leave of the knight and of the lady, that besought him to tell them his name. Truly, he said, my name is Sir Tor that was late made knight, and this was the first quest of arms that ever I did, to bring again that this knight Abelleus took away from King Arthur's court. O fair knight, said the lady and her husband, an ye come here in our marches, come and see our poor lodging, and it shall be always at your commandment. So Sir Tor departed and came to Camelot on the third day by noon, and the king and the queen and all the court was passing fain of his coming, and made great joy that he was come again; for he went from the court with little succour, but as King Pellinore his father gave him an old courser, and King Arthur gave him armour and a sword, and else had he none other succour, but rode so forth himself alone. And then the king and the queen by Merlin's advice made him to swear to tell of his adventures, and so he told and made proofs of his deeds as it is afore rehearsed, wherefore the king and the queen made great joy. Nay, nay, said Merlin, these be but japes to that he shall do; for he shall prove a noble knight of prowess, as good as any is living, and gentle and courteous, and of good tatches, and passing true of his promise, and never shall outrage. Wherethrough Merlin's words King Arthur gave him an earldom of lands that fell unto him. And here endeth the quest of Sir Tor, King Pellinore's son.

## **CHAPTER XII. How King Pellinore rode after the lady and the knight that led her away, and how a lady desired help of him, and how he fought with two**

knights for that lady, of whom he slew the one at the first stroke.

THEN King Pellinore armed him and mounted upon his horse, and rode more than a pace after the lady that the knight led away. And as he rode in a forest, he saw in a valley a damosel sit by a well, and a wounded knight in her arms, and Pellinore saluted her. And when she was ware of him, she cried



overloud, Help me, knight; for Christ's sake, King Pellinore. And he would not tarry, he was so eager in his quest, and ever she cried an hundred times after help. When she saw he would not abide, she prayed unto God to send him as much need of help as she had, and that he might feel it or he died. So, as the book telleth, the knight there died that there was wounded, wherefore the lady for pure sorrow slew herself with his sword. As King Pellinore rode in that valley he met with a poor man, a labourer. Sawest thou not, said Pellinore, a knight riding and leading away a lady? Yea, said the man, I saw that knight, and the lady that made great dole; and yonder beneath in a valley there shall ye see two pavilions, and one of the knights of the pavilions challenged that lady of that knight, and said she was his cousin near, wherefore he should lead her no farther. And so they waged battle in that quarrel, the one said he would have her by force, and the other said he would have the rule of her, by cause he was her kinsman, and would lead her to her kin. For this quarrel he left them fighting. And if ye will ride a pace ye shall find them fighting, and the lady was beleft with the two squires in the pavilions. God thank thee, said King Pellinore.

Then he rode a wallop till he had a sight of the two pavilions, and the two knights fighting. Anon he rode unto the pavilions, and saw the lady that was his quest, and said, Fair lady, ye must go with me unto the court of King Arthur. Sir knight, said the two squires that were with her, yonder are two knights that fight for this lady, go thither and depart them, and be agreed with them, and then may ye have her at your pleasure. Ye say well, said King Pellinore. And anon he rode betwixt them, and departed them, and asked them the causes why that they fought? Sir knight, said the one, I shall tell you, this lady is my kinswoman nigh, mine aunt's daughter, and when I heard her complain that she was with him maugre her head, I waged battle to fight with him. Sir knight, said the other, whose name was Hontzlake of Wentland, and this lady I gat by my prowess of arms this day at Arthur's court. That is untruly said, said King Pellinore, for ye came in suddenly there as we were at the high feast, and took away this lady or any man might make him ready; and therefore it was my quest to bring her again and you both, or else the one of us to abide in the field; therefore the lady shall go with me, or I will die for it, for I have promised it King Arthur. And therefore fight ye no more, for none of you shall have no part of her at this time; and if ye list to fight for her, fight with me, and I will defend her. Well, said the knights, make you ready, and we shall assail you with all our power. And as King Pellinore would have put his horse from them, Sir Hontzlake rove his horse through with a sword, and said: Now art thou on foot as well as we are. When King Pellinore espied that his horse was slain, lightly he leapt from his horse and pulled out his sword, and put his shield afore him, and said, Knight, keep well

thy head, for thou shalt have a buffet for the slaying of my horse. So King Pellinore gave him such a stroke upon the helm that he clave the head down to the chin, that he fell to the earth dead.

### **CHAPTER XIII. How King Pellinore gat the lady and brought her to Camelot to the court of King Arthur.**

AND then he turned him to the other knight, that was sore wounded. But when he saw the other's buffet, he would not fight, but kneeled down and said, Take my cousin the lady with you at your request, and I require you, as ye be a true knight, put her to no shame nor villainy. What, said King Pellinore, will ye not fight for her? No, sir, said the knight, I will not fight with such a knight of prowess as ye be. Well, said Pellinore, ye say well; I promise you she shall have no villainy by me, as I am true knight; but now me lacketh an horse, said Pellinore, but I will have Hontzlake's horse. Ye shall not need, said the knight, for I shall give you such an horse as shall please you, so that you will lodge with me, for it is near night. I will well, said King Pellinore, abide with you all night. And there he had with him right good cheer, and fared of the best with passing good wine, and had merry rest that night. And on the morn he heard a mass and dined; and then was brought him a fair bay courser, and King Pellinore's saddle set upon him. Now, what shall I call you? said the knight, inasmuch as ye have my cousin at your desire of your quest. Sir, I shall tell you, my name is King Pellinore of the Isles and knight of the Table Round. Now I am glad, said the knight, that such a noble man shall have the rule of my cousin. Now, what is your name? said Pellinore, I pray you tell me. Sir, my name is Sir Meliot of Logurs, and this lady my cousin hight Nimue, and the knight that was in the other pavilion is my sworn brother, a passing good knight, and his name is Brian of the Isles, and he is full loath to do wrong, and full loath to fight with any man, but if he be sore sought on, so that for shame he may not leave it. It is marvel, said Pellinore, that he will not have ado with me. Sir, he will not have ado with no man but if it be at his request. Bring him to the court, said Pellinore, one of these days. Sir, we will come together. And ye shall be welcome, said Pellinore, to the court of King Arthur, and greatly allowed for your coming. And so he departed with the lady, and brought her to Camelot.

So as they rode in a valley it was full of stones, and there the lady's horse stumbled and threw her down, that her arm was sore bruised and near she swooned for pain. Alas! sir, said the lady, mine arm is out of lithe, wherethrough I must needs rest me. Ye shall well, said King Pellinore. And so he alighted under a fair tree where was fair grass, and he put his horse thereto, and so laid him under the tree and slept till it was nigh night. And when he awoke he would

have ridden. Sir, said the lady, it is so dark that ye may as well ride backward as forward. So they abode still and made there their lodging. Then Sir Pellinore put off his armour; then a little afore midnight they heard the trotting of an horse. Be ye still, said King Pellinore, for we shall hear of some adventure.

**CHAPTER XIV. How on the way he heard two knights, as he lay by night in a valley, and of their adventures.**

AND therewith he armed him. So right even afore him there met two knights, the one came froward Camelot, and the other from the north, and either saluted other. What tidings at Camelot? said the one. By my head, said the other, there have I been and espied the court of King Arthur, and there is such a fellowship they may never be broken, and well-nigh all the world holdeth with Arthur, for there is the flower of chivalry. Now for this cause I am riding into the north, to tell our chieftains of the fellowship that is withholden with King Arthur. As for that, said the other knight, I have brought a remedy with me, that is the greatest poison that ever ye heard speak of, and to Camelot will I with it, for we have a friend right nigh King Arthur, and well cherished, that shall poison King Arthur; for so he hath promised our chieftains, and received great gifts for to do it. Beware, said the other knight, of Merlin, for he knoweth all things by the devil's craft. Therefore will I not let it, said the knight. And so they departed asunder. Anon after Pellinore made him ready, and his lady, [and] rode toward Camelot; and as they came by the well there as the wounded knight was and the lady, there he found the knight, and the lady eaten with lions or wild beasts, all save the head, wherefore he made great sorrow, and wept passing sore, and said, Alas! her life might I have saved; but I was so fierce in my quest, therefore I would not abide. Wherefore make ye such dole? said the lady. I wot not, said Pellinore, but my heart mourneth sore of the death of her, for she was a passing fair lady and a young. Now, will ye do by mine advice? said the lady, take this knight and let him be buried in an hermitage, and then take the lady's head and bear it with you unto Arthur. So King Pellinore took this dead knight on his shoulders, and brought him to the hermitage, and charged the hermit with the corpse, that service should be done for the soul; and take his harness for your pain. It shall be done, said the hermit, as I will answer unto God.

**CHAPTER XV. How when he was come to Camelot he was sworn upon a book to tell the truth of his quest.**

AND therewith they departed, and came there as the head of the lady lay with a fair yellow hair that grieved King Pellinore passingly sore when he looked on it, for much he cast his heart on the visage. And so by noon they came

to Camelot; and the king and the queen were passing fain of his coming to the court. And there he was made to swear upon the Four Evangelists, to tell the truth of his quest from the one to the other. Ah! Sir Pellinore, said Queen Guenever, ye were greatly to blame that ye saved not this lady's life. Madam, said Pellinore, ye were greatly to blame an ye would not save your own life an ye might, but, save your pleasure, I was so furious in my quest that I would not abide, and that repenteth me, and shall the days of my life. Truly, said Merlin, ye ought sore to repent it, for that lady was your own daughter begotten on the lady of the Rule, and that knight that was dead was her love, and should have wedded her, and he was a right good knight of a young man, and would have proved a good man, and to this court was he coming, and his name was Sir Miles of the Launds, and a knight came behind him and slew him with a spear, and his name is Loraine le Savage, a false knight and a coward; and she for great sorrow and dole slew herself with his sword, and her name was Eleine. And because ye would not abide and help her, ye shall see your best friend fail you when ye be in the greatest distress that ever ye were or shall be. And that penance God hath ordained you for that deed, that he that ye shall most trust to of any man alive, he shall leave you there ye shall be slain. Me forthinketh, said King Pellinore, that this shall me betide, but God may fordo well destiny.

Thus, when the quest was done of the white hart, the which followed Sir Gawaine; and the quest of the brachet, followed of Sir Tor, Pellinore's son; and the quest of the lady that the knight took away, the which King Pellinore at that time followed; then the king stablished all his knights, and them that were of lands not rich he gave them lands, and charged them never to do outrageousness nor murder, and always to flee treason; also, by no means to be cruel, but to give mercy unto him that asketh mercy, upon pain of forfeiture of their worship and lordship of King Arthur for evermore; and always to do ladies, damosels, and gentlewomen succour, upon pain of death. Also, that no man take no battles in a wrongful quarrel for no law, nor for no world's goods. Unto this were all the knights sworn of the Table Round, both old and young. And every year were they sworn at the high feast of Pentecost.

Explicit the Wedding of King Arthur. Sequitur quartus liber.

## BOOK IV

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### **CHAPTER I. How Merlin was assotted and doted on one of the ladies of the lake, and how he was shut in a rock under a stone and there died.**

SO after these quests of Sir Gawaine, Sir Tor, and King Pellinore, it fell so that Merlin fell in a dotage on the damosel that King Pellinore brought to court, and she was one of the damosels of the lake, that hight Nimue. But Merlin would let her have no rest, but always he would be with her. And ever she made Merlin good cheer till she had learned of him all manner thing that she desired; and he was assotted upon her, that he might not be from her. So on a time he told King Arthur that he should not dure long, but for all his crafts he should be put in the earth quick. And so he told the king many things that should befall, but always he warned the king to keep well his sword and the scabbard, for he told him how the sword and the scabbard should be stolen by a woman from him that he most trusted. Also he told King Arthur that he should miss him,—Yet had ye liefer than all your lands to have me again. Ah, said the king, since ye know of your adventure, purvey for it, and put away by your crafts that misadventure. Nay, said Merlin, it will not be; so he departed from the king. And within a while the Damosel of the Lake departed, and Merlin went with her evermore wheresomever she went. And ofttimes Merlin would have had her privily away by his subtle crafts; then she made him to swear that he should never do none enchantment upon her if he would have his will. And so he sware; so she and Merlin went over the sea unto the land of Benwick, whereas King Ban was king that had great war against King Claudas, and there Merlin spake with King Ban's wife, a fair lady and a good, and her name was Elaine, and there he saw young Launcelot. There the queen made great sorrow for the mortal war that King Claudas made on her lord and on her lands. Take none heaviness, said Merlin, for this same child within this twenty year shall revenge you on King Claudas, that all Christendom shall speak of it; and this same child shall be the most man of worship of the world, and his first name is Galahad, that know I well, said Merlin, and since ye have confirmed him Launcelot. That is truth, said the queen, his first name was Galahad. O Merlin, said the queen, shall I live to see my son such a man of prowess? Yea, lady, on my peril ye shall see it, and live

many winters after.

And so, soon after, the lady and Merlin departed, and by the way Merlin showed her many wonders, and came into Cornwall. And always Merlin lay about the lady to have her maidenhood, and she was ever passing weary of him, and fain would have been delivered of him, for she was afeard of him because he was a devil's son, and she could not beskift him by no mean. And so on a time it happed that Merlin showed to her in a rock whereas was a great wonder, and wrought by enchantment, that went under a great stone. So by her subtle working she made Merlin to go under that stone to let her wit of the marvels there; but she wrought so there for him that he came never out for all the craft he could do. And so she departed and left Merlin.

## **CHAPTER II. How five kings came into this land to war against King Arthur, and what counsel Arthur had against them.**

AND as King Arthur rode to Camelot, and held there a great feast with mirth and joy, so soon after he returned unto Cardoile, and there came unto Arthur new tidings that the king of Denmark, and the king of Ireland that was his brother, and the king of the Vale, and the king of Soleise, and the king of the Isle of Longtains, all these five kings with a great host were entered into the land of King Arthur, and burnt and slew clean afore them, both cities and castles, that it was pity to hear. Alas, said Arthur, yet had I never rest one month since I was crowned king of this land. Now shall I never rest till I meet with those kings in a fair field, that I make mine avow; for my true liege people shall not be destroyed in my default, go with me who will, and abide who that will. Then the king let write unto King Pellinore, and prayed him in all haste to make him ready with such people as he might lightliest rear and hie him after in all haste. All the barons were privily wroth that the king would depart so suddenly; but the king by no mean would abide, but made writing unto them that were not there, and bade them hie after him, such as were not at that time in the court. Then the king came to Queen Guenever, and said, Lady, make you ready, for ye shall go with me, for I may not long miss you; ye shall cause me to be the more hardy, what adventure so befall me; I will not wit my lady to be in no jeopardy. Sir, said she, I am at your commandment, and shall be ready what time so ye be ready. So on the morn the king and the queen departed with such fellowship as they had, and came into the north, into a forest beside Humber, and there lodged them. When the word and tiding came unto the five kings above said, that Arthur was beside Humber in a forest, there was a knight, brother unto one of the five kings, that gave them this counsel: Ye know well that Sir Arthur hath the flower of chivalry of the world with him, as it is proved by the great battle he did with the eleven

kings; and therefore hie unto him night and day till that we be nigh him, for the longer he tarrieth the bigger he is, and we ever the weaker; and he is so courageous of himself that he is come to the field with little people, and therefore let us set upon him or day and we shall slay down; of his knights there shall none escape.

### **CHAPTER III. How King Arthur had ado with them and overthrew them, and slew the five kings and made the remnant to flee.**

UNTO this counsel these five kings assented, and so they passed forth with their host through North Wales, and came upon Arthur by night, and set upon his host as the king and his knights were in their pavilions. King Arthur was unarmed, and had laid him to rest with his Queen Guenever. Sir, said Sir Kay, it is not good we be unarmed. We shall have no need, said Sir Gawaine and Sir Griflet, that lay in a little pavilion by the king. With that they heard a great noise, and many cried, Treason, treason! Alas, said King Arthur, we be betrayed! Unto arms, fellows, then he cried. So they were armed anon at all points. Then came there a wounded knight unto the king, and said, Sir, save yourself and my lady the queen, for our host is destroyed, and much people of ours slain. So anon the king and the queen and the three knights took their horses, and rode toward Humber to pass over it, and the water was so rough that they were afraid to pass over. Now may ye choose, said King Arthur, whether ye will abide and take the adventure on this side, for an ye be taken they will slay you. It were me liefer, said the queen, to die in the water than to fall in your enemies' hands and there be slain.

And as they stood so talking, Sir Kay saw the five kings coming on horseback by themselves alone, with their spears in their hands even toward them. Lo, said Sir Kay, yonder be the five kings; let us go to them and match them. That were folly, said Sir Gawaine, for we are but three and they be five. That is truth, said Sir Griflet. No force, said Sir Kay, I will undertake for two of them, and then may ye three undertake for the other three. And therewithal, Sir Kay let his horse run as fast as he might, and struck one of them through the shield and the body a fathom, that the king fell to the earth stark dead. That saw Sir Gawaine, and ran unto another king so hard that he smote him through the body. And therewithal King Arthur ran to another, and smote him through the body with a spear, that he fell to the earth dead. Then Sir Griflet ran unto the fourth king, and gave him such a fall that his neck brake. Anon Sir Kay ran unto the fifth king, and smote him so hard on the helm that the stroke clave the helm and the head to the earth. That was well stricken, said King Arthur, and worshipfully hast thou holden thy promise, therefore I shall honour thee while

that I live. And therewithal they set the queen in a barge into Humber; but always Queen Guenever praised Sir Kay for his deeds, and said, What lady that ye love, and she love you not again she were greatly to blame; and among ladies, said the queen, I shall bear your noble fame, for ye spake a great word, and fulfilled it worshipfully. And therewith the queen departed.

Then the king and the three knights rode into the forest, for there they supposed to hear of them that were escaped; and there he found the most part of his people, and told them all how the five kings were dead. And therefore let us hold us together till it be day, and when their host have espied that their chieftains be slain, they will make such dole that they shall no more help themselves. And right so as the king said, so it was; for when they found the five kings dead, they made such dole that they fell from their horses. Therewithal came King Arthur but with a few people, and slew on the left hand and on the right hand, that well-nigh there escaped no man, but all were slain to the number thirty thousand. And when the battle was all ended, the king kneeled down and thanked God meekly. And then he sent for the queen, and soon she was come, and she made great joy of the overcoming of that battle.

#### **CHAPTER IV. How the battle was finished or he came, and how King Arthur founded an abbey where the battle was.**

THEREWITHAL came one to King Arthur, and told him that King Pellinore was within three mile with a great host; and he said, Go unto him, and let him understand how we have sped. So within a while King Pellinore came with a great host, and saluted the people and the king, and there was great joy made on every side. Then the king let search how much people of his party there was slain; and there were found but little past two hundred men slain and eight knights of the Table Round in their pavilions. Then the king let rear and devise in the same place whereat the battle was done a fair abbey, and endowed it with great livelihood, and let it call the Abbey of La Beale Adventure. But when some of them came into their countries, whereof the five kings were kings, and told them how they were slain, there was made great dole. And all King Arthur's enemies, as the King of North Wales, and the kings of the North, [when they] wist of the battle, they were passing heavy. And so the king returned unto Camelot in haste.

And when he was come to Camelot he called King Pellinore unto him, and said, Ye understand well that we have lost eight knights of the best of the Table Round, and by your advice we will choose eight again of the best we may find in this court. Sir, said Pellinore, I shall counsel you after my conceit the best: there are in your court full noble knights both of old and young; and therefore by mine



advice ye shall choose half of the old and half of the young. Which be the old? said King Arthur. Sir, said King Pellinore, meseemeth that King Uriens that hath wedded your sister Morgan le Fay, and the King of the Lake, and Sir Hervise de Revel, a noble knight, and Sir Galagars, the fourth. This is well devised, said King Arthur, and right so shall it be. Now, which are the four young knights? said Arthur. Sir, said Pellinore, the first is Sir Gawaine, your nephew, that is as good a knight of his time as any is in this land; and the second as meseemeth best is Sir Griflet le Fise de Dieu, that is a good knight and full desirous in arms, and who may see him live he shall prove a good knight; and the third as meseemeth is well to be one of the knights of the Round Table, Sir Kay the Seneschal, for many times he hath done full worshipfully, and now at your last battle he did full honourably for to undertake to slay two kings. By my head, said Arthur, he is best worth to be a knight of the Round Table of any that ye have rehearsed, an he had done no more prowess in his life days.

#### **CHAPTER V. How Sir Tor was made knight of the Round Table, and how Bagdemagus was displeased.**

NOW, said King Pellinore, I shall put to you two knights, and ye shall choose which is most worthy, that is Sir Bagdemagus, and Sir Tor, my son. But because Sir Tor is my son I may not praise him, but else, an he were not my son, I durst say that of his age there is not in this land a better knight than he is, nor of better conditions and loath to do any wrong, and loath to take any wrong. By my head, said Arthur, he is a passing good knight as any ye spake of this day, that wot I well, said the king; for I have seen him proved, but he saith little and he doth much more, for I know none in all this court an he were as well born on his mother's side as he is on your side, that is like him of prowess and of might: and therefore I will have him at this time, and leave Sir Bagdemagus till another time. So when they were so chosen by the assent of all the barons, so were there found in their sieges every knights' names that here are rehearsed, and so were they set in their sieges; whereof Sir Bagdemagus was wonderly wroth, that Sir Tor was advanced afore him, and therefore suddenly he departed from the court, and took his squire with him, and rode long in a forest till they came to a cross, and there alighted and said his prayers devoutly. The meanwhile his squire found written upon the cross, that Bagdemagus should never return unto the court again, till he had won a knight's body of the Round Table, body for body. So, sir, said the squire, here I find writing of you, therefore I rede you return again to the court. That shall I never, said Bagdemagus, till men speak of me great worship, and that I be worthy to be a knight of the Round Table. And so he rode forth, and there by the way he found a branch of an holy herb that was the sign of the

Sangreal, and no knight found such tokens but he were a good liver.

So, as Sir Bagdemagus rode to see many adventures, it happed him to come to the rock whereas the Lady of the Lake had put Merlin under the stone, and there he heard him make great dole; whereof Sir Bagdemagus would have holpen him, and went unto the great stone, and it was so heavy that an hundred men might not lift it up. When Merlin wist he was there, he bade leave his labour, for all was in vain, for he might never be holpen but by her that put him there. And so Bagdemagus departed and did many adventures, and proved after a full good knight, and came again to the court and was made knight of the Round Table. So on the morn there fell new tidings and other adventures.

### **CHAPTER VI. How King Arthur, King Uriens, and Sir Accolon of Gaul, chased an hart, and of their marvellous adventures.**

THEN it befell that Arthur and many of his knights rode a-hunting into a great forest, and it happed King Arthur, King Uriens, and Sir Accolon of Gaul, followed a great hart, for they three were well horsed, and so they chased so fast that within a while they three were then ten mile from their fellowship. And at the last they chased so sore that they slew their horses underneath them. Then were they all three on foot, and ever they saw the hart afore them passing weary and enbushed. What will we do? said King Arthur, we are hard bestead. Let us go on foot, said King Uriens, till we may meet with some lodging. Then were they ware of the hart that lay on a great water bank, and a brachet biting on his throat, and more other hounds came after. Then King Arthur blew the prise and dight the hart.

Then the king looked about the world, and saw afore him in a great water a little ship, all apparelled with silk down to the water, and the ship came right unto them and landed on the sands. Then Arthur went to the bank and looked in, and saw none earthly creature therein. Sirs, said the king, come thence, and let us see what is in this ship. So they went in all three, and found it richly behanged with cloth of silk. By then it was dark night, and there suddenly were about them an hundred torches set upon all the sides of the ship boards, and it gave great light; and therewithal there came out twelve fair damosels and saluted King Arthur on their knees, and called him by his name, and said he was right welcome, and such cheer as they had he should have of the best. The king thanked them fair. Therewithal they led the king and his two fellows into a fair chamber, and there was a cloth laid, richly beseen of all that longed unto a table, and there were they served of all wines and meats that they could think; of that the king had great marvel, for he fared never better in his life as for one supper. And so when they had supped at their leisure, King Arthur was led into a

chamber, a richer beseen chamber saw he never none, and so was King Uriens served, and led into such another chamber, and Sir Accolon was led into the third chamber passing richly and well beseen; and so they were laid in their beds easily. And anon they fell asleep, and slept marvellously sore all the night. And on the morrow King Uriens was in Camelot abed in his wife's arms, Morgan le Fay. And when he awoke he had great marvel, how he came there, for on the even afore he was two days' journey from Camelot. And when King Arthur awoke he found himself in a dark prison, hearing about him many complaints of woful knights.

### **CHAPTER VII. How Arthur took upon him to fight to be delivered out of prison, and also for to deliver twenty knights that were in prison.**

WHAT are ye that so complain? said King Arthur. We be here twenty knights, prisoners, said they, and some of us have lain here seven year, and some more and some less. For what cause? said Arthur. We shall tell you, said the knights; this lord of this castle, his name is Sir Damas, and he is the falsest knight that liveth, and full of treason, and a very coward as any liveth, and he hath a younger brother, a good knight of prowess, his name is Sir Ontzlake; and this traitor Damas, the elder brother will give him no part of his livelihood, but as Sir Ontzlake keepeth thorough prowess of his hands, and so he keepeth from him a full fair manor and a rich, and therein Sir Ontzlake dwelleth worshipfully, and is well beloved of all people. And this Sir Damas, our master is as evil beloved, for he is without mercy, and he is a coward, and great war hath been betwixt them both, but Ontzlake hath ever the better, and ever he proffereth Sir Damas to fight for the livelihood, body for body, but he will not do; other-else to find a knight to fight for him. Unto that Sir Damas had granted to find a knight, but he is so evil beloved and hated, that there is never a knight will fight for him. And when Damas saw this, that there was never a knight would fight for him, he hath daily lain await with many knights with him, and taken all the knights in this country to see and espy their adventures, he hath taken them by force and brought them to his prison. And so he took us separately as we rode on our adventures, and many good knights have died in this prison for hunger, to the number of eighteen knights; and if any of us all that here is, or hath been, would have foughten with his brother Ontzlake, he would have delivered us, but for because this Damas is so false and so full of treason we would never fight for him to die for it. And we be so lean for hunger that unnethe we may stand on our feet. God deliver you, for his mercy, said Arthur.

Anon, therewithal there came a damosel unto Arthur, and asked him, What cheer? I cannot say, said he. Sir, said she, an ye will fight for my lord, ye shall

be delivered out of prison, and else ye escape never the life. Now, said Arthur, that is hard, yet had I liefer to fight with a knight than to die in prison; with this, said Arthur, I may be delivered and all these prisoners, I will do the battle. Yes, said the damosel. I am ready, said Arthur, an I had horse and armour. Ye shall lack none, said the damosel. Meseemeth, damosel, I should have seen you in the court of Arthur. Nay said the damosel, I came never there, I am the lord's daughter of this castle. Yet was she false, for she was one of the damosels of Morgan le Fay.

Anon she went unto Sir Damas, and told him how he would do battle for him, and so he sent for Arthur. And when he came he was well coloured, and well made of his limbs, that all knights that saw him said it were pity that such a knight should die in prison. So Sir Damas and he were agreed that he should fight for him upon this covenant, that all other knights should be delivered; and unto that was Sir Damas sworn unto Arthur, and also to do the battle to the uttermost. And with that all the twenty knights were brought out of the dark prison into the hall, and delivered, and so they all abode to see the battle.

#### **CHAPTER VIII. How Accolon found himself by a well, and he took upon him to do battle against Arthur.**

NOW turn we unto Accolon of Gaul, that when he awoke he found himself by a deep well-side, within half a foot, in great peril of death. And there came out of that fountain a pipe of silver, and out of that pipe ran water all on high in a stone of marble. When Sir Accolon saw this, he blessed him and said, Jesus save my lord King Arthur, and King Uriens, for these damosels in this ship have betrayed us, they were devils and no women; and if I may escape this misadventure, I shall destroy all where I may find these false damosels that use enchantments. Right with that there came a dwarf with a great mouth and a flat nose, and saluted Sir Accolon, and said how he came from Queen Morgan le Fay, and she greeteth you well, and biddeth you be of strong heart, for ye shall fight to morrow with a knight at the hour of prime, and therefore she hath sent you here Excalibur, Arthur's sword, and the scabbard, and she biddeth you as ye love her, that ye do the battle to the uttermost, without any mercy, like as ye had promised her when ye spake together in privy; and what damosel that bringeth her the knight's head, which ye shall fight withal, she will make her a queen. Now I understand you well, said Accolon, I shall hold that I have promised her now I have the sword: when saw ye my lady Queen Morgan le Fay? Right late, said the dwarf. Then Accolon took him in his arms and said, Recommend me unto my lady queen, and tell her all shall be done that I have promised her, and else I will die for it. Now I suppose, said Accolon, she hath made all these crafts

and enchantments for this battle. Ye may well believe it, said the dwarf. Right so there came a knight and a lady with six squires, and saluted Accolon, and prayed him for to arise, and come and rest him at his manor. And so Accolon mounted upon a void horse, and went with the knight unto a fair manor by a priory, and there he had passing good cheer.

Then Sir Damas sent unto his brother Sir Ontzlake, and bade make him ready by to-morn at the hour of prime, and to be in the field to fight with a good knight, for he had found a good knight that was ready to do battle at all points. When this word came unto Sir Ontzlake he was passing heavy, for he was wounded a little to-fore through both his thighs with a spear, and made great dole; but as he was wounded, he would have taken the battle on hand. So it happed at that time, by the means of Morgan le Fay, Accolon was with Sir Ontzlake lodged; and when he heard of that battle, and how Ontzlake was wounded, he said that he would fight for him. Because Morgan le Fay had sent him Excalibur and the sheath for to fight with the knight on the morn: this was the cause Sir Accolon took the battle on hand. Then Sir Ontzlake was passing glad, and thanked Sir Accolon with all his heart that he would do so much for him. And therewithal Sir Ontzlake sent word unto his brother Sir Damas, that he had a knight that for him should be ready in the field by the hour of prime.

So on the morn Sir Arthur was armed and well horsed, and asked Sir Damas, When shall we to the field? Sir, said Sir Damas, ye shall hear mass. And so Arthur heard a mass, and when mass was done there came a squire on a great horse, and asked Sir Damas if his knight were ready, for our knight is ready in the field. Then Sir Arthur mounted upon horseback, and there were all the knights and commons of that country; and so by all advices there were chosen twelve good men of the country for to wait upon the two knights. And right as Arthur was on horseback there came a damosel from Morgan le Fay, and brought unto Sir Arthur a sword like unto Excalibur, and the scabbard, and said unto Arthur, Morgan le Fay sendeth here your sword for great love. And he thanked her, and weened it had been so, but she was false, for the sword and the scabbard was counterfeit, and brittle, and false.

#### **CHAPTER IX. Of the battle between King Arthur and Accolon.**

AND then they dressed them on both parties of the field, and let their horses run so fast that either smote other in the midst of the shield with their spear-heads, that both horse and man went to the earth; and then they started up both, and pulled out their swords. The meanwhile that they were thus at the battle, came the Damosel of the Lake into the field, that put Merlin under the stone; and she came thither for love of King Arthur, for she knew how Morgan le Fay had

so ordained that King Arthur should have been slain that day, and therefore she came to save his life. And so they went eagerly to the battle, and gave many great strokes, but always Arthur's sword bit not like Accolon's sword; but for the most part, every stroke that Accolon gave he wounded sore Arthur, that it was marvel he stood, and always his blood fell from him fast.

When Arthur beheld the ground so sore be-bled he was dismayed, and then he deemed treason that his sword was changed; for his sword bit not steel as it was wont to do, therefore he dreaded him sore to be dead, for ever him seemed that the sword in Accolon's hand was Excalibur, for at every stroke that Accolon struck he drew blood on Arthur. Now, knight, said Accolon unto Arthur, keep thee well from me; but Arthur answered not again, and gave him such a buffet on the helm that it made him to stoop, nigh falling down to the earth. Then Sir Accolon withdrew him a little, and came on with Excalibur on high, and smote Sir Arthur such a buffet that he fell nigh to the earth. Then were they wroth both, and gave each other many sore strokes, but always Sir Arthur lost so much blood that it was marvel he stood on his feet, but he was so full of knighthood that knightly he endured the pain. And Sir Accolon lost not a deal of blood, therefore he waxed passing light, and Sir Arthur was passing feeble, and weened verily to have died; but for all that he made countenance as though he might endure, and held Accolon as short as he might. But Accolon was so bold because of Excalibur that he waxed passing hardy. But all men that beheld him said they saw never knight fight so well as Arthur did considering the blood that he bled. So was all the people sorry for him, but the two brethren would not accord. Then always they fought together as fierce knights, and Sir Arthur withdrew him a little for to rest him, and Sir Accolon called him to battle and said, It is no time for me to suffer thee to rest. And therewith he came fiercely upon Arthur, and Sir Arthur was wroth for the blood that he had lost, and smote Accolon on high upon the helm, so mightily, that he made him nigh to fall to the earth; and therewith Arthur's sword brast at the cross, and fell in the grass among the blood, and the pommel and the sure handles he held in his hands. When Sir Arthur saw that, he was in great fear to die, but always he held up his shield and lost no ground, nor bated no cheer.

**CHAPTER X. How King Arthur's sword that he fought with brake, and how he recovered of Accolon his own sword Excalibur, and overcame his enemy.**

THEN Sir Accolon began with words of treason, and said, Knight, thou art overcome, and mayst not endure, and also thou art weaponless, and thou hast lost much of thy blood, and I am full loath to slay thee, therefore yield thee to

me as recreant. Nay, said Sir Arthur, I may not so, for I have promised to do the battle to the uttermost by the faith of my body, while me lasteth the life, and therefore I had liefer to die with honour than to live with shame; and if it were possible for me to die an hundred times, I had liefer to die so oft than yield me to thee; for though I lack weapon, I shall lack no worship, and if thou slay me weaponless that shall be thy shame. Well, said Accolon, as for the shame I will not spare, now keep thee from me, for thou art but a dead man. And therewith Accolon gave him such a stroke that he fell nigh to the earth, and would have had Arthur to have cried him mercy. But Sir Arthur pressed unto Accolon with his shield, and gave him with the pommel in his hand such a buffet that he went three strides aback.

When the Damosel of the Lake beheld Arthur, how full of prowess his body was, and the false treason that was wrought for him to have had him slain, she had great pity that so good a knight and such a man of worship should so be destroyed. And at the next stroke Sir Accolon struck him such a stroke that by the damosel's enchantment the sword Excalibur fell out of Accolon's hand to the earth. And therewithal Sir Arthur lightly leapt to it, and gat it in his hand, and forthwithal he knew that it was his sword Excalibur, and said, Thou hast been from me all too long, and much damage hast thou done me; and therewith he espied the scabbard hanging by his side, and suddenly he sterte to him and pulled the scabbard from him, and threw it from him as far as he might throw it. O knight, said Arthur, this day hast thou done me great damage with this sword; now are ye come unto your death, for I shall not warrant you but ye shall as well be rewarded with this sword, or ever we depart, as thou hast rewarded me; for much pain have ye made me to endure, and much blood have I lost. And therewith Sir Arthur rushed on him with all his might and pulled him to the earth, and then rushed off his helm, and gave him such a buffet on the head that the blood came out at his ears, his nose, and his mouth. Now will I slay thee, said Arthur. Slay me ye may well, said Accolon, an it please you, for ye are the best knight that ever I found, and I see well that God is with you. But for I promised to do this battle, said Accolon, to the uttermost, and never to be recreant while I lived, therefore shall I never yield me with my mouth, but God do with my body what he will. Then Sir Arthur remembered him, and thought he should have seen this knight. Now tell me, said Arthur, or I will slay thee, of what country art thou, and of what court? Sir Knight, said Sir Accolon, I am of the court of King Arthur, and my name is Accolon of Gaul. Then was Arthur more dismayed than he was beforehand; for then he remembered him of his sister Morgan le Fay, and of the enchantment of the ship. O sir knight, said he, I pray you tell me who gave you this sword, and by whom ye had it.

**CHAPTER XI. How Accolon confessed the treason of Morgan le Fay,  
King Arthur's sister, and how she would have done slay him.**

THEN Sir Accolon bethought him, and said, Woe worth this sword, for by it have I got my death. It may well be, said the king. Now, sir, said Accolon, I will tell you; this sword hath been in my keeping the most part of this twelvemonth; and Morgan le Fay, King Uriens' wife, sent it me yesterday by a dwarf, to this intent, that I should slay King Arthur, her brother. For ye shall understand King Arthur is the man in the world that she most hateth, because he is most of worship and of prowess of any of her blood; also she loveth me out of measure as paramour, and I her again; and if she might bring about to slay Arthur by her crafts, she would slay her husband King Uriens lightly, and then had she me devised to be king in this land, and so to reign, and she to be my queen; but that is now done, said Accolon, for I am sure of my death. Well, said Sir Arthur, I feel by you ye would have been king in this land. It had been great damage to have destroyed your lord, said Arthur. It is truth, said Accolon, but now I have told you truth, wherefore I pray you tell me of whence ye are, and of what court? O Accolon, said King Arthur, now I let thee wit that I am King Arthur, to whom thou hast done great damage. When Accolon heard that he cried aloud, Fair, sweet lord, have mercy on me, for I knew not you. O Sir Accolon, said King Arthur, mercy shalt thou have, because I feel by thy words at this time thou knewest not my person; but I understand well by thy words that thou hast agreed to the death of my person, and therefore thou art a traitor; but I wite thee the less, for my sister Morgan le Fay by her false crafts made thee to agree and consent to her false lusts, but I shall be sore avenged upon her an I live, that all Christendom shall speak of it; God knoweth I have honoured her and worshipped her more than all my kin, and more have I trusted her than mine own wife and all my kin after.

Then Sir Arthur called the keepers of the field, and said, Sirs, come hither, for here are we two knights that have fought unto a great damage unto us both, and like each one of us to have slain other, if it had happed so; and had any of us known other, here had been no battle, nor stroke stricken. Then all aloud cried Accolon unto all the knights and men that were then there gathered together, and said to them in this manner, O lords, this noble knight that I have fought withal, the which me sore repenteth, is the most man of prowess, of manhood, and of worship in the world, for it is himself King Arthur, our alther liege lord, and with mishap and with misadventure have I done this battle with the king and lord that I am holden withal.



## **CHAPTER XII. How Arthur accorded the two brethren, and delivered the twenty knights, and how Sir Accolon died.**

THEN all the people fell down on their knees and cried King Arthur mercy. Mercy shall ye have, said Arthur: here may ye see what adventures befall ofttime of errant knights, how that I have fought with a knight of mine own unto my great damage and his both. But, sirs, because I am sore hurt, and he both, and I had great need of a little rest, ye shall understand the opinion betwixt you two brethren: As to thee, Sir Damas, for whom I have been champion and won the field of this knight, yet will I judge because ye, Sir Damas, are called an orgulous knight, and full of villainy, and not worth of prowess your deeds, therefore I will that ye give unto your brother all the whole manor with the appurtenance, under this form, that Sir Ontzlake hold the manor of you, and yearly to give you a palfrey to ride upon, for that will become you better to ride on than upon a courser. Also I charge thee, Sir Damas, upon pain of death, that thou never distress no knights errant that ride on their adventure. And also that thou restore these twenty knights that thou hast long kept prisoners, of all their harness, that they be content for; and if any of them come to my court and complain of thee, by my head thou shalt die therefore. Also, Sir Ontzlake, as to you, because ye are named a good knight, and full of prowess, and true and gentle in all your deeds, this shall be your charge I will give you, that in all goodly haste ye come unto me and my court, and ye shall be a knight of mine, and if your deeds be thereafter I shall so prefer you, by the grace of God, that ye shall in short time be in ease for to live as worshipfully as your brother Sir Damas. God thank your largeness of your goodness and of your bounty, I shall be from henceforward at all times at your commandment; for, sir, said Sir Ontzlake, as God would, as I was hurt but late with an adventurous knight through both my thighs, that grieved me sore, and else had I done this battle with you. God would, said Arthur, it had been so, for then had not I been hurt as I am. I shall tell you the cause why: for I had not been hurt as I am, had it not been mine own sword, that was stolen from me by treason; and this battle was ordained aforehand to have slain me, and so it was brought to the purpose by false treason, and by false enchantment. Alas, said Sir Ontzlake, that is great pity that ever so noble a man as ye are of your deeds and prowess, that any man or woman might find in their hearts to work any treason against you. I shall reward them, said Arthur, in short time, by the grace of God. Now, tell me, said Arthur, how far am I from Camelot? Sir, ye are two days' journey therefrom. I would fain be at some place of worship, said Sir Arthur, that I might rest me. Sir, said Sir Ontzlake, hereby is a rich abbey of your elders' foundation, of nuns, but three miles hence. So the king took his leave of all the people, and mounted upon

horseback, and Sir Accolon with him. And when they were come to the abbey, he let fetch leeches and search his wounds and Accolon's both; but Sir Accolon died within four days, for he had bled so much blood that he might not live, but King Arthur was well recovered. So when Accolon was dead he let send him on an horsebier with six knights unto Camelot, and said: Bear him to my sister Morgan le Fay, and say that I send her him to a present, and tell her I have my sword Excalibur and the scabbard; so they departed with the body.

### **CHAPTER XIII. How Morgan would have slain Sir Uriens her husband, and how Sir Uwaine her son saved him.**

THE meanwhile Morgan le Fay had weened King Arthur had been dead. So on a day she espied King Uriens lay in his bed sleeping. Then she called unto her a maiden of her counsel, and said, Go fetch me my lord's sword, for I saw never better time to slay him than now. O madam, said the damosel, an ye slay my lord ye can never escape. Care not you, said Morgan le Fay, for now I see my time in the which it is best to do it, and therefore hie thee fast and fetch me the sword. Then the damosel departed, and found Sir Uwaine sleeping upon a bed in another chamber, so she went unto Sir Uwaine, and awaked him, and bade him, Arise, and wait on my lady your mother, for she will slay the king your father sleeping in his bed, for I go to fetch his sword. Well, said Sir Uwaine, go on your way, and let me deal. Anon the damosel brought Morgan the sword with quaking hands, and she lightly took the sword, and pulled it out, and went boldly unto the bed's side, and awaited how and where she might slay him best. And as she lifted up the sword to smite, Sir Uwaine leapt unto his mother, and caught her by the hand, and said, Ah, fiend, what wilt thou do? An thou wert not my mother, with this sword I should smite off thy head. Ah, said Sir Uwaine, men saith that Merlin was begotten of a devil, but I may say an earthly devil bare me. O fair son, Uwaine, have mercy upon me, I was tempted with a devil, wherefore I cry thee mercy; I will never more do so; and save my worship and discover me not. On this covenant, said Sir Uwaine, I will forgive it you, so ye will never be about to do such deeds. Nay, son, said she, and that I make you assurance.

### **CHAPTER XIV. How Queen Morgan le Fay made great sorrow for the death of Accolon, and how she stole away the scabbard from Arthur.**

THEN came tidings unto Morgan le Fay that Accolon was dead, and his body brought unto the church, and how King Arthur had his sword again. But when Queen Morgan wist that Accolon was dead, she was so sorrowful that near her heart to-brast. But because she would not it were known, outward she kept her countenance, and made no semblant of sorrow. But well she wist an she

abode till her brother Arthur came thither, there should no gold go for her life.

Then she went unto Queen Guenever, and asked her leave to ride into the country. Ye may abide, said Queen Guenever, till your brother the king come home. I may not, said Morgan le Fay, for I have such hasty tidings, that I may not tarry. Well, said Guenever, ye may depart when ye will. So early on the morn, or it was day, she took her horse and rode all that day and most part of the night, and on the morn by noon she came to the same abbey of nuns whereas lay King Arthur; and she knowing he was there, she asked where he was. And they answered how he had laid him in his bed to sleep, for he had had but little rest these three nights. Well, said she, I charge you that none of you awake him till I do, and then she alighted off her horse, and thought for to steal away Excalibur his sword, and so she went straight unto his chamber, and no man durst disobey her commandment, and there she found Arthur asleep in his bed, and Excalibur in his right hand naked. When she saw that she was passing heavy that she might not come by the sword without she had awaked him, and then she wist well she had been dead. Then she took the scabbard and went her way on horseback. When the king awoke and missed his scabbard, he was wroth, and he asked who had been there, and they said his sister, Queen Morgan had been there, and had put the scabbard under her mantle and was gone. Alas, said Arthur, falsely ye have watched me. Sir, said they all, we durst not disobey your sister's commandment. Ah, said the king, let fetch the best horse may be found, and bid Sir Ontzlake arm him in all haste, and take another good horse and ride with me. So anon the king and Ontzlake were well armed, and rode after this lady, and so they came by a cross and found a cowherd, and they asked the poor man if there came any lady riding that way. Sir, said this poor man, right late came a lady riding with a forty horses, and to yonder forest she rode. Then they spurred their horses, and followed fast, and within a while Arthur had a sight of Morgan le Fay; then he chased as fast as he might. When she espied him following her, she rode a greater pace through the forest till she came to a plain, and when she saw she might not escape, she rode unto a lake thereby, and said, Whatsoever come of me, my brother shall not have this scabbard. And then she let throw the scabbard in the deepest of the water so it sank, for it was heavy of gold and precious stones.

Then she rode into a valley where many great stones were, and when she saw she must be overtaken, she shaped herself, horse and man, by enchantment unto a great marble stone. Anon withal came Sir Arthur and Sir Ontzlake whereas the king might know his sister and her men, and one knight from another. Ah, said the king, here may ye see the vengeance of God, and now am I sorry that this misadventure is befallen. And then he looked for the scabbard, but it would not

be found, so he returned to the abbey where he came from. So when Arthur was gone she turned all into the likeliness as she and they were before, and said, Sirs, now may we go where we will.

### **CHAPTER XV. How Morgan le Fay saved a knight that should have been drowned, and how King Arthur returned home again.**

THEN said Morgan, Saw ye Arthur, my brother? Yea, said her knights, right well, and that ye should have found an we might have stirred from one stead, for by his armyvestal countenance he would have caused us to have fled. I believe you, said Morgan. Anon after as she rode she met a knight leading another knight on his horse before him, bound hand and foot, blindfold, to have drowned him in a fountain. When she saw this knight so bound, she asked him, What will ye do with that knight? Lady, said he, I will drown him. For what cause? she asked. For I found him with my wife, and she shall have the same death anon. That were pity, said Morgan le Fay. Now, what say ye, knight, is it truth that he saith of you? she said to the knight that should be drowned. Nay truly, madam, he saith not right on me. Of whence be ye, said Morgan le Fay, and of what country? I am of the court of King Arthur, and my name is Manassen, cousin unto Accolon of Gaul. Ye say well, said she, and for the love of him ye shall be delivered, and ye shall have your adversary in the same case ye be in. So Manassen was loosed and the other knight bound. And anon Manassen unarmed him, and armed himself in his harness, and so mounted on horseback, and the knight afore him, and so threw him into the fountain and drowned him. And then he rode unto Morgan again, and asked if she would anything unto King Arthur. Tell him that I rescued thee, not for the love of him but for the love of Accolon, and tell him I fear him not while I can make me and them that be with me in likeness of stones; and let him wit I can do much more when I see my time. And so she departed into the country of Gore, and there was she richly received, and made her castles and towns passing strong, for always she dreaded much King Arthur.

When the king had well rested him at the abbey, he rode unto Camelot, and found his queen and his barons right glad of his coming. And when they heard of his strange adventures as is afore rehearsed, then all had marvel of the falsehood of Morgan le Fay; many knights wished her burnt. Then came Manassen to court and told the king of his adventure. Well, said the king, she is a kind sister; I shall so be avenged on her an I live, that all Christendom shall speak of it. So on the morn there came a damosel from Morgan to the king, and she brought with her the richest mantle that ever was seen in that court, for it was set as full of precious stones as one might stand by another, and there were the richest stones

that ever the king saw. And the damosel said, Your sister sendeth you this mantle, and desireth that ye should take this gift of her; and in what thing she hath offended you, she will amend it at your own pleasure. When the king beheld this mantle it pleased him much, but he said but little.

#### **CHAPTER XVI. How the Damosel of the Lake saved King Arthur from mantle that should have burnt him.**

WITH that came the Damosel of the Lake unto the king, and said, Sir, I must speak with you in privy. Say on, said the king, what ye will. Sir, said the damosel, put not on you this mantle till ye have seen more, and in no wise let it not come on you, nor on no knight of yours, till ye command the bringer thereof to put it upon her. Well, said King Arthur, it shall be done as ye counsel me. And then he said unto the damosel that came from his sister, Damosel, this mantle that ye have brought me, I will see it upon you. Sir, she said, It will not beseem me to wear a king's garment. By my head, said Arthur, ye shall wear it or it come on my back, or any man's that here is. And so the king made it to be put upon her, and forth withal she fell down dead, and never more spake word after and burnt to coals. Then was the king wonderly wroth, more than he was toforehand, and said unto King Uriens, My sister, your wife, is alway about to betray me, and well I wot either ye, or my nephew, your son, is of counsel with her to have me destroyed; but as for you, said the king to King Uriens, I deem not greatly that ye be of her counsel, for Accolon confessed to me by his own mouth, that she would have destroyed you as well as me, therefore I hold you excused; but as for your son, Sir Uwaine, I hold him suspect, therefore I charge you put him out of my court. So Sir Uwaine was discharged. And when Sir Gawaine wist that, he made him ready to go with him; and said, Whoso banisheth my cousin-germain shall banish me. So they two departed, and rode into a great forest, and so they came to an abbey of monks, and there were well lodged. But when the king wist that Sir Gawaine was departed from the court, there was made great sorrow among all the estates. Now, said Gaheris, Gawaine's brother, we have lost two good knights for the love of one. So on the morn they heard their masses in the abbey, and so they rode forth till that they came to a great forest. Then was Sir Gawaine ware in a valley by a turret [of] twelve fair damosels, and two knights armed on great horses, and the damosels went to and fro by a tree. And then was Sir Gawaine ware how there hung a white shield on that tree, and ever as the damosels came by it they spit upon it, and some threw mire upon the shield.

#### **CHAPTER XVII. How Sir Gawaine and Sir Uwaine met with twelve**

**fair damosels, and how they complained on Sir Marhaus.**

THEN Sir Gawaine and Sir Uwaine went and saluted them, and asked why they did that despite to the shield. Sir, said the damosels, we shall tell you. There is a knight in this country that owneth this white shield, and he is a passing good man of his hands, but he hateth all ladies and gentlewomen, and therefore we do all this despite to the shield. I shall say you, said Sir Gawaine, it beseemeth evil a good knight to despise all ladies and gentlewomen, and peradventure though he hate you he hath some certain cause, and peradventure he loveth in some other places ladies and gentlewomen, and to be loved again, an he be such a man of prowess as ye speak of. Now, what is his name? Sir, said they, his name is Marhaus, the king's son of Ireland. I know him well, said Sir Uwaine, he is a passing good knight as any is alive, for I saw him once proved at a jousts where many knights were gathered, and that time there might no man withstand him. Ah! said Sir Gawaine, damosels, methinketh ye are to blame, for it is to suppose, he that hung that shield there, he will not be long therefrom, and then may those knights match him on horseback, and that is more your worship than thus; for I will abide no longer to see a knight's shield dishonoured. And therewith Sir Uwaine and Gawaine departed a little from them, and then were they ware where Sir Marhaus came riding on a great horse straight toward them. And when the twelve damosels saw Sir Marhaus they fled into the turret as they were wild, so that some of them fell by the way. Then the one of the knights of the tower dressed his shield, and said on high, Sir Marhaus, defend thee. And so they ran together that the knight brake his spear on Marhaus, and Marhaus smote him so hard that he brake his neck and the horse's back. That saw the other knight of the turret, and dressed him toward Marhaus, and they met so eagerly together that the knight of the turret was soon smitten down, horse and man, stark dead.

**CHAPTER XVIII. How Sir Marhaus jousted with Sir Gawaine and Sir Uwaine, and overthrew them both.**

AND then Sir Marhaus rode unto his shield, and saw how it was defouled, and said, Of this despite I am a part avenged, but for her love that gave me this white shield I shall wear thee, and hang mine where thou wast; and so he hanged it about his neck. Then he rode straight unto Sir Gawaine and to Sir Uwaine, and asked them what they did there? They answered him that they came from King Arthur's court to see adventures. Well, said Sir Marhaus, here am I ready, an adventurous knight that will fulfil any adventure that ye will desire; and so departed from them, to fetch his range. Let him go, said Sir Uwaine unto Sir Gawaine, for he is a passing good knight as any is living; I would not by my will that any of us were matched with him. Nay, said Sir Gawaine, not so, it were

shame to us were he not assayed, were he never so good a knight. Well, said Sir Uwayne, I will assay him afore you, for I am more weaker than ye, and if he smite me down then may ye revenge me. So these two knights came together with great raundon, that Sir Uwayne smote Sir Marhaus that his spear brast in pieces on the shield, and Sir Marhaus smote him so sore that horse and man he bare to the earth, and hurt Sir Uwayne on the left side.

Then Sir Marhaus turned his horse and rode toward Gawaine with his spear, and when Sir Gawaine saw that he dressed his shield, and they aventred their spears, and they came together with all the might of their horses, that either knight smote other so hard in midst of their shields, but Sir Gawaine's spear brake, but Sir Marhaus' spear held; and therewith Sir Gawaine and his horse rushed down to the earth. And lightly Sir Gawaine rose on his feet, and pulled out his sword, and dressed him toward Sir Marhaus on foot, and Sir Marhaus saw that, and pulled out his sword and began to come to Sir Gawaine on horseback. Sir knight, said Sir Gawaine, alight on foot, or else I will slay thy horse. Gramercy, said Sir Marhaus, of your gentleness ye teach me courtesy, for it is not for one knight to be on foot, and the other on horseback. And therewith Sir Marhaus set his spear against a tree and alighted and tied his horse to a tree, and dressed his shield, and either came unto other eagerly, and smote together with their swords that their shields flew in cantels, and they bruised their helms and their hauberks, and wounded either other. But Sir Gawaine from it passed nine of the clock waxed ever stronger and stronger, for then it came to the hour of noon, and thrice his might was increased. All this espied Sir Marhaus and had great wonder how his might increased, and so they wounded other passing sore. And then when it was past noon, and when it drew toward evensong, Sir Gawaine's strength feebled, and waxed passing faint that unnethes he might dure any longer, and Sir Marhaus was then bigger and bigger. Sir knight, said Sir Marhaus, I have well felt that ye are a passing good knight and a marvellous man of might as ever I felt any, while it lasteth, and our quarrels are not great, and therefore it were pity to do you hurt, for I feel ye are passing feeble. Ah, said Sir Gawaine, gentle knight, ye say the word that I should say. And therewith they took off their helms, and either kissed other, and there they swore together either to love other as brethren. And Sir Marhaus prayed Sir Gawaine to lodge with him that night. And so they took their horses, and rode toward Sir Marhaus' house. And as they rode by the way, Sir knight, said Sir Gawaine, I have marvel that so valiant a man as ye be love no ladies nor damosels. Sir, said Sir Marhaus, they name me wrongfully those that give me that name, but well I wot it be the damosels of the turret that so name me, and other such as they be. Now shall I tell you for what cause I hate them: for they be sorceresses and enchanter many

of them, and be a knight never so good of his body and full of prowess as man may be, they will make him a stark coward to have the better of him, and this is the principal cause that I hate them; and to all good ladies and gentlewomen I owe my service as a knight ought to do.

As the book rehearseth in French, there were many knights that overmatched Sir Gawaine, for all the thrice might that he had: Sir Launcelot de Lake, Sir Tristram, Sir Bors de Ganis, Sir Percivale, Sir Pelleas, and Sir Marhaus, these six knights had the better of Sir Gawaine. Then within a little while they came to Sir Marhaus' place, which was in a little priory, and there they alighted, and ladies and damosels unarmed them, and hastily looked to their hurts, for they were all three hurt. And so they had all three good lodging with Sir Marhaus, and good cheer; for when he wist that they were King Arthur's sister's sons he made them all the cheer that lay in his power, and so they sojourned there a sennight, and were well eased of their wounds, and at the last departed. Now, said Sir Marhaus, we will not depart so lightly, for I will bring you through the forest; and rode day by day well a seven days or they found any adventure. At the last they came into a great forest, that was named the country and forest of Arroy, and the country of strange adventures. In this country, said Sir Marhaus, came never knight since it was christened but he found strange adventures; and so they rode, and came into a deep valley full of stones, and thereby they saw a fair stream of water; above thereby was the head of the stream a fair fountain, and three damosels sitting thereby. And then they rode to them, and either saluted other, and the eldest had a garland of gold about her head, and she was three score winter of age or more, and her hair was white under the garland. The second damosel was of thirty winter of age, with a circlet of gold about her head. The third damosel was but fifteen year of age, and a garland of flowers about her head. When these knights had so beheld them, they asked them the cause why they sat at that fountain? We be here, said the damosels, for this cause: if we may see any errant knights, to teach them unto strange adventures; and ye be three knights that seek adventures, and we be three damosels, and therefore each one of you must choose one of us; and when ye have done so we will lead you unto three highways, and there each of you shall choose a way and his damosel with him. And this day twelvemonth ye must meet here again, and God send you your lives, and thereto ye must plight your troth. This is well said, said Sir Marhaus.

**CHAPTER XIX. How Sir Marhaus, Sir Gawaine, and Sir Uwaine met three damosels, and each of them took one.[\*1]**



## **[\*1] Misnumbered xx. by Caxton.**

NOW shall everych of us choose a damosel. I shall tell you, said Sir Uwaine, I am the youngest and most weakest of you both, therefore I will have the eldest damosel, for she hath seen much, and can best help me when I have need, for I have most need of help of you both. Now, said Sir Marhaus, I will have the damosel of thirty winter age, for she falleth best to me. Well, said Sir Gawaine, I thank you, for ye have left me the youngest and the fairest, and she is most liefest to me. Then every damosel took her knight by the reins of his bridle, and brought him to the three ways, and there was their oath made to meet at the fountain that day twelvemonth an they were living, and so they kissed and departed, and each knight set his lady behind him. And Sir Uwaine took the way that lay west, and Sir Marhaus took the way that lay south, and Sir Gawaine took the way that lay north. Now will we begin at Sir Gawaine, that held that way till that he came unto a fair manor, where dwelled an old knight and a good householder, and there Sir Gawaine asked the knight if he knew any adventures in that country. I shall show you some to-morn, said the old knight, and that marvellous. So, on the morn they rode into the forest of adventures to a laund, and thereby they found a cross, and as they stood and hoved there came by them the fairest knight and the seemliest man that ever they saw, making the greatest dole that ever man made. And then he was ware of Sir Gawaine, and saluted him, and prayed God to send him much worship. As to that, said Sir Gawaine, gramercy; also I pray to God that he send you honour and worship. Ah, said the knight, I may lay that aside, for sorrow and shame cometh to me after worship.

### **CHAPTER XX. How a knight and a dwarf strove for a lady.**

AND therewith he passed unto the one side of the laund; and on the other side saw Sir Gawaine ten knights that hoved still and made them ready with their shields and spears against that one knight that came by Sir Gawaine.

Then this one knight aventred a great spear, and one of the ten knights encountered with him, but this woful knight smote him so hard that he fell over his horse's tail. So this same dolorous knight served them all, that at the leastway he smote down horse and man, and all he did with one spear; and so when they were all ten on foot, they went to that one knight, and he stood stone still, and suffered them to pull him down off his horse, and bound him hand and foot, and tied him under the horse's belly, and so led him with them. O Jesu! said Sir Gawaine, this is a doleful sight, to see the yonder knight so to be entreated, and it seemeth by the knight that he suffereth them to bind him so, for he maketh no

resistance. No, said his host, that is truth, for an he would they all were too weak so to do him. Sir, said the damosel unto Sir Gawaine, meseemeth it were your worship to help that dolorous knight, for methinketh he is one of the best knights that ever I saw. I would do for him, said Sir Gawaine, but it seemeth he will have no help. Then, said the damosel, methinketh ye have no lust to help him.

Thus as they talked they saw a knight on the other side of the laund all armed save the head. And on the other side there came a dwarf on horseback all armed save the head, with a great mouth and a short nose; and when the dwarf came nigh he said, Where is the lady should meet us here? and therewithal she came forth out of the wood. And then they began to strive for the lady; for the knight said he would have her, and the dwarf said he would have her. Will we do well? said the dwarf; yonder is a knight at the cross, let us put it both upon him, and as he deemeth so shall it be. I will well, said the knight, and so they went all three unto Sir Gawaine and told him wherefore they strove. Well, sirs, said he, will ye put the matter in my hand? Yea, they said both. Now damosel, said Sir Gawaine, ye shall stand betwixt them both, and whether ye list better to go to, he shall have you. And when she was set between them both, she left the knight and went to the dwarf, and the dwarf took her and went his way singing, and the knight went his way with great mourning.

Then came there two knights all armed, and cried on high, Sir Gawaine! knight of King Arthur's, make thee ready in all haste and joust with me. So they ran together, that either fell down, and then on foot they drew their swords, and did full actually. The meanwhile the other knight went to the damosel, and asked her why she abode with that knight, and if ye would abide with me, I will be your faithful knight. And with you will I be, said the damosel, for with Sir Gawaine I may not find in mine heart to be with him; for now here was one knight discomfited ten knights, and at the last he was cowardly led away; and therefore let us two go whilst they fight. And Sir Gawaine fought with that other knight long, but at the last they accorded both. And then the knight prayed Sir Gawaine to lodge with him that night. So as Sir Gawaine went with this knight he asked him, What knight is he in this country that smote down the ten knights? For when he had done so manfully he suffered them to bind him hand and foot, and so led him away. Ah, said the knight, that is the best knight I trow in the world, and the most man of prowess, and he hath been served so as he was even more than ten times, and his name hight Sir Pelleas, and he loveth a great lady in this country and her name is Ettard. And so when he loved her there was cried in this country a great jousts three days, and all the knights of this country were there and gentlewomen, and who that proved him the best knight should have a passing good sword and a circlet of gold, and the circlet the knight should give it

to the fairest lady that was at the jousts. And this knight Sir Pelleas was the best knight that was there, and there were five hundred knights, but there was never man that ever Sir Pelleas met withal but he struck him down, or else from his horse; and every day of three days he struck down twenty knights, therefore they gave him the prize, and forthwithal he went thereas the Lady Ettard was, and gave her the circlet, and said openly she was the fairest lady that there was, and that would he prove upon any knight that would say nay.

**CHAPTER XXI. How King Pelleas suffered himself to be taken prisoner because he would have a sight of his lady, and how Sir Gawaine promised him to get**

to him the love of his lady.

AND so he chose her for his sovereign lady, and never to love other but her, but she was so proud that she had scorn of him, and said that she would never love him though he would die for her. Wherefore all ladies and gentlewomen had scorn of her that she was so proud, for there were fairer than she, and there was none that was there but an Sir Pelleas would have proffered them love, they would have loved him for his noble prowess. And so this knight promised the Lady Ettard to follow her into this country, and never to leave her till she loved him. And thus he is here the most part nigh her, and lodged by a priory, and every week she sendeth knights to fight with him. And when he hath put them to the worse, then will he suffer them wilfully to take him prisoner, because he would have a sight of this lady. And always she doth him great despite, for sometime she maketh her knights to tie him to his horse's tail, and some to bind him under the horse's belly; thus in the most shamefullest ways that she can think he is brought to her. And all she doth it for to cause him to leave this country, and to leave his loving; but all this cannot make him to leave, for an he would have fought on foot he might have had the better of the ten knights as well on foot as on horseback. Alas, said Sir Gawaine, it is great pity of him; and after this night I will seek him to-morrow, in this forest, to do him all the help I can. So on the morn Sir Gawaine took his leave of his host Sir Carados, and rode into the forest; and at the last he met with Sir Pelleas, making great moan out of measure, so each of them saluted other, and asked him why he made such sorrow. And as it is above rehearsed, Sir Pelleas told Sir Gawaine: But always I suffer her knights to fare so with me as ye saw yesterday, in trust at the last to win her love, for she knoweth well all her knights should not lightly win me, an me list to fight with them to the uttermost. Wherefore an I loved her not so sore, I had liefer die an hundred times, an I might die so oft, rather than I would suffer that despite; but I trust she will have pity upon me at the last, for love causeth

many a good knight to suffer to have his entent, but alas I am unfortunate. And therewith he made so great dole and sorrow that unnethe he might hold him on horseback.

Now, said Sir Gawaine, leave your mourning and I shall promise you by the faith of my body to do all that lieth in my power to get you the love of your lady, and thereto I will plight you my troth. Ah, said Sir Pelleas, of what court are ye? tell me, I pray you, my good friend. And then Sir Gawaine said, I am of the court of King Arthur, and his sister's son, and King Lot of Orkney was my father, and my name is Sir Gawaine. And then he said, My name is Sir Pelleas, born in the Isles, and of many isles I am lord, and never have I loved lady nor damosel till now in an unhappy time; and, sir knight, since ye are so nigh cousin unto King Arthur, and a king's son, therefore betray me not but help me, for I may never come by her but by some good knight, for she is in a strong castle here, fast by within this four mile, and over all this country she is lady of. And so I may never come to her presence, but as I suffer her knights to take me, and but if I did so that I might have a sight of her, I had been dead long or this time; and yet fair word had I never of her, but when I am brought to-fore her she rebuketh me in the foulest manner. And then they take my horse and harness and put me out of the gates, and she will not suffer me to eat nor drink; and always I offer me to be her prisoner, but that she will not suffer me, for I would desire no more, what pains so ever I had, so that I might have a sight of her daily. Well, said Sir Gawaine, all this shall I amend an ye will do as I shall devise: I will have your horse and your armour, and so will I ride unto her castle and tell her that I have slain you, and so shall I come within her to cause her to cherish me, and then shall I do my true part that ye shall not fail to have the love of her.

#### **CHAPTER XXII. How Sir Gawaine came to the Lady Ettard, and how Sir Pelleas found them sleeping.**

AND therewith Sir Gawaine plight his troth unto Sir Pelleas to be true and faithful unto him; so each one plight their troth to other, and so they changed horses and harness, and Sir Gawaine departed, and came to the castle whereas stood the pavilions of this lady without the gate. And as soon as Ettard had espied Sir Gawaine she fled in toward the castle. Sir Gawaine spake on high, and bade her abide, for he was not Sir Pelleas; I am another knight that have slain Sir Pelleas. Do off your helm, said the Lady Ettard, that I may see your visage. And so when she saw that it was not Sir Pelleas, she bade him alight and led him unto her castle, and asked him faithfully whether he had slain Sir Pelleas. And he said her yea, and told her his name was Sir Gawaine of the court of King Arthur, and his sister's son. Truly, said she, that is great pity, for he was a passing good

knight of his body, but of all men alive I hated him most, for I could never be quit of him; and for ye have slain him I shall be your woman, and to do anything that might please you. So she made Sir Gawaine good cheer. Then Sir Gawaine said that he loved a lady and by no means she would love him. She is to blame, said Ettard, an she will not love you, for ye that be so well born a man, and such a man of prowess, there is no lady in the world too good for you. Will ye, said Sir Gawaine, promise me to do all that ye may, by the faith of your body, to get me the love of my lady? Yea, sir, said she, and that I promise you by the faith of my body. Now, said Sir Gawaine, it is yourself that I love so well, therefore I pray you hold your promise. I may not choose, said the Lady Ettard, but if I should be forsworn; and so she granted him to fulfil all his desire.

So it was then in the month of May that she and Sir Gawaine went out of the castle and supped in a pavilion, and there was made a bed, and there Sir Gawaine and the Lady Ettard went to bed together, and in another pavilion she laid her damosels, and in the third pavilion she laid part of her knights, for then she had no dread of Sir Pelleas. And there Sir Gawaine lay with her in that pavilion two days and two nights. And on the third day, in the morning early, Sir Pelleas armed him, for he had never slept since Sir Gawaine departed from him; for Sir Gawaine had promised him by the faith of his body, to come to him unto his pavilion by that priory within the space of a day and a night.

Then Sir Pelleas mounted upon horseback, and came to the pavilions that stood without the castle, and found in the first pavilion three knights in three beds, and three squires lying at their feet. Then went he to the second pavilion and found four gentlewomen lying in four beds. And then he yede to the third pavilion and found Sir Gawaine lying in bed with his Lady Ettard, and either clipping other in arms, and when he saw that his heart well-nigh brast for sorrow, and said: Alas! that ever a knight should be found so false; and then he took his horse and might not abide no longer for pure sorrow. And when he had ridden nigh half a mile he turned again and thought to slay them both; and when he saw them both so lie sleeping fast, unnethe he might hold him on horseback for sorrow, and said thus to himself, Though this knight be never so false, I will never slay him sleeping, for I will never destroy the high order of knighthood; and therewith he departed again. And or he had ridden half a mile he returned again, and thought then to slay them both, making the greatest sorrow that ever man made. And when he came to the pavilions, he tied his horse unto a tree, and pulled out his sword naked in his hand, and went to them thereas they lay, and yet he thought it were shame to slay them sleeping, and laid the naked sword overthwart both their throats, and so took his horse and rode his way.

And when Sir Pelleas came to his pavilions he told his knights and his

squires how he had sped, and said thus to them, For your true and good service ye have done me I shall give you all my goods, for I will go unto my bed and never arise until I am dead. And when that I am dead I charge you that ye take the heart out of my body and bear it her betwixt two silver dishes, and tell her how I saw her lie with the false knight Sir Gawaine. Right so Sir Pelleas unarmed himself, and went unto his bed making marvellous dole and sorrow.

When Sir Gawaine and Ettard awoke of their sleep, and found the naked sword overthwart their throats, then she knew well it was Sir Pelleas' sword. Alas! said she to Sir Gawaine, ye have betrayed me and Sir Pelleas both, for ye told me ye had slain him, and now I know well it is not so, he is alive. And if Sir Pelleas had been as uncourteous to you as ye have been to him ye had been a dead knight; but ye have deceived me and betrayed me falsely, that all ladies and damosels may beware by you and me. And therewith Sir Gawaine made him ready, and went into the forest. So it happed then that the Damosel of the Lake, Nimue, met with a knight of Sir Pelleas, that went on his foot in the forest making great dole, and she asked him the cause. And so the woful knight told her how his master and lord was betrayed through a knight and lady, and how he will never arise out of his bed till he be dead. Bring me to him, said she anon, and I will warrant his life he shall not die for love, and she that hath caused him so to love, she shall be in as evil plight as he is or it be long to, for it is no joy of such a proud lady that will have no mercy of such a valiant knight. Anon that knight brought her unto him, and when she saw him lie in his bed, she thought she saw never so likely a knight; and therewith she threw an enchantment upon him, and he fell asleep. And therewhile she rode unto the Lady Ettard, and charged no man to awake him till she came again. So within two hours she brought the Lady Ettard thither, and both ladies found him asleep: Lo, said the Damosel of the Lake, ye ought to be ashamed for to murder such a knight. And therewith she threw such an enchantment upon her that she loved him sore, that well-nigh she was out of her mind. O Lord Jesu, said the Lady Ettard, how is it befallen unto me that I love now him that I have most hated of any man alive? That is the righteous judgment of God, said the damosel. And then anon Sir Pelleas awaked and looked upon Ettard; and when he saw her he knew her, and then he hated her more than any woman alive, and said: Away, traitress, come never in my sight. And when she heard him say so, she wept and made great sorrow out of measure.

### **CHAPTER XXIII. How Sir Pelleas loved no more Ettard by means of the Damosel of the Lake, whom he loved ever after.**

SIR KNIGHT PELLEAS, said the Damosel of the Lake, take your horse and

come forth with me out of this country, and ye shall love a lady that shall love you. I will well, said Sir Pelleas, for this Lady Ettard hath done me great despite and shame, and there he told her the beginning and ending, and how he had purposed never to have arisen till that he had been dead. And now such grace God hath sent me, that I hate her as much as ever I loved her, thanked be our Lord Jesus! Thank me, said the Damosel of the Lake. Anon Sir Pelleas armed him, and took his horse, and commanded his men to bring after his pavilions and his stuff where the Damosel of the Lake would assign. So the Lady Ettard died for sorrow, and the Damosel of the Lake rejoiced Sir Pelleas, and loved together during their life days.

#### **CHAPTER XXIV. How Sir Marhaus rode with the damosel, and how he came to the Duke of the South Marches.**

NOW turn we unto Sir Marhaus, that rode with the damosel of thirty winter of age, southward. And so they came into a deep forest, and by fortune they were nighted, and rode long in a deep way, and at the last they came unto a courtelage, and there they asked harbour. But the man of the courtelage would not lodge them for no treatise that they could treat, but thus much the good man said, An ye will take the adventure of your lodging, I shall bring you where ye shall be lodged. What adventure is that that I shall have for my lodging? said Sir Marhaus. Ye shall wit when ye come there, said the good man. Sir, what adventure so it be, bring me thither I pray thee, said Sir Marhaus; for I am weary, my damosel, and my horse. So the good man went and opened the gate, and within an hour he brought him unto a fair castle, and then the poor man called the porter, and anon he was let into the castle, and so he told the lord how he brought him a knight errant and a damosel that would be lodged with him. Let him in, said the lord, it may happen he shall repent that they took their lodging here.

So Sir Marhaus was let in with torchlight, and there was a goodly sight of young men that welcomed him. And then his horse was led into the stable, and he and the damosel were brought into the hall, and there stood a mighty duke and many goodly men about him. Then this lord asked him what he hight, and from whence he came, and with whom he dwelt. Sir, he said, I am a knight of King Arthur's and knight of the Table Round, and my name is Sir Marhaus, and born I am in Ireland. And then said the duke to him, That me sore repenteth: the cause is this, for I love not thy lord nor none of thy fellows of the Table Round; and therefore ease thyself this night as well as thou mayest, for as to-morn I and my six sons shall match with you. Is there no remedy but that I must have ado with you and your six sons at once? said Sir Marhaus. No, said the duke, for this

cause I made mine avow, for Sir Gawaine slew my seven sons in a recouter, therefore I made mine avow, there should never knight of King Arthur's court lodge with me, or come thereas I might have ado with him, but that I would have a revenging of my sons' death. What is your name? said Sir Marhaus; I require you tell me, an it please you. Wit thou well I am the Duke of South Marches. Ah, said Sir Marhaus, I have heard say that ye have been long time a great foe unto my lord Arthur and to his knights. That shall ye feel to-morn, said the duke. Shall I have ado with you? said Sir Marhaus. Yea, said the duke, thereof shalt thou not choose, and therefore take you to your chamber, and ye shall have all that to you longeth. So Sir Marhaus departed and was led to a chamber, and his damosel was led unto her chamber. And on the morn the duke sent unto Sir Marhaus and bade make him ready. And so Sir Marhaus arose and armed him, and then there was a mass sung afore him, and brake his fast, and so mounted on horseback in the court of the castle where they should do the battle. So there was the duke all ready on horseback, clean armed, and his six sons by him, and everych had a spear in his hand, and so they encountered, whereas the duke and his two sons brake their spears upon him, but Sir Marhaus held up his spear and touched none of them.

#### **CHAPTER XXV. How Sir Marhaus fought with the duke and his four sons and made them to yield them.**

THEN came the four sons by couple, and two of them brake their spears, and so did the other two. And all this while Sir Marhaus touched them not. Then Sir Marhaus ran to the duke, and smote him with his spear that horse and man fell to the earth, and so he served his sons; and then Sir Marhaus alighted down and bade the duke yield him or else he would slay him. And then some of his sons recovered, and would have set upon Sir Marhaus; then Sir Marhaus said to the duke, Cease thy sons, or else I will do the uttermost to you all. Then the duke saw he might not escape the death, he cried to his sons, and charged them to yield them to Sir Marhaus; and they kneeled all down and put the pommels of their swords to the knight, and so he received them. And then they helped up their father, and so by their cominal assent promised to Sir Marhaus never to be foes unto King Arthur, and thereupon at Whitsuntide after to come, he and his sons, and put them in the king's grace.

Then Sir Marhaus departed, and within two days his damosel brought him whereas was a great tournament that the Lady de Vawse had cried. And who that did best should have a rich circlet of gold worth a thousand besants. And there Sir Marhaus did so nobly that he was renowned, and had sometime down forty knights, and so the circlet of gold was rewarded him. Then he departed from



them with great worship; and so within seven nights his damosel brought him to an earl's place, his name was the Earl Fergus, that after was Sir Tristram's knight; and this earl was but a young man, and late come into his lands, and there was a giant fast by him that hight Taulurd, and he had another brother in Cornwall that hight Taulas, that Sir Tristram slew when he was out of his mind. So this earl made his complaint unto Sir Marhaus, that there was a giant by him that destroyed all his lands, and how he durst nowhere ride nor go for him. Sir, said the knight, whether useth he to fight on horseback or on foot? Nay, said the earl, there may no horse bear him. Well, said Sir Marhaus, then will I fight with him on foot; so on the morn Sir Marhaus prayed the earl that one of his men might bring him whereas the giant was; and so he was, for he saw him sit under a tree of holly, and many clubs of iron and gisarms about him. So this knight dressed him to the giant, putting his shield afore him, and the giant took an iron club in his hand, and at the first stroke he clave Sir Marhaus' shield in two pieces. And there he was in great peril, for the giant was a wily fighter, but at last Sir Marhaus smote off his right arm above the elbow.

Then the giant fled and the knight after him, and so he drove him into a water, but the giant was so high that he might not wade after him. And then Sir Marhaus made the Earl Fergus' man to fetch him stones, and with those stones the knight gave the giant many sore knocks, till at the last he made him fall down into the water, and so was he there dead. Then Sir Marhaus went unto the giant's castle, and there he delivered twenty-four ladies and twelve knights out of the giant's prison, and there he had great riches without number, so that the days of his life he was never poor man. Then he returned to the Earl Fergus, the which thanked him greatly, and would have given him half his lands, but he would none take. So Sir Marhaus dwelled with the earl nigh half a year, for he was sore bruised with the giant, and at the last he took his leave. And as he rode by the way, he met with Sir Gawaine and Sir Uwaine, and so by adventure he met with four knights of Arthur's court, the first was Sir Sagramore le Desirous, Sir Osanna, Sir Dodinas le Savage, and Sir Felot of Listinoise; and there Sir Marhaus with one spear smote down these four knights, and hurt them sore. So he departed to meet at his day aforeset.

#### **CHAPTER XXVI. How Sir Uwaine rode with the damosel of sixty year of age, and how he gat the prize at tourneying.**

NOW turn we unto Sir Uwaine, that rode westward with his damosel of three score winter of age, and she brought him thereas was a tournament nigh the march of Wales. And at that tournament Sir Uwaine smote down thirty knights, therefore was given him the prize, and that was a gerfalcon, and a white steed

trapped with cloth of gold. So then Sir Uwaine did many strange adventures by the means of the old damosel, and so she brought him to a lady that was called the Lady of the Rock, the which was much courteous. So there were in the country two knights that were brethren, and they were called two perilous knights, the one knight hight Sir Edward of the Red Castle, and the other Sir Hue of the Red Castle; and these two brethren had disherited the Lady of the Rock of a barony of lands by their extortion. And as this knight was lodged with this lady she made her complaint to him of these two knights.

Madam, said Sir Uwaine, they are to blame, for they do against the high order of knighthood, and the oath that they made; and if it like you I will speak with them, because I am a knight of King Arthur's, and I will entreat them with fairness; and if they will not, I shall do battle with them, and in the defence of your right. Gramercy said the lady, and thereas I may not acquit you, God shall. So on the morn the two knights were sent for, that they should come thither to speak with the Lady of the Rock, and wit ye well they failed not, for they came with an hundred horse. But when this lady saw them in this manner so big, she would not suffer Sir Uwaine to go out to them upon no surety nor for no fair language, but she made him speak with them over a tower, but finally these two brethren would not be entreated, and answered that they would keep that they had. Well, said Sir Uwaine, then will I fight with one of you, and prove that ye do this lady wrong. That will we not, said they, for an we do battle, we two will fight with one knight at once, and therefore if ye will fight so, we will be ready at what hour ye will assign. And if ye win us in battle the lady shall have her lands again. Ye say well, said Sir Uwaine, therefore make you ready so that ye be here to-morn in the defence of the lady's right.

### **CHAPTER XXVII. How Sir Uwaine fought with two knights and overcame them.**

SO was there sikerness made on both parties that no treason should be wrought on neither party; so then the knights departed and made them ready, and that night Sir Uwaine had great cheer. And on the morn he arose early and heard mass, and brake his fast, and so he rode unto the plain without the gates, where hoved the two brethren abiding him. So they rode together passing sore, that Sir Edward and Sir Hue brake their spears upon Sir Uwaine. And Sir Uwaine smote Sir Edward that he fell over his horse and yet his spear brast not. And then he spurred his horse and came upon Sir Hue and overthrew him, but they soon recovered and dressed their shields and drew their swords and bade Sir Uwaine alight and do his battle to the uttermost. Then Sir Uwaine devoided his horse suddenly, and put his shield afore him and drew his sword, and so they dressed

together, and either gave other such strokes, and there these two brethren wounded Sir Uwaine passing grievously that the Lady of the Rock weened he should have died. And thus they fought together five hours as men raged out of reason. And at the last Sir Uwaine smote Sir Edward upon the helm such a stroke that his sword carved unto his canel bone, and then Sir Hue abated his courage, but Sir Uwaine pressed fast to have slain him. That saw Sir Hue: he kneeled down and yielded him to Sir Uwaine. And he of his gentleness received his sword, and took him by the hand, and went into the castle together. Then the Lady of the Rock was passing glad, and the other brother made great sorrow for his brother's death. Then the lady was restored of all her lands, and Sir Hue was commanded to be at the court of King Arthur at the next feast of Pentecost. So Sir Uwaine dwelt with the lady nigh half a year, for it was long or he might be whole of his great hurts. And so when it drew nigh the term-day that Sir Gawaine, Sir Marhaus, and Sir Uwaine should meet at the cross-way, then every knight drew him thither to hold his promise that they had made; and Sir Marhaus and Sir Uwaine brought their damosels with them, but Sir Gawaine had lost his damosel, as it is afore rehearsed.

#### **CHAPTER XXVIII. How at the year's end all three knights with their three damosels met at the fountain.**

RIGHT so at the twelvemonths' end they met all three knights at the fountain and their damosels, but the damosel that Sir Gawaine had could say but little worship of him so they departed from the damosels and rode through a great forest, and there they met with a messenger that came from King Arthur, that had sought them well-nigh a twelvemonth throughout all England, Wales, and Scotland, and charged if ever he might find Sir Gawaine and Sir Uwaine to bring them to the court again. And then were they all glad, and so prayed they Sir Marhaus to ride with them to the king's court. And so within twelve days they came to Camelot, and the king was passing glad of their coming, and so was all the court. Then the king made them to swear upon a book to tell him all their adventures that had befallen them that twelvemonth, and so they did. And there was Sir Marhaus well known, for there were knights that he had matched aforetime, and he was named one of the best knights living.

Against the feast of Pentecost came the Damosel of the Lake and brought with her Sir Pelleas; and at that high feast there was great jousting of knights, and of all knights that were at that jousts, Sir Pelleas had the prize, and Sir Marhaus was named the next; but Sir Pelleas was so strong there might but few knights sit him a buffet with a spear. And at that next feast Sir Pelleas and Sir Marhaus were made knights of the Table Round, for there were two sieges void,

for two knights were slain that twelvemonth, and great joy had King Arthur of Sir Pelleas and of Sir Marhaus. But Pelleas loved never after Sir Gawaine, but as he spared him for the love of King Arthur; but oftentimes at jousts and tournaments Sir Pelleas quit Sir Gawaine, for so it rehearseth in the book of French. So Sir Tristram many days after fought with Sir Marhaus in an island, and there they did a great battle, but at the last Sir Tristram slew him, so Sir Tristram was wounded that unnethe he might recover, and lay at a nunnery half a year. And Sir Pelleas was a worshipful knight, and was one of the four that achieved the Sangreal, and the Damosel of the Lake made by her means that never he had ado with Sir Launcelot de Lake, for where Sir Launcelot was at any jousts or any tournament, she would not suffer him be there that day, but if it were on the side of Sir Launcelot.

Explicit liber quartus. Incipit liber quintus.

# BOOK V

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## **CHAPTER I. How twelve aged ambassadors of Rome came to King Arthur to demand truage for Britain.**

WHEN King Arthur had after long war rested, and held a royal feast and Table Round with his allies of kings, princes, and noble knights all of the Round Table, there came into his hall, he sitting in his throne royal, twelve ancient men, bearing each of them a branch of olive, in token that they came as ambassadors and messengers from the Emperor Lucius, which was called at that time, Dictator or Procuror of the Public Weal of Rome. Which said messengers, after their entering and coming into the presence of King Arthur, did to him their obeisance in making to him reverence, and said to him in this wise: The high and mighty Emperor Lucius sendeth to the King of Britain greeting, commanding thee to acknowledge him for thy lord, and to send him the truage due of this realm unto the Empire, which thy father and other to-fore thy precessors have paid as is of record, and thou as rebel not knowing him as thy sovereign, withholdest and retainest contrary to the statutes and decrees made by the noble and worthy Julius Cesar, conqueror of this realm, and first Emperor of Rome. And if thou refuse his demand and commandment know thou for certain that he shall make strong war against thee, thy realms and lands, and shall chastise thee and thy subjects, that it shall be ensample perpetual unto all kings and princes, for to deny their truage unto that noble empire which domineth upon the universal world. Then when they had showed the effect of their message, the king commanded them to withdraw them, and said he should take advice of council and give to them an answer. Then some of the young knights, hearing this their message, would have run on them to have slain them, saying that it was a rebuke to all the knights there being present to suffer them to say so to the king. And anon the king commanded that none of them, upon pain of death, to missay them nor do them any harm, and commanded a knight to bring them to their lodging, and see that they have all that is necessary and requisite for them, with the best cheer, and that no dainty be spared, for the Romans be great lords, and though their message please me not nor my court, yet I must remember mine honour.

After this the king let call all his lords and knights of the Round Table to counsel upon this matter, and desired them to say their advice. Then Sir Cadur of Cornwall spake first and said, Sir, this message liketh me well, for we have many days rested us and have been idle, and now I hope ye shall make sharp war on the Romans, where I doubt not we shall get honour. I believe well, said Arthur, that this matter pleaseth thee well, but these answers may not be answered, for the demand grieveth me sore, for truly I will never pay truage to Rome, wherefore I pray you to counsel me. I have understood that Belinus and Brenius, kings of Britain, have had the empire in their hands many days, and also Constantine the son of Heleine, which is an open evidence that we owe no tribute to Rome but of right we that be descended of them have right to claim the title of the empire.

## **CHAPTER II. How the kings and lords promised to King Arthur aid and help against the Romans.**

THEN answered King Anguish of Scotland, Sir, ye ought of right to be above all other kings, for unto you is none like nor pareil in Christendom, of knighthood nor of dignity, and I counsel you never to obey the Romans, for when they reigned on us they distressed our elders, and put this land to great extortions and tallies, wherefore I make here mine avow to avenge me on them; and for to strengthen your quarrel I shall furnish twenty thousand good men of war, and wage them on my costs, which shall await on you with myself when it shall please you. And the king of Little Britain granted him to the same thirty thousand; wherefore King Arthur thanked them. And then every man agreed to make war, and to aid after their power; that is to wit, the lord of West Wales promised to bring thirty thousand men, and Sir Uwaine, Sir Ider his son, with their cousins, promised to bring thirty thousand. Then Sir Launcelot with all other promised in likewise every man a great multitude.

And when King Arthur understood their courages and good wills he thanked them heartily, and after let call the ambassadors to hear their answer. And in presence of all his lords and knights he said to them in this wise: I will that ye return unto your lord and Procuror of the Common Weal for the Romans, and say ye to him, Of his demand and commandment I set nothing, and that I know of no truage nor tribute that I owe to him, nor to none earthly prince, Christian nor heathen; but I pretend to have and occupy the sovereignty of the empire, wherein I am entitled by the right of my predecessors, sometime kings of this land; and say to him that I am delibered and fully concluded, to go with mine army with strength and power unto Rome, by the grace of God, to take possession in the empire and subdue them that be rebel. Wherefore I command

him and all them of Rome, that incontinent they make to me their homage, and to acknowledge me for their Emperor and Governor, upon pain that shall ensue. And then he commanded his treasurer to give to them great and large gifts, and to pay all their dispenses, and assigned Sir Cadour to convey them out of the land. And so they took their leave and departed, and took their shipping at Sandwich, and passed forth by Flanders, Almaine, the mountains, and all Italy, until they came unto Lucius. And after the reverence made, they made relation of their answer, like as ye to-fore have heard.

When the Emperor Lucius had well understood their credence, he was sore moved as he had been all araged, and said, I had supposed that Arthur would have obeyed to my commandment, and have served you himself, as him well beseemed or any other king to do. O Sir, said one of the senators, let be such vain words, for we let you wit that I and my fellows were full sore afeard to behold his countenance; I fear me ye have made a rod for yourself, for he intendeth to be lord of this empire, which sore is to be doubted if he come, for he is all another man than ye ween, and holdeth the most noble court of the world, all other kings nor princes may not compare unto his noble maintenance. On New Year's Day we saw him in his estate, which was the royalest that ever we saw, for he was served at his table with nine kings, and the noblest fellowship of other princes, lords, and knights that be in the world, and every knight approved and like a lord, and holdeth Table Round: and in his person the most manly man that liveth, and is like to conquer all the world, for unto his courage it is too little: wherefore I advise you to keep well your marches and straits in the mountains; for certainly he is a lord to be doubted. Well, said Lucius, before Easter I suppose to pass the mountains, and so forth into France, and there bereave him his lands with Genoese and other mighty warriors of Tuscany and Lombardy. And I shall send for them all that be subjects and allied to the empire of Rome to come to mine aid. And forthwith sent old wise knights unto these countries following: first to Ambage and Arrage, to Alexandria, to India, to Armenia, whereas the river of Euphrates runneth into Asia, to Africa, and Europe the Large, to Ertayne and Elamye, to Araby, Egypt, and to Damascus, to Damietta and Cayer, to Cappadocia, to Tarsus, Turkey, Pontus and Pamphylia, to Syria and Galatia. And all these were subject to Rome and many more, as Greece, Cyprus, Macedonia, Calabria, Cateland, Portugal, with many thousands of Spaniards. Thus all these kings, dukes, and admirals, assembled about Rome, with sixteen kings at once, with great multitude of people. When the emperor understood their coming he made ready his Romans and all the people between him and Flanders.

Also he had gotten with him fifty giants which had been engendered of

fiends; and they were ordained to guard his person, and to break the front of the battle of King Arthur. And thus departed from Rome, and came down the mountains for to destroy the lands that Arthur had conquered, and came unto Cologne, and besieged a castle thereby, and won it soon, and stuffed it with two hundred Saracens or Infidels, and after destroyed many fair countries which Arthur had won of King Claudas. And thus Lucius came with all his host, which were disperplyd sixty mile in breadth, and commanded them to meet with him in Burgoyne, for he purposed to destroy the realm of Little Britain.

### **CHAPTER III. How King Arthur held a parliament at York, and how he ordained the realm should be governed in his absence.**

NOW leave we of Lucius the Emperour and speak we of King Arthur, that commanded all them of his retinue to be ready at the utas of Hilary for to hold a parliament at York. And at that parliament was concluded to arrest all the navy of the land, and to be ready within fifteen days at Sandwich, and there he showed to his army how he purposed to conquer the empire which he ought to have of right. And there he ordained two governors of this realm, that is to say, Sir Baudwin of Britain, for to counsel to the best, and Sir Constantine, son to Sir Cador of Cornwall, which after the death of Arthur was king of this realm. And in the presence of all his lords he resigned the rule of the realm and Guenever his queen to them, wherefore Sir Launcelot was wroth, for he left Sir Tristram with King Mark for the love of Beale Isould. Then the Queen Guenever made great sorrow for the departing of her lord and other, and swooned in such wise that the ladies bare her into her chamber. Thus the king with his great army departed, leaving the queen and realm in the governance of Sir Baudwin and Constantine. And when he was on his horse he said with an high voice, If I die in this journey I will that Sir Constantine be mine heir and king crowned of this realm as next of my blood. And after departed and entered into the sea at Sandwich with all his army, with a great multitude of ships, galleys, cogs, and dromounds, sailing on the sea.

### **CHAPTER IV. How King Arthur being shipped and lying in his cabin had a marvellous dream and of the exposition thereof.**

AND as the king lay in his cabin in the ship, he fell in a slumbering and dreamed a marvellous dream: him seemed that a dreadful dragon did drown much of his people, and he came flying out of the west, and his head was enamelled with azure, and his shoulders shone as gold, his belly like mails of a marvellous hue, his tail full of tatters, his feet full of fine sable, and his claws like fine gold; and an hideous flame of fire flew out of his mouth, like as the land



and water had flamed all of fire. After, him seemed there came out of the orient, a grimly boar all black in a cloud, and his paws as big as a post; he was rugged looking roughly, he was the foulest beast that ever man saw, he roared and roared so hideously that it were marvel to hear. Then the dreadful dragon advanced him and came in the wind like a falcon giving great strokes on the boar, and the boar hit him again with his grizzly tusks that his breast was all bloody, and that the hot blood made all the sea red of his blood. Then the dragon flew away all on an height, and came down with such a swough, and smote the boar on the ridge, which was ten foot large from the head to the tail, and smote the boar all to powder both flesh and bones, that it fluttered all abroad on the sea.

And therewith the king awoke anon, and was sore abashed of this dream, and sent anon for a wise philosopher, commanding to tell him the signification of his dream. Sir, said the philosopher, the dragon that thou dreamedst of betokeneth thine own person that sailest here, and the colours of his wings be thy realms that thou hast won, and his tail which is all to-tattered signifieth the noble knights of the Round Table; and the boar that the dragon slew coming from the clouds betokeneth some tyrant that tormenteth the people, or else thou art like to fight with some giant thyself, being horrible and abominable, whose peer ye saw never in your days, wherefore of this dreadful dream doubt thee nothing, but as a conqueror come forth thyself.

Then after this soon they had sight of land, and sailed till they arrived at Barflete in Flanders, and when they were there he found many of his great lords ready, as they had been commanded to wait upon him.

#### **CHAPTER V. How a man of the country told to him of a marvellous giant, and how he fought and conquered him.**

THEN came to him an husbandman of the country, and told him how there was in the country of Constantine beside Brittany, a great giant which had slain, murdered and devoured much people of the country, and had been sustained seven year with the children of the commons of that land, insomuch that all the children be all slain and destroyed; and now late he hath taken the Duchess of Brittany as she rode with her meiny, and hath led her to his lodging which is in a mountain, for to ravish and lie by her to her life's end, and many people followed her, more than five hundred, but all they might not rescue her, but they left her shrieking and crying lamentably, wherefore I suppose that he hath slain her in fulfilling his foul lust of lechery. She was wife unto thy cousin Sir Howell, whom we call full nigh of thy blood. Now, as thou art a rightful king, have pity on this lady, and revenge us all as thou art a noble conqueror. Alas, said King Arthur, this is a great mischief, I had liefer than the best realm that I have that I

had been a furlong way to-fore him for to have rescued that lady. Now, fellow, said King Arthur, canst thou bring me thereas this giant haunteth? Yea, Sir, said the good man, look yonder whereas thou seest those two great fires, there shalt thou find him, and more treasure than I suppose is in all France. When the king had understood this piteous case, he returned into his tent.

Then he called to him Sir Kay and Sir Bedivere, and commanded them secretly to make ready horse and harness for himself and them twain; for after evensong he would ride on pilgrimage with them two only unto Saint Michael's mount. And then anon he made him ready, and armed him at all points, and took his horse and his shield. And so they three departed thence and rode forth as fast as ever they might till that they came to the foreland of that mount. And there they alighted, and the king commanded them to tarry there, for he would himself go up into that mount. And so he ascended up into that hill till he came to a great fire, and there he found a careful widow wringing her hands and making great sorrow, sitting by a grave new made. And then King Arthur saluted her, and demanded of her wherefore she made such lamentation, to whom she answered and said, Sir knight, speak soft, for yonder is a devil, if he hear thee speak he will come and destroy thee; I hold thee unhappy; what dost thou here in this mountain? for if ye were such fifty as ye be, ye were not able to make resistance against this devil: here lieth a duchess dead, the which was the fairest of all the world, wife to Sir Howell, Duke of Brittany, he hath murdered her in forcing her, and hath slit her unto the navel.

Dame, said the king, I come from the noble conqueror King Arthur, for to treat with that tyrant for his liege people. Fie on such treaties, said she, he setteth not by the king nor by no man else; but an if thou have brought Arthur's wife, dame Guenever, he shall be gladder than thou hadst given to him half France. Beware, approach him not too nigh, for he hath vanquished fifteen kings, and hath made him a coat full of precious stones embroidered with their beards, which they sent him to have his love for salvation of their people at this last Christmas. And if thou wilt, speak with him at yonder great fire at supper. Well, said Arthur, I will accomplish my message for all your fearful words; and went forth by the crest of that hill, and saw where he sat at supper gnawing on a limb of a man, baking his broad limbs by the fire, and breechless, and three fair damosels turning three broaches whereon were broached twelve young children late born, like young birds.

When King Arthur beheld that piteous sight he had great compassion on them, so that his heart bled for sorrow, and hailed him, saying in this wise: He that all the world wieldeth give thee short life and shameful death; and the devil have thy soul; why hast thou murdered these young innocent children, and

murdered this duchess? Therefore, arise and dress thee, thou glutton, for this day shalt thou die of my hand. Then the glutton anon started up, and took a great club in his hand, and smote at the king that his coronal fell to the earth. And the king hit him again that he carved his belly and cut off his genitours, that his guts and his entrails fell down to the ground. Then the giant threw away his club, and caught the king in his arms that he crushed his ribs. Then the three maidens kneeled down and called to Christ for help and comfort of Arthur. And then Arthur weltered and wrung, that he was other while under and another time above. And so weltering and wallowing they rolled down the hill till they came to the sea mark, and ever as they so weltered Arthur smote him with his dagger.

And it fortun'd they came to the place whereas the two knights were and kept Arthur's horse; then when they saw the king fast in the giant's arms they came and loosed him. And then the king commanded Sir Kay to smite off the giant's head, and to set it upon a truncheon of a spear, and bear it to Sir Howell, and tell him that his enemy was slain; and after let this head be bound to a barbican that all the people may see and behold it; and go ye two up to the mountain, and fetch me my shield, my sword, and the club of iron; and as for the treasure, take ye it, for ye shall find there goods out of number; so I have the kirtle and the club I desire no more. This was the fiercest giant that ever I met with, save one in the mount of Araby, which I overcame, but this was greater and fiercer. Then the knights fetched the club and the kirtle, and some of the treasure they took to themselves, and returned again to the host. And anon this was known through all the country, wherefore the people came and thanked the king. And he said again, Give the thanks to God, and depart the goods among you.

And after that King Arthur said and commanded his cousin Howell, that he should ordain for a church to be builded on the same hill in the worship of Saint Michael. And on the morn the king removed with his great battle, and came into Champayne and in a valley, and there they pight their tents; and the king being set at his dinner, there came in two messengers, of whom that one was Marshal of France, and said to the king that the emperor was entered into France, and had destroyed a great part, and was in Burgoyne, and had destroyed and made great slaughter of people, and burnt towns and boroughs; wherefore, if thou come not hastily, they must yield up their bodies and goods.

#### **CHAPTER VI. How King Arthur sent Sir Gawaine and other to Lucius, and how they were assailed and escaped with worship.**

THEN the king did do call Sir Gawaine, Sir Bors, Sir Lionel, and Sir Bedivere, and commanded them to go straight to Sir Lucius, and say ye to him

that hastily he remove out of my land; and if he will not, bid him make him ready to battle and not distress the poor people. Then anon these noble knights dressed them to horseback, and when they came to the green wood, they saw many pavilions set in a meadow, of silk of divers colours, beside a river, and the emperor's pavilion was in the middle with an eagle displayed above. To the which tent our knights rode toward, and ordained Sir Gawaine and Sir Bors to do the message, and left in a bushment Sir Lionel and Sir Bedivere. And then Sir Gawaine and Sir Bors did their message, and commanded Lucius, in Arthur's name to avoid his land, or shortly to address him to battle. To whom Lucius answered and said, Ye shall return to your lord, and say ye to him that I shall subdue him and all his lands. Then Sir Gawaine was wroth and said, I had liefer than all France fight against thee; and so had I, said Sir Bors, liefer than all Brittany or Burgoyne.

Then a knight named Sir Gainus, nigh cousin to the emperor, said, Lo, how these Britons be full of pride and boast, and they brag as though they bare up all the world. Then Sir Gawaine was sore grieved with these words, and pulled out his sword and smote off his head. And therewith turned their horses and rode over waters and through woods till they came to their bushment, whereas Sir Lionel and Sir Bedivere were hoving. The Romans followed fast after, on horseback and on foot, over a champaign unto a wood; then Sir Bors turned his horse and saw a knight come fast on, whom he smote through the body with a spear that he fell dead down to the earth; then came Caliburn one of the strongest of Pavie, and smote down many of Arthur's knights. And when Sir Bors saw him do so much harm, he addressed toward him, and smote him through the breast, that he fell down dead to the earth. Then Sir Feldenak thought to revenge the death of Gainus upon Sir Gawaine, but Sir Gawaine was ware thereof, and smote him on the head, which stroke stunted not till it came to his breast. And then he returned and came to his fellows in the bushment. And there was a recounter, for the bushment brake on the Romans, and slew and hew down the Romans, and forced the Romans to flee and return, whom the noble knights chased unto their tents.

Then the Romans gathered more people, and also footmen came on, and there was a new battle, and so much people that Sir Bors and Sir Berel were taken. But when Sir Gawaine saw that, he took with him Sir Idrus the good knight, and said he would never see King Arthur but if he rescued them, and pulled out Galatine his good sword, and followed them that led those two knights away; and he smote him that led Sir Bors, and took Sir Bors from him and delivered him to his fellows. And Sir Idrus in likewise rescued Sir Berel. Then began the battle to be great, that our knights were in great jeopardy,

wherefore Sir Gawaine sent to King Arthur for succour, and that he hie him, for I am sore wounded, and that our prisoners may pay goods out of number. And the messenger came to the king and told him his message. And anon the king did do assemble his army, but anon, or he departed the prisoners were come, and Sir Gawaine and his fellows gat the field and put the Romans to flight, and after returned and came with their fellowship in such wise that no man of worship was lost of them, save that Sir Gawaine was sore hurt. Then the king did do ransack his wounds and comforted him. And thus was the beginning of the first journey of the Britons and Romans, and there were slain of the Romans more than ten thousand, and great joy and mirth was made that night in the host of King Arthur. And on the morn he sent all the prisoners into Paris under the guard of Sir Launcelot, with many knights, and of Sir Cador.

#### **CHAPTER VII. How Lucius sent certain spies in a bushment for to have taken his knights being prisoners, and how they were letted.**

NOW turn we to the Emperor of Rome, which espied that these prisoners should be sent to Paris, and anon he sent to lie in a bushment certain knights and princes with sixty thousand men, for to rescue his knights and lords that were prisoners. And so on the morn as Launcelot and Sir Cador, chieftains and governors of all them that conveyed the prisoners, as they should pass through a wood, Sir Launcelot sent certain knights to espy if any were in the woods to let them. And when the said knights came into the wood, anon they espied and saw the great embushment, and returned and told Sir Launcelot that there lay in await for them three score thousand Romans. And then Sir Launcelot with such knights as he had, and men of war to the number of ten thousand, put them in array, and met with them and fought with them manly, and slew and detrenched many of the Romans, and slew many knights and admirals of the party of the Romans and Saracens; there was slain the king of Lyly and three great lords, Aladuke, Herawd, and Heringdale. But Sir Launcelot fought so nobly that no man might endure a stroke of his hand, but where he came he showed his prowess and might, for he slew down right on every side; and the Romans and Saracens fled from him as the sheep from the wolf or from the lion, and put them, all that abode alive, to flight.

And so long they fought that tidings came to King Arthur, and anon he graithed him and came to the battle, and saw his knights how they had vanquished the battle, he embraced them knight by knight in his arms, and said, Ye be worthy to wield all your honour and worship; there was never king save myself that had so noble knights. Sir, said Cador, there was none of us failed other, but of the prowess and manhood of Sir Launcelot were more than wonder

to tell, and also of his cousins which did that day many noble feats of war. And also Sir Cador told who of his knights were slain, as Sir Berel, and other Sir Moris and Sir Maurel, two good knights. Then the king wept, and dried his eyes with a kerchief, and said, Your courage had near-hand destroyed you, for though ye had returned again, ye had lost no worship; for I call it folly, knights to abide when they be overmatched. Nay, said Launcelot and the other, for once shamed may never be recovered.

### **CHAPTER VIII. How a senator told to Lucius of their discomfiture, and also of the great battle between Arthur and Lucius.**

NOW leave we King Arthur and his noble knights which had won the field, and had brought their prisoners to Paris, and speak we of a senator which escaped from the battle, and came to Lucius the emperor, and said to him, Sir emperor, I advise thee for to withdraw thee; what dost thou here? thou shalt win nothing in these marches but great strokes out of all measure, for this day one of Arthur's knights was worth in the battle an hundred of ours. Fie on thee, said Lucius, thou speakest cowardly; for thy words grieve me more than all the loss that I had this day. And anon he sent forth a king, which hight Sir Leomie, with a great army, and bade him hie him fast to-fore, and he would follow hastily after. King Arthur was warned privily, and sent his people to Sesseoine, and took up the towns and castles from the Romans. Then the king commanded Sir Cador to take the rearward, and to take with him certain knights of the Round Table, and Sir Launcelot, Sir Bors, Sir Kay, Sir Marrok, with Sir Marhaus, shall await on our person. Thus the King Arthur disperpled his host in divers parties, to the end that his enemies should not escape.

When the emperor was entered into the vale of Sesseoine, he might see where King Arthur was embattled and his banner displayed; and he was beset round about with his enemies, that needs he must fight or yield him, for he might not flee, but said openly unto the Romans, Sirs, I admonish you that this day ye fight and acquit you as men, and remember how Rome domineth and is chief and head over all the earth and universal world, and suffer not these Britons this day to abide against us; and therewith he did command his trumpets to blow the bloody sounds, in such wise that the ground trembled and dindled.

Then the battles approached and shoved and shouted on both sides, and great strokes were smitten on both sides, many men overthrown, hurt, and slain; and great valiances, prowesses and appertices of war were that day showed, which were over long to recount the noble feats of every man, for they should contain an whole volume. But in especial, King Arthur rode in the battle exhorting his knights to do well, and himself did as nobly with his hands as was possible a

man to do; he drew out Excalibur his sword, and awaited ever whereas the Romans were thickest and most grieved his people, and anon he addressed him on that part, and hew and slew down right, and rescued his people; and he slew a great giant named Galapas, which was a man of an huge quantity and height, he shorted him and smote off both his legs by the knees, saying, Now art thou better of a size to deal with than thou were, and after smote off his head. There Sir Gawaine fought nobly and slew three admirals in that battle. And so did all the knights of the Round Table. Thus the battle between King Arthur and Lucius the Emperor endured long. Lucius had on his side many Saracens which were slain. And thus the battle was great, and oft sides that one party was at a fordeal and anon at an afterdeal, which endured so long till at the last King Arthur espied where Lucius the Emperor fought, and did wonder with his own hands. And anon he rode to him. And either smote other fiercely, and at last Lucius smote Arthur thwart the visage, and gave him a large wound. And when King Arthur felt himself hurt, anon he smote him again with Excalibur that it cleft his head, from the summit of his head, and stinted not till it came to his breast. And then the emperor fell down dead and there ended his life.

And when it was known that the emperor was slain, anon all the Romans with all their host put them to flight, and King Arthur with all his knights followed the chase, and slew down right all them that they might attain. And thus was the victory given to King Arthur, and the triumph; and there were slain on the part of Lucius more than an hundred thousand. And after King Arthur did do ransack the dead bodies, and did do bury them that were slain of his retinue, every man according to the estate and degree that he was of. And them that were hurt he let the surgeons do search their hurts and wounds, and commanded to spare no salves nor medicines till they were whole.

Then the king rode straight to the place where the Emperor Lucius lay dead, and with him he found slain the Soudan of Syria, the King of Egypt and of Ethiopia, which were two noble kings, with seventeen other kings of divers regions, and also sixty senators of Rome, all noble men, whom the king did do balm and gum with many good gums aromatic, and after did do cere them in sixty fold of cered cloth of sendal, and laid them in chests of lead, because they should not chafe nor savour, and upon all these bodies their shields with their arms and banners were set, to the end they should be known of what country they were. And after he found three senators which were alive, to whom he said, For to save your lives I will that ye take these dead bodies, and carry them with you unto great Rome, and present them to the Potestate on my behalf, shewing him my letters, and tell them that I in my person shall hastily be at Rome. And I suppose the Romans shall beware how they shall demand any tribute of me. And

I command you to say when ye shall come to Rome, to the Potestate and all the Council and Senate, that I send to them these dead bodies for the tribute that they have demanded. And if they be not content with these, I shall pay more at my coming, for other tribute owe I none, nor none other will I pay. And methinketh this sufficeth for Britain, Ireland and all Almaine with Germany. And furthermore, I charge you to say to them, that I command them upon pain of their heads never to demand tribute nor tax of me nor of my lands. Then with this charge and commandment, the three senators aforesaid departed with all the said dead bodies, laying the body of Lucius in a car covered with the arms of the Empire all alone; and after alway two bodies of kings in a chariot, and then the bodies of the senators after them, and so went toward Rome, and showed their legation and message to the Potestate and Senate, recounting the battle done in France, and how the field was lost and much people and innumerable slain. Wherefore they advised them in no wise to move no more war against that noble conqueror Arthur, for his might and prowess is most to be doubted, seen the noble kings and great multitude of knights of the Round Table, to whom none earthly prince may compare.

#### **CHAPTER IX How Arthur, after he had achieved the battle against the Romans, entered into Almaine, and so into Italy.**

NOW turn we unto King Arthur and his noble knights, which, after the great battle achieved against the Romans, entered into Lorraine, Brabant and Flanders, and sithen returned into Haut Almaine, and so over the mountains into Lombardy, and after, into Tuscany wherein was a city which in no wise would yield themselves nor obey, wherefore King Arthur besieged it, and lay long about it, and gave many assaults to the city; and they within defended them valiantly. Then, on a time, the king called Sir Florence, a knight, and said to him they lacked victual, And not far from hence be great forests and woods, wherein be many of mine enemies with much bestial: I will that thou make thee ready and go thither in foraying, and take with thee Sir Gawaine my nephew, Sir Wisshard, Sir Clegis, Sir Cleremond, and the Captain of Cardiff with other, and bring with you all the beasts that ye there can get.

And anon these knights made them ready, and rode over holts and hills, through forests and woods, till they came into a fair meadow full of fair flowers and grass; and there they rested them and their horses all that night. And in the springing of the day in the next morn, Sir Gawaine took his horse and stole away from his fellowship, to seek some adventures. And anon he was ware of a man armed, walking his horse easily by a wood's side, and his shield laced to his shoulder, sitting on a strong courser, without any man saving a page bearing a



mighty spear. The knight bare in his shield three griffins of gold, in sable carbuncle, the chief of silver. When Sir Gawaine espied this gay knight, he feutred his spear, and rode straight to him, and demanded of him from whence that he was. That other answered and said he was of Tuscany, and demanded of Sir Gawaine, What, profferest thou, proud knight, thee so boldly? here gettest thou no prey, thou mayest prove what thou wilt, for thou shalt be my prisoner or thou depart. Then said Gawaine, thou avauntest thee greatly and speakest proud words, I counsel thee for all thy boast that thou make thee ready, and take thy gear to thee, to-fore greater grame fall to thee.

**CHAPTER X. Of a battle done by Sir Gawaine against a Saracen, which after was yelden and became Christian.**

THEN they took their spears and ran each at other with all the might they had, and smote each other through their shields into their shoulders, wherefore anon they pulled out their swords, and smote great strokes that the fire sprang out of their helms. Then Sir Gawaine was all abashed, and with Galatine his good sword he smote through shield and thick hauberk made of thick mails, and all to-rushed and break the precious stones, and made him a large wound, that men might see both liver and lung. Then groaned that knight, and addressed him to Sir Gawaine, and with an awk stroke gave him a great wound and cut a vein, which grieved Gawaine sore, and he bled sore. Then the knight said to Sir Gawaine, bind thy wound or thy blee[ding] change, for thou be-bleedest all thy horse and thy fair arms, for all the barbers of Brittany shall not con staunch thy blood, for whosomever is hurt with this blade he shall never be staunched of bleeding. Then answered Gawaine, it grieveth me but little, thy great words shall not fear me nor lessen my courage, but thou shalt suffer teen and sorrow or we depart, but tell me in haste who may staunch my bleeding. That may I do, said the knight, if I will, and so will I if thou wilt succour and aid me, that I may be christened and believe on God, and thereof I require thee of thy manhood, and it shall be great merit for thy soul. I grant, said Gawaine, so God help me, to accomplish all thy desire, but first tell me what thou soughtest here thus alone, and of what land and liegiance thou art of. Sir, he said, my name is Priamus, and a great prince is my father, and he hath been rebel unto Rome and overridden many of their lands. My father is lineally descended of Alexander and of Hector by right line. And Duke Joshua and Maccabaeus were of our lineage. I am right inheritor of Alexandria and Africa, and all the out isles, yet will I believe on thy Lord that thou believest on; and for thy labour I shall give thee treasure enough. I was so elate and hauteyn in my heart that I thought no man my peer, nor to me semblable. I was sent into this war with seven score knights, and now I have

encountered with thee, which hast given to me of fighting my fill, wherefore sir knight, I pray thee to tell me what thou art. I am no knight, said Gawaine, I have been brought up in the guardrobe with the noble King Arthur many years, for to take heed to his armour and his other array, and to point his paltocks that long to himself. At Yule last he made me yeoman, and gave to me horse and harness, and an hundred pound in money; and if fortune be my friend, I doubt not but to be well advanced and holpen by my liege lord. Ah, said Priamus, if his knaves be so keen and fierce, his knights be passing good: now for the King's love of Heaven, whether thou be a knave or a knight, tell thou me thy name. By God, said Sir Gawaine, now I will say thee sooth, my name is Sir Gawaine, and known I am in his court and in his chamber, and one of the knights of the Round Table, he dubbed me a duke with his own hand. Therefore grudge not if this grace is to me fortun'd, it is the goodness of God that lent to me my strength. Now am I better pleased, said Priamus, than thou hadst given to me all the Provence and Paris the rich. I had liefer to have been torn with wild horses, than any varlet had won such loos, or any page or priker should have had prize on me. But now sir knight I warn thee that hereby is a Duke of Lorraine with his army, and the noblest men of Dolphiny, and lords of Lombardy, with the garrison of Godard, and Saracens of Southland, y-numbered sixty thousand of good men of arms; wherefore but if we hie us hence, it will harm us both, for we be sore hurt, never like to recover; but take heed to my page, that he no horn blow, for if he do, there be hoving here fast by an hundred knights awaiting on my person, and if they take thee, there shall no ransom of gold nor silver acquit thee.

Then Sir Gawaine rode over a water for to save him, and the knight followed him, and so rode forth till they came to his fellows which were in the meadow, where they had been all the night. Anon as Sir Wisshard was ware of Sir Gawaine and saw that he was hurt, he ran to him sorrowfully weeping, and demanded of him who had so hurt him; and Gawaine told how he had foughten with that man, and each of them had hurt other, and how he had salves to heal them; but I can tell you other tidings, that soon we shall have ado with many enemies.

Then Sir Priamus and Sir Gawaine alighted, and let their horses graze in the meadow, and unarmed them, and then the blood ran freshly from their wounds. And Priamus took from his page a vial full of the four waters that came out of Paradise, and with certain balm anointed their wounds, and washed them with that water, and within an hour after they were both as whole as ever they were. And then with a trumpet were they all assembled to council, and there Priamus told unto them what lords and knights had sworn to rescue him, and that without fail they should be assailed with many thousands, wherefore he counselled them

to withdraw them. Then Sir Gawaine said, it were great shame to them to avoid without any strokes; Wherefore I advise to take our arms and to make us ready to meet with these Saracens and misbelieving men, and with the help of God we shall overthrow them and have a fair day on them. And Sir Florence shall abide still in this field to keep the stale as a noble knight, and we shall not forsake yonder fellows. Now, said Priamus, cease your words, for I warn you ye shall find in yonder woods many perilous knights; they will put forth beasts to call you on, they be out of number, and ye are not past seven hundred, which be over few to fight with so many. Nevertheless, said Sir Gawaine, we shall once encounter them, and see what they can do, and the best shall have the victory.

### **CHAPTER XI. How the Saracens came out of a wood for to rescue their beasts, and of a great battle.**

THEN Sir Florence called to him Sir Floridas, with an hundred knights, and drove forth the herd of beasts. Then followed him seven hundred men of arms; and Sir Ferant of Spain on a fair steed came springing out of the woods, and came to Sir Florence and asked him why he fled. Then Sir Florence took his spear and rode against him, and smote him in the forehead and brake his neck bone. Then all the other were moved, and thought to avenge the death of Sir Ferant, and smote in among them, and there was great fight, and many slain and laid down to ground, and Sir Florence with his hundred knights alway kept the stale, and fought manly.

Then when Priamus the good knight perceived the great fight, he went to Sir Gawaine, and bade him that he should go and succour his fellowship, which were sore bestead with their enemies. Sir, grieve you not, said Sir Gawaine, for their gree shall be theirs. I shall not once move my horse to them ward, but if I see more than there be; for they be strong enough to match them.

And with that he saw an earl called Sir Ethelwold and the duke of Dutchmen, came leaping out of a wood with many thousands, and Priamus' knights, and came straight unto the battle. Then Sir Gawaine comforted his knights, and bade them not to be abashed, for all shall be ours. Then they began to wallop and met with their enemies, there were men slain and overthrown on every side. Then thrust in among them the knights of the Table Round, and smote down to the earth all them that withstood them, in so much that they made them to recoil and flee. By God, said Sir Gawaine, this gladdeth my heart, for now be they less in number by twenty thousand. Then entered into the battle Jubance a giant, and fought and slew down right, and distressed many of our knights, among whom was slain Sir Gherard, a knight of Wales. Then our knights took heart to them, and slew many Saracens. And then came in Sir Priamus with his pennon, and

rode with the knights of the Round Table, and fought so manfully that many of their enemies lost their lives. And there Sir Priamus slew the Marquis of Moises land, and Sir Gawaine with his fellows so quit them that they had the field, but in that stour was Sir Chestelaine, a child and ward of Sir Gawaine slain, wherefore was much sorrow made, and his death was soon avenged. Thus was the battle ended, and many lords of Lombardy and Saracens left dead in the field.

Then Sir Florence and Sir Gawaine harboured surely their people, and took great plenty of bestial, of gold and silver, and great treasure and riches, and returned unto King Arthur, which lay still at the siege. And when they came to the king they presented their prisoners and recounted their adventures, and how they had vanquished their enemies.

## **CHAPTER XII. How Sir Gawaine returned to King Arthur with his prisoners, and how the King won a city, and how he was crowned Emperor.**

NOW thanked be God, said the noble King Arthur. But what manner man is he that standeth by himself, him seemeth no prisoner. Sir, said Gawaine, this is a good man of arms, he hath matched me, but he is yelden unto God, and to me, for to become Christian; had not he have been we should never have returned, wherefore I pray you that he may be baptised, for there liveth not a nobler man nor better knight of his hands. Then the king let him anon be christened, and did do call him his first name Priamus, and made him a duke and knight of the Table Round. And then anon the king let do cry assault to the city, and there was rearing of ladders, breaking of walls, and the ditch filled, that men with little pain might enter into the city. Then came out a duchess, and Clarisin the countess, with many ladies and damosels, and kneeling before King Arthur, required him for the love of God to receive the city, and not to take it by assault, for then should many guiltless be slain. Then the king aveled his visor with a meek and noble countenance, and said, Madam, there shall none of my subjects misdo you nor your maidens, nor to none that to you belong, but the duke shall abide my judgment. Then anon the king commanded to leave the assault, and anon the duke's oldest son brought out the keys, and kneeling delivered them to the king, and besought him of grace; and the king seized the town by assent of his lords, and took the duke and sent him to Dover, there for to abide prisoner term of his life, and assigned certain rents for the dower of the duchess and for her children.

Then he made lords to rule those lands, and laws as a lord ought to do in his own country; and after he took his journey toward Rome, and sent Sir Floris and Sir Floridas to-fore, with five hundred men of arms, and they came to the city of Urbino and laid there a bushment, thereas them seemed most best for them, and

rode to-fore the town, where anon issued out much people and skirmished with the fore-riders. Then brake out the bushment and won the bridge, and after the town, and set upon the walls the king's banner. Then came the king upon an hill, and saw the city and his banner on the walls, by which he knew that the city was won. And anon he sent and commanded that none of his liege men should defoul nor lie by no lady, wife nor maid; and when he came into the city, he passed to the castle, and comforted them that were in sorrow, and ordained there a captain, a knight of his own country.

And when they of Milan heard that thilk city was won, they sent to King Arthur great sums of money, and besought him as their lord to have pity on them, promising to be his subjects for ever, and yield to him homage and fealty for the lands of Pleasance and Pavia, Petersaint, and the Port of Tremble, and to give him yearly a million of gold all his lifetime. Then he rideth into Tuscany, and winneth towns and castles, and wasted all in his way that to him will not obey, and so to Spolite and Viterbe, and from thence he rode into the Vale of Vicecount among the vines. And from thence he sent to the senators, to wit whether they would know him for their lord. But soon after on a Saturday came unto King Arthur all the senators that were left alive, and the noblest cardinals that then dwelt in Rome, and prayed him of peace, and proferred him full large, and besought him as governor to give licence for six weeks for to assemble all the Romans, and then to crown him emperor with chrism as it belongeth to so high estate. I assent, said the king, like as ye have devised, and at Christmas there to be crowned, and to hold my Round Table with my knights as me liketh. And then the senators made ready for his enthronization. And at the day appointed, as the romance telleth, he came into Rome, and was crowned emperor by the pope's hand, with all the royalty that could be made, and sojourned there a time, and established all his lands from Rome into France, and gave lands and realms unto his servants and knights, to everych after his desert, in such wise that none complained, rich nor poor. And he gave to Sir Priamus the duchy of Lorraine; and he thanked him, and said he would serve him the days of his life; and after made dukes and earls, and made every man rich.

Then after this all his knights and lords assembled them afore him, and said: Blessed be God, your war is finished and your conquest achieved, in so much that we know none so great nor mighty that dare make war against you: wherefore we beseech you to return homeward, and give us licence to go home to our wives, from whom we have been long, and to rest us, for your journey is finished with honour and worship. Then said the king, Ye say truth, and for to tempt God it is no wisdom, and therefore make you ready and return we into England. Then there was trussing of harness and baggage and great carriage.

And after licence given, he returned and commanded that no man in pain of death should not rob nor take victual, nor other thing by the way but that he should pay therefore. And thus he came over the sea and landed at Sandwich, against whom Queen Guenever his wife came and met him, and he was nobly received of all his commons in every city and burgh, and great gifts presented to him at his home-coming to welcome him with.

Thus endeth the fifth book of the conquest that King Arthur had against Lucius the Emperor of Rome, and here followeth the sixth book, which is of Sir Launcelot du Lake.

## BOOK VI

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### **CHAPTER I. How Sir Launcelot and Sir Lionel departed from the court, and how Sir Lionel left him sleeping and was taken.**

SOON after that King Arthur was come from Rome into England, then all the knights of the Table Round resorted unto the king, and made many jousts and tournaments, and some there were that were but knights, which increased so in arms and worship that they passed all their fellows in prowess and noble deeds, and that was well proved on many; but in especial it was proved on Sir Launcelot du Lake, for in all tournaments and jousts and deeds of arms, both for life and death, he passed all other knights, and at no time he was never overcome but if it were by treason or enchantment; so Sir Launcelot increased so marvellously in worship, and in honour, therefore is he the first knight that the French book maketh mention of after King Arthur came from Rome. Wherefore Queen Guenever had him in great favour above all other knights, and in certain he loved the queen again above all other ladies and damosels of his life, and for her he did many deeds of arms, and saved her from the fire through his noble chivalry.

Thus Sir Launcelot rested him long with play and game. And then he thought himself to prove himself in strange adventures, then he bade his nephew, Sir Lionel, for to make him ready; for we two will seek adventures. So they mounted on their horses, armed at all rights, and rode into a deep forest and so into a deep plain. And then the weather was hot about noon, and Sir Launcelot had great lust to sleep. Then Sir Lionel espied a great appletree that stood by an hedge, and said, Brother, yonder is a fair shadow, there may we rest us [and] our horses. It is well said, fair brother, said Sir Launcelot, for this eight year I was not so sleepy as I am now; and so they there alighted and tied their horses unto sundry trees, and so Sir Launcelot laid him down under an appletree, and his helm he laid under his head. And Sir Lionel waked while he slept. So Sir Launcelot was asleep passing fast.

And in the meanwhile there came three knights riding, as fast fleeing as ever they might ride. And there followed them three but one knight. And when Sir Lionel saw him, him thought he saw never so great a knight, nor so well faring a

man, neither so well apparelled unto all rights. So within a while this strong knight had overtaken one of these knights, and there he smote him to the cold earth that he lay still. And then he rode unto the second knight, and smote him so that man and horse fell down. And then straight to the third knight he rode, and smote him behind his horse's arse a spear length. And then he alighted down and reined his horse on the bridle, and bound all the three knights fast with the reins of their own bridles. When Sir Lionel saw him do thus, he thought to assay him, and made him ready, and stilly and privily he took his horse, and thought not for to awake Sir Launcelot. And when he was mounted upon his horse, he overtook this strong knight, and bade him turn, and the other smote Sir Lionel so hard that horse and man he bare to the earth, and so he alighted down and bound him fast, and threw him overthwart his own horse, and so he served them all four, and rode with them away to his own castle. And when he came there he gart unarm them, and beat them with thorns all naked, and after put them in a deep prison where were many more knights, that made great dolour.

## **CHAPTER II. How Sir Ector followed for to seek Sir Launcelot, and how he was taken by Sir Turquine.**

WHEN Sir Ector de Maris wist that Sir Launcelot was passed out of the court to seek adventures, he was wroth with himself, and made him ready to seek Sir Launcelot, and as he had ridden long in a great forest he met with a man was like a forester. Fair fellow, said Sir Ector, knowest thou in this country any adventures that be here nigh hand? Sir, said the forester, this country know I well, and hereby, within this mile, is a strong manor, and well dyked, and by that manor, on the left hand, there is a fair ford for horses to drink of, and over that ford there groweth a fair tree, and thereon hang many fair shields that wielded sometime good knights, and at the hole of the tree hangeth a basin of copper and latten, and strike upon that basin with the butt of thy spear thrice, and soon after thou shalt hear new tidings, and else hast thou the fairest grace that many a year had ever knight that passed through this forest. Gramercy, said Sir Ector, and departed and came to the tree, and saw many fair shields. And among them he saw his brother's shield, Sir Lionel, and many more that he knew that were his fellows of the Round Table, the which grieved his heart, and promised to revenge his brother.

Then anon Sir Ector beat on the basin as he were wood, and then he gave his horse drink at the ford, and there came a knight behind him and bade him come out of the water and make him ready; and Sir Ector anon turned him shortly, and in feuter cast his spear, and smote the other knight a great buffet that his horse turned twice about. This was well done, said the strong knight, and knightly thou



hast stricken me; and therewith he rushed his horse on Sir Ector, and cleight him under his right arm, and bare him clean out of the saddle, and rode with him away into his own hall, and threw him down in midst of the floor. The name of this knight was Sir Turquine. Then he said unto Sir Ector, For thou hast done this day more unto me than any knight did these twelve years, now will I grant thee thy life, so thou wilt be sworn to be my prisoner all thy life days. Nay, said Sir Ector, that will I never promise thee, but that I will do mine advantage. That me repenteth, said Sir Turquine. And then he gart to unarm him, and beat him with thorns all naked, and sithen put him down in a deep dungeon, where he knew many of his fellows. But when Sir Ector saw Sir Lionel, then made he great sorrow. Alas, brother, said Sir Ector, where is my brother Sir Launcelot? Fair brother, I left him asleep when that I from him yode, under an appletree, and what is become of him I cannot tell you. Alas, said the knights, but Sir Launcelot help us we may never be delivered, for we know now no knight that is able to match our master Turquine.

### **CHAPTER III How four queens found Launcelot sleeping, and how by enchantment he was taken and led into a castle.**

NOW leave we these knights prisoners, and speak we of Sir Launcelot du Lake that lieth under the appletree sleeping. Even about the noon there came by him four queens of great estate; and, for the heat should not annoy them, there rode four knights about them, and bare a cloth of green silk on four spears, betwixt them and the sun, and the queens rode on four white mules. Thus as they rode they heard by them a great horse grimly neigh, then were they ware of a sleeping knight, that lay all armed under an appletree; anon as these queens looked on his face, they knew it was Sir Launcelot. Then they began for to strive for that knight, everych one said they would have him to her love. We shall not strive, said Morgan le Fay, that was King Arthur's sister, I shall put an enchantment upon him that he shall not awake in six hours, and then I will lead him away unto my castle, and when he is surely within my hold, I shall take the enchantment from him, and then let him choose which of us he will have unto paramour.

So this enchantment was cast upon Sir Launcelot, and then they laid him upon his shield, and bare him so on horseback betwixt two knights, and brought him unto the castle Chariot, and there they laid him in a chamber cold, and at night they sent unto him a fair damosel with his supper ready dight. By that the enchantment was past, and when she came she saluted him, and asked him what cheer. I cannot say, fair damosel, said Sir Launcelot, for I wot not how I came into this castle but it be by an enchantment. Sir, said she, ye must make good

cheer, and if ye be such a knight as it is said ye be, I shall tell you more to-morn by prime of the day. Gramercy, fair damosel, said Sir Launcelot, of your good will I require you. And so she departed. And there he lay all that night without comfort of anybody. And on the morn early came these four queens, passingly well beseen, all they bidding him good morn, and he them again.

Sir knight, the four queens said, thou must understand thou art our prisoner, and we here know thee well that thou art Sir Launcelot du Lake, King Ban's son, and because we understand your worthiness, that thou art the noblest knight living, and as we know well there can no lady have thy love but one, and that is Queen Guenever, and now thou shalt lose her for ever, and she thee, and therefore thee behoveth now to choose one of us four. I am the Queen Morgan le Fay, queen of the land of Gore, and here is the queen of Northgalis, and the queen of Eastland, and the queen of the Out Isles; now choose one of us which thou wilt have to thy paramour, for thou mayest not choose or else in this prison to die. This is an hard case, said Sir Launcelot, that either I must die or else choose one of you, yet had I liefer to die in this prison with worship, than to have one of you to my paramour maugre my head. And therefore ye be answered, I will none of you, for ye be false enchantresses, and as for my lady, Dame Guenever, were I at my liberty as I was, I would prove it on you or on yours, that she is the truest lady unto her lord living. Well, said the queens, is this your answer, that ye will refuse us. Yea, on my life, said Sir Launcelot, refused ye be of me. So they departed and left him there alone that made great sorrow.

#### **CHAPTER IV. How Sir Launcelot was delivered by the mean of a damosel.**

RIGHT so at the noon came the damosel unto him with his dinner, and asked him what cheer. Truly, fair damosel, said Sir Launcelot, in my life days never so ill. Sir, she said, that me repenteth, but an ye will be ruled by me, I shall help you out of this distress, and ye shall have no shame nor villainy, so that ye hold me a promise. Fair damosel, I will grant you, and sore I am of these queen-sorceresses afeard, for they have destroyed many a good knight. Sir, said she, that is sooth, and for the renown and bounty that they hear of you they would have your love, and Sir, they say, your name is Sir Launcelot du Lake, the flower of knights, and they be passing wroth with you that ye have refused them. But Sir, an ye would promise me to help my father on Tuesday next coming, that hath made a tournament betwixt him and the King of Northgalis—for the last Tuesday past my father lost the field through three knights of Arthur's court—an ye will be there on Tuesday next coming, and help my father, to-morn or prime,

by the grace of God, I shall deliver you clean. Fair maiden, said Sir Launcelot, tell me what is your father's name, and then shall I give you an answer. Sir knight, she said, my father is King Bagdemagus, that was foul rebuked at the last tournament. I know your father well, said Sir Launcelot, for a noble king and a good knight, and by the faith of my body, ye shall have my body ready to do your father and you service at that day. Sir, she said, gramercy, and to-morn await ye be ready betimes and I shall be she that shall deliver you and take you your armour and your horse, shield and spear, and hereby within this ten mile, is an abbey of white monks, there I pray you that ye me abide, and thither shall I bring my father unto you. All this shall be done, said Sir Launcelot as I am true knight.

And so she departed, and came on the morn early, and found him ready; then she brought him out of twelve locks, and brought him unto his armour, and when he was clean armed, she brought him until his own horse, and lightly he saddled him and took a great spear in his hand and so rode forth, and said, Fair damosel, I shall not fail you, by the grace of God. And so he rode into a great forest all that day, and never could find no highway and so the night fell on him, and then was he ware in a slade, of a pavilion of red sendal. By my faith, said Sir Launcelot, in that pavilion will I lodge all this night, and so there he alighted down, and tied his horse to the pavilion, and there he unarmed him, and there he found a bed, and laid him therein and fell asleep sadly.

#### **CHAPTER V. How a knight found Sir Launcelot lying in his leman's bed, and how Sir Launcelot fought with the knight.**

THEN within an hour there came the knight to whom the pavilion ought, and he weened that his leman had lain in that bed, and so he laid him down beside Sir Launcelot, and took him in his arms and began to kiss him. And when Sir Launcelot felt a rough beard kissing him, he started out of the bed lightly, and the other knight after him, and either of them gat their swords in their hands, and out at the pavilion door went the knight of the pavilion, and Sir Launcelot followed him, and there by a little slake Sir Launcelot wounded him sore, nigh unto the death. And then he yielded him unto Sir Launcelot, and so he granted him, so that he would tell him why he came into the bed. Sir, said the knight, the pavilion is mine own, and there this night I had assigned my lady to have slept with me, and now I am likely to die of this wound. That me repenteth, said Launcelot, of your hurt, but I was adread of treason, for I was late beguiled, and therefore come on your way into your pavilion and take your rest, and as I suppose I shall staunch your blood. And so they went both into the pavilion, and anon Sir Launcelot staunched his blood.

Therewithal came the knight's lady, that was a passing fair lady, and when she espied that her lord Belleus was sore wounded, she cried out on Sir Launcelot, and made great dole out of measure. Peace, my lady and my love, said Belleus, for this knight is a good man, and a knight adventurous, and there he told her all the cause how he was wounded; And when that I yielded me unto him, he left me goodly and hath staunched my blood. Sir, said the lady, I require thee tell me what knight ye be, and what is your name? Fair lady, he said, my name is Sir Launcelot du Lake. So me thought ever by your speech, said the lady, for I have seen you oft or this, and I know you better than ye ween. But now an ye would promise me of your courtesy, for the harms that ye have done to me and my Lord Belleus, that when he cometh unto Arthur's court for to cause him to be made knight of the Round Table, for he is a passing good man of arms, and a mighty lord of lands of many out isles.

Fair lady, said Sir Launcelot, let him come unto the court the next high feast, and look that ye come with him, and I shall do my power, an ye prove you doughty of your hands, that ye shall have your desire. So thus within a while, as they thus talked, the night passed, and the day shone, and then Sir Launcelot armed him, and took his horse, and they taught him to the Abbey, and thither he rode within the space of two hours.

#### **CHAPTER VI. How Sir Launcelot was received of King Bagdemagus' daughter, and how he made his complaint to her father.**

AND soon as Sir Launcelot came within the abbey yard, the daughter of King Bagdemagus heard a great horse go on the pavement. And she then arose and yede unto a window, and there she saw Sir Launcelot, and anon she made men fast to take his horse from him and let lead him into a stable, and himself was led into a fair chamber, and unarmed him, and the lady sent him a long gown, and anon she came herself. And then she made Launcelot passing good cheer, and she said he was the knight in the world was most welcome to her. Then in all haste she sent for her father Bagdemagus that was within twelve mile of that Abbey, and afore even he came, with a fair fellowship of knights with him. And when the king was alighted off his horse he yode straight unto Sir Launcelot's chamber and there he found his daughter, and then the king embraced Sir Launcelot in his arms, and either made other good cheer.

Anon Sir Launcelot made his complaint unto the king how he was betrayed, and how his brother Sir Lionel was departed from him he wist not where, and how his daughter had delivered him out of prison; Therefore while I live I shall do her service and all her kindred. Then am I sure of your help, said the king, on Tuesday next coming. Yea, sir, said Sir Launcelot, I shall not fail you, for so I

have promised my lady your daughter. But, sir, what knights be they of my lord Arthur's that were with the King of Northgalis? And the king said it was Sir Mador de la Porte, and Sir Mordred and Sir Gahalantine that all for-fared my knights, for against them three I nor my knights might bear no strength. Sir, said Sir Launcelot, as I hear say that the tournament shall be here within this three mile of this abbey, ye shall send unto me three knights of yours, such as ye trust, and look that the three knights have all white shields, and I also, and no painture on the shields, and we four will come out of a little wood in midst of both parties, and we shall fall in the front of our enemies and grieve them that we may; and thus shall I not be known what knight I am.

So they took their rest that night, and this was on the Sunday, and so the king departed, and sent unto Sir Launcelot three knights with the four white shields. And on the Tuesday they lodged them in a little leaved wood beside there the tournament should be. And there were scaffolds and holes that lords and ladies might behold and to give the prize. Then came into the field the King of Northgalis with eight score helms. And then the three knights of Arthur's stood by themselves. Then came into the field King Bagdemagus with four score of helms. And then they feutred their spears, and came together with a great dash, and there were slain of knights at the first recounter twelve of King Bagdemagus' party, and six of the King of Northgalis' party, and King Bagdemagus' party was far set aback.

#### **CHAPTER VII. How Sir Launcelot behaved him in a tournament, and how he met with Sir Turquine leading Sir Gaheris.**

WITH that came Sir Launcelot du Lake, and he thrust in with his spear in the thickest of the press, and there he smote down with one spear five knights, and of four of them he brake their backs. And in that throng he smote down the King of Northgalis, and brake his thigh in that fall. All this doing of Sir Launcelot saw the three knights of Arthur's. Yonder is a shrewd guest, said Sir Mador de la Porte, therefore have here once at him. So they encountered, and Sir Launcelot bare him down horse and man, so that his shoulder went out of lith. Now befalleth it to me to joust, said Mordred, for Sir Mador hath a sore fall. Sir Launcelot was ware of him, and gat a great spear in his hand, and met him, and Sir Mordred brake a spear upon him, and Sir Launcelot gave him such a buffet that the arson of his saddle brake, and so he flew over his horse's tail, that his helm butted into the earth a foot and more, that nigh his neck was broken, and there he lay long in a swoon.

Then came in Sir Gahalantine with a great spear and Launcelot against him, with all their strength that they might drive, that both their spears to-brast even

to their hands, and then they flang out with their swords and gave many a grim stroke. Then was Sir Launcelot wroth out of measure, and then he smote Sir Gahalantine on the helm that his nose brast out on blood, and ears and mouth both, and therewith his head hung low. And therewith his horse ran away with him, and he fell down to the earth. Anon therewithal Sir Launcelot gat a great spear in his hand, and or ever that great spear brake, he bare down to the earth sixteen knights, some horse and man, and some the man and not the horse, and there was none but that he hit surely, he bare none arms that day. And then he gat another great spear, and smote down twelve knights, and the most part of them never throve after. And then the knights of the King of Northgalis would joust no more. And there the gree was given to King Bagdemagus.

So either party departed unto his own place, and Sir Launcelot rode forth with King Bagdemagus unto his castle, and there he had passing good cheer both with the king and with his daughter, and they proffered him great gifts. And on the morn he took his leave, and told the king that he would go and seek his brother Sir Lionel, that went from him when that he slept, so he took his horse, and betaught them all to God. And there he said unto the king's daughter, If ye have need any time of my service I pray you let me have knowledge, and I shall not fail you as I am true knight. And so Sir Launcelot departed, and by adventure he came into the same forest there he was taken sleeping. And in the midst of a highway he met a damosel riding on a white palfrey, and there either saluted other. Fair damosel, said Sir Launcelot, know ye in this country any adventures? Sir knight, said that damosel, here are adventures near hand, an thou durst prove them. Why should I not prove adventures? said Sir Launcelot for that cause come I hither. Well, said she, thou seemest well to be a good knight, and if thou dare meet with a good knight, I shall bring thee where is the best knight, and the mightiest that ever thou found, so thou wilt tell me what is thy name, and what knight thou art. Damosel, as for to tell thee my name I take no great force; truly my name is Sir Launcelot du Lake. Sir, thou beseemest well, here be adventures by that fall for thee, for hereby dwelleth a knight that will not be overmatched for no man I know but ye overmatch him, and his name is Sir Turquine. And, as I understand, he hath in his prison, of Arthur's court, good knights three score and four, that he hath won with his own hands. But when ye have done that journey ye shall promise me as ye are a true knight for to go with me, and to help me and other damosels that are distressed daily with a false knight. All your intent, damosel, and desire I will fulfil, so ye will bring me unto this knight. Now, fair knight, come on your way; and so she brought him unto the ford and the tree where hung the basin.

So Sir Launcelot let his horse drink, and then he beat on the basin with the

butt of his spear so hard with all his might till the bottom fell out, and long he did so, but he saw nothing. Then he rode endlong the gates of that manor nigh half-an-hour. And then was he ware of a great knight that drove an horse afore him, and overthwart the horse there lay an armed knight bound. And ever as they came near and near, Sir Launcelot thought he should know him. Then Sir Launcelot was ware that it was Sir Gaheris, Gawaine's brother, a knight of the Table Round. Now, fair damosel, said Sir Launcelot, I see yonder cometh a knight fast bounden that is a fellow of mine, and brother he is unto Sir Gawaine. And at the first beginning I promise you, by the leave of God, to rescue that knight; but if his master sit better in the saddle I shall deliver all the prisoners that he hath out of danger, for I am sure he hath two brethren of mine prisoners with him. By that time that either had seen other, they gripped their spears unto them. Now, fair knight, said Sir Launcelot, put that wounded knight off the horse, and let him rest awhile, and let us two prove our strengths; for as it is informed me, thou doest and hast done great despite and shame unto knights of the Round Table, and therefore now defend thee. An thou be of the Table Round, said Turquine, I defy thee and all thy fellowship. That is overmuch said, said Sir Launcelot.

#### **CHAPTER VIII. How Sir Launcelot and Sir Turquine fought together.**

AND then they put their spears in the rests, and came together with their horses as fast as they might run, and either smote other in midst of their shields, that both their horses' backs brast under them, and the knights were both stoned. And as soon as they might avoid their horses, they took their shields afore them, and drew out their swords, and came together eagerly, and either gave other many strong strokes, for there might neither shields nor harness hold their strokes. And so within a while they had both grimly wounds, and bled passing grievously. Thus they fared two hours or more trasing and rasing either other, where they might hit any bare place.

Then at the last they were breathless both, and stood leaning on their swords. Now fellow, said Sir Turquine, hold thy hand a while, and tell me what I shall ask thee. Say on. Then Turquine said, Thou art the biggest man that ever I met withal, and the best breathed, and like one knight that I hate above all other knights; so be it that thou be not he I will lightly accord with thee, and for thy love I will deliver all the prisoners that I have, that is three score and four, so thou wilt tell me thy name. And thou and I we will be fellows together, and never to fail thee while that I live. It is well said, said Sir Launcelot, but sithen it is so that I may have thy friendship, what knight is he that thou so hatest above all other? Faithfully, said Sir Turquine, his name is Sir Launcelot du Lake, for he

slew my brother, Sir Carados, at the dolorous tower, that was one of the best knights alive; and therefore him I except of all knights, for may I once meet with him, the one of us shall make an end of other, I make mine avow. And for Sir Launcelot's sake I have slain an hundred good knights, and as many I have maimed all utterly that they might never after help themselves, and many have died in prison, and yet have I three score and four, and all shall be delivered so thou wilt tell me thy name, so be it that thou be not Sir Launcelot.

Now, see I well, said Sir Launcelot, that such a man I might be, I might have peace, and such a man I might be, that there should be war mortal betwixt us. And now, sir knight, at thy request I will that thou wit and know that I am Launcelot du Lake, King Ban's son of Benwick, and very knight of the Table Round. And now I defy thee, and do thy best. Ah, said Turquine, Launcelot, thou art unto me most welcome that ever was knight, for we shall never depart till the one of us be dead. Then they hurtled together as two wild bulls rushing and lashing with their shields and swords, that sometime they fell both over their noses. Thus they fought still two hours and more, and never would have rest, and Sir Turquine gave Sir Launcelot many wounds that all the ground thereas they fought was all bespeckled with blood.

#### **CHAPTER IX. How Sir Turquine was slain, and how Sir Launcelot bade Sir Gaheris deliver all the prisoners.**

THEN at the last Sir Turquine waxed faint, and gave somewhat aback, and bare his shield low for weariness. That espied Sir Launcelot, and leapt upon him fiercely and gat him by the beaver of his helmet, and plucked him down on his knees, and anon he raced off his helm, and smote his neck in sunder. And when Sir Launcelot had done this, he yode unto the damosel and said, Damosel, I am ready to go with you where ye will have me, but I have no horse. Fair sir, said she, take this wounded knight's horse and send him into this manor, and command him to deliver all the prisoners. So Sir Launcelot went unto Gaheris, and prayed him not to be aggrieved for to lend him his horse. Nay, fair lord, said Gaheris, I will that ye take my horse at your own commandment, for ye have both saved me and my horse, and this day I say ye are the best knight in the world, for ye have slain this day in my sight the mightiest man and the best knight except you that ever I saw, and, fair sir, said Gaheris, I pray you tell me your name. Sir, my name is Sir Launcelot du Lake, that ought to help you of right for King Arthur's sake, and in especial for my lord Sir Gawaine's sake, your own dear brother; and when that ye come within yonder manor, I am sure ye shall find there many knights of the Round Table, for I have seen many of their shields that I know on yonder tree. There is Kay's shield, and Sir Brandel's



shield, and Sir Marhaus' shield, and Sir Galind's shield, and Sir Brian de Listnois' shield, and Sir Aliduke's shield, with many more that I am not now advised of, and also my two brethren's shields, Sir Ector de Maris and Sir Lionel; wherefore I pray you greet them all from me, and say that I bid them take such stuff there as they find, and that in any wise my brethren go unto the court and abide me there till that I come, for by the feast of Pentecost I cast me to be there, for as at this time I must ride with this damosel for to save my promise.

And so he departed from Gaheris, and Gaheris yede in to the manor, and there he found a yeoman porter keeping there many keys. Anon withal Sir Gaheris threw the porter unto the ground and took the keys from him, and hastily he opened the prison door, and there he let out all the prisoners, and every man loosed other of their bonds. And when they saw Sir Gaheris, all they thanked him, for they weened that he was wounded. Not so, said Gaheris, it was Launcelot that slew him worshipfully with his own hands. I saw it with mine own eyes. And he greeteth you all well, and prayeth you to haste you to the court; and as unto Sir Lionel and Ector de Maris he prayeth you to abide him at the court. That shall we not do, says his brethren, we will find him an we may live. So shall I, said Sir Kay, find him or I come at the court, as I am true knight.

Then all those knights sought the house thereas the armour was, and then they armed them, and every knight found his own horse, and all that ever longed unto him. And when this was done, there came a forester with four horses laden with fat venison. Anon, Sir Kay said, Here is good meat for us for one meal, for we had not many a day no good repast. And so that venison was roasted, baken, and sodden, and so after supper some abode there all night, but Sir Lionel and Ector de Maris and Sir Kay rode after Sir Launcelot to find him if they might.

### **CHAPTER X. How Sir Launcelot rode with a damosel and slew a knight that distressed all ladies and also a villain that kept a bridge.**

NOW turn we unto Sir Launcelot, that rode with the damosel in a fair highway. Sir, said the damosel, here by this way haunteth a knight that distressed all ladies and gentlewomen, and at the least he robbeth them or lieth by them. What, said Sir Launcelot, is he a thief and a knight and a ravisher of women? he doth shame unto the order of knighthood, and contrary unto his oath; it is pity that he liveth. But, fair damosel, ye shall ride on afore, yourself, and I will keep myself in covert, and if that he trouble you or distress you I shall be your rescue and learn him to be ruled as a knight.

So the maid rode on by the way a soft ambling pace, and within a while came out that knight on horseback out of the wood, and his page with him, and there he put the damosel from her horse, and then she cried. With that came

Launcelot as fast as he might till he came to that knight, saying, O thou false knight and traitor unto knighthood, who did learn thee to distress ladies and gentlewomen? When the knight saw Sir Launcelot thus rebuking him he answered not, but drew his sword and rode unto Sir Launcelot, and Sir Launcelot threw his spear from him, and drew out his sword, and struck him such a buffet on the helmet that he clave his head and neck unto the throat. Now hast thou thy payment that long thou hast deserved! That is truth, said the damosel, for like as Sir Turquine watched to destroy knights, so did this knight attend to destroy and distress ladies, damosels, and gentlewomen, and his name was Sir Peris de Forest Savage. Now, damosel, said Sir Launcelot, will ye any more service of me? Nay, sir, she said, at this time, but almighty Jesu preserve you wheresomever ye ride or go, for the curteist knight thou art, and meekest unto all ladies and gentlewomen, that now liveth. But one thing, sir knight, methinketh ye lack, ye that are a knight wifeless, that he will not love some maiden or gentlewoman, for I could never hear say that ever ye loved any of no manner degree, and that is great pity; but it is noised that ye love Queen Guenever, and that she hath ordained by enchantment that ye shall never love none other but her, nor none other damosel nor lady shall rejoice you; wherefore many in this land, of high estate and low, make great sorrow.

Fair damosel, said Sir Launcelot, I may not warn people to speak of me what it pleaseth them; but for to be a wedded man, I think it not; for then I must couch with her, and leave arms and tournaments, battles, and adventures; and as for to say for to take my pleasaunce with paramours, that will I refuse in principal for dread of God; for knights that be adventurous or lecherous shall not be happy nor fortunate unto the wars, for other they shall be overcome with a simpler knight than they be themselves, other else they shall by unhap and their cursedness slay better men than they be themselves. And so who that useth paramours shall be unhappy, and all thing is unhappy that is about them.

And so Sir Launcelot and she departed. And then he rode in a deep forest two days and more, and had strait lodging. So on the third day he rode over a long bridge, and there stert upon him suddenly a passing foul churl, and he smote his horse on the nose that he turned about, and asked him why he rode over that bridge without his licence. Why should I not ride this way? said Sir Launcelot, I may not ride beside. Thou shalt not choose, said the churl, and lashed at him with a great club shod with iron. Then Sir Launcelot drew his sword and put the stroke aback, and clave his head unto the paps. At the end of the bridge was a fair village, and all the people, men and women, cried on Sir Launcelot, and said, A worse deed didst thou never for thyself, for thou hast slain the chief porter of our castle. Sir Launcelot let them say what they would,

and straight he went into the castle; and when he came into the castle he alighted, and tied his horse to a ring on the wall and there he saw a fair green court, and thither he dressed him, for there him thought was a fair place to fight in. So he looked about, and saw much people in doors and windows that said, Fair knight, thou art unhappy.

### **CHAPTER XI. How Sir Launcelot slew two giants, and made a castle free.**

ANON withal came there upon him two great giants, well armed all save the heads, with two horrible clubs in their hands. Sir Launcelot put his shield afore him and put the stroke away of the one giant, and with his sword he clave his head asunder. When his fellow saw that, he ran away as he were wood, for fear of the horrible strokes, and Launcelot after him with all his might, and smote him on the shoulder, and clave him to the navel. Then Sir Launcelot went into the hall, and there came afore him three score ladies and damosels, and all kneeled unto him, and thanked God and him of their deliverance; For sir, said they, the most party of us have been here this seven year their prisoners, and we have worked all manner of silk works for our meat, and we are all great gentlewomen born; and blessed be the time, knight, that ever thou be born, for thou hast done the most worship that ever did knight in this world, that will we bear record, and we all pray you to tell us your name, that we may tell our friends who delivered us out of prison. Fair damosel, he said, my name is Sir Launcelot du Lake. Ah, sir, said they all, well mayest thou be he, for else save yourself, as we deemed, there might never knight have the better of these two giants; for many fair knights have assayed it, and here have ended, and many times have we wished after you, and these two giants dread never knight but you. Now may ye say, said Sir Launcelot, unto your friends how and who hath delivered you, and greet them all from me, and if that I come in any of your marches, show me such cheer as ye have cause, and what treasure that there in this castle is I give it you for a reward for your grievance, and the lord that is owner of this castle I would he received it as is right. Fair sir, said they, the name of this castle is Tintagil, and a duke ought it sometime that had wedded fair Igraine, and after wedded her Uther Pendragon, and gat on her Arthur. Well, said Sir Launcelot, I understand to whom this castle longeth; and so he departed from them, and betaught them unto God.

And then he mounted upon his horse, and rode into many strange and wild countries, and through many waters and valleys, and evil was he lodged. And at the last by fortune him happened, against a night, to come to a fair courtelage, and therein he found an old gentlewoman that lodged him with good will, and

there he had good cheer for him and his horse. And when time was, his host brought him into a fair garret, over the gate, to his bed. There Sir Launcelot unarmed him, and set his harness by him, and went to bed, and anon he fell asleep. So, soon after, there came one on horseback, and knocked at the gate in great haste, and when Sir Launcelot heard this, he arose up and looked out at the window, and saw by the moonlight three knights came riding after that one man, and all three lashed on him at once with swords, and that one knight turned on them knightly again, and defended him. Truly, said Sir Launcelot, yonder one knight shall I help, for it were shame for me to see three knights on one, and if he be slain I am partner of his death; and therewith he took his harness, and went out at a window by a sheet down to the four knights, and then Sir Launcelot said on high, Turn you knights unto me, and leave your fighting with that knight. And then they all three left Sir Kay, and turned unto Sir Launcelot, and there began great battle, for they alighted all three, and struck many great strokes at Sir Launcelot, and assailed him on every side. Then Sir Kay dressed him for to have holpen Sir Launcelot. Nay, sir, said he, I will none of your help; therefore as ye will have my help, let me alone with them. Sir Kay, for the pleasure of the knight, suffered him for to do his will, and so stood aside. And then anon within six strokes, Sir Launcelot had stricken them to the earth.

And then they all three cried: Sir knight, we yield us unto you as a man of might makeless. As to that, said Sir Launcelot, I will not take your yielding unto me. But so that ye will yield you unto Sir Kay the Seneschal, on that covenant I will save your lives, and else not. Fair knight, said they, that were we loath to do; for as for Sir Kay, we chased him hither, and had overcome him had not ye been, therefore to yield us unto him it were no reason. Well, as to that, said Launcelot, advise you well, for ye may choose whether ye will die or live, for an ye be yolden it shall be unto Sir Kay. Fair knight, then they said, in saving of our lives we will do as thou commandest us. Then shall ye, said Sir Launcelot, on Whitsunday next coming, go unto the court of King Arthur, and there shall ye yield you unto Queen Guenever, and put you all three in her grace and mercy, and say that Sir Kay sent you thither to be her prisoners. Sir, they said, it shall be done by the faith of our bodies, an we be living, and there they swore every knight upon his sword. And so Sir Launcelot suffered them so to depart. And then Sir Launcelot knocked at the gate with the pommel of his sword, and with that came his host, and in they entered Sir Kay and he. Sir, said his host, I weened ye had been in your bed. So I was, said Sir Launcelot, but I rose and leapt out at my window for to help an old fellow of mine. And so when they came nigh the light, Sir Kay knew well that it was Sir Launcelot, and therewith he kneeled down and thanked him of all his kindness that he had holpen him

twice from the death. Sir, he said, I have nothing done but that me ought for to do, and ye are welcome, and here shall ye repose you and take your rest.

So when Sir Kay was unarmed, he asked after meat; so there was meat fetched him, and he ate strongly. And when he had supped they went to their beds and were lodged together in one bed. On the morn Sir Launcelot arose early, and left Sir Kay sleeping, and Sir Launcelot took Sir Kay's armour and his shield, and armed him, and so he went to the stable, and took his horse, and took his leave of his host, and so he departed. Then soon after arose Sir Kay and missed Sir Launcelot. And then he espied that he had his armour and his horse. Now by my faith I know well that he will grieve some of the court of King Arthur; for on him knights will be bold, and deem that it is I, and that will beguile them. And because of his armour and shield I am sure I shall ride in peace. And then soon after departed Sir Kay and thanked his host.

## **CHAPTER XII. How Sir Launcelot rode disguised in Sir Kay's harness, and how he smote down a knight.**

NOW turn we unto Sir Launcelot that had ridden long in a great forest, and at the last he came into a low country, full of fair rivers and meadows. And afore him he saw a long bridge, and three pavilions stood thereon, of silk and sendal of divers hue. And without the pavilions hung three white shields on truncheons of spears, and great long spears stood upright by the pavilions, and at every pavilion's door stood three fresh squires, and so Sir Launcelot passed by them and spake no word. When he was passed the three knights said them that it was the proud Kay; He weeneth no knight so good as he, and the contrary is oftime proved. By my faith, said one of the knights, his name was Sir Gaunter, I will ride after him and assay him for all his pride, and ye may behold how that I speed. So this knight, Sir Gaunter, armed him, and hung his shield upon his shoulder, and mounted upon a great horse, and gat his spear in his hand, and walloped after Sir Launcelot. And when he came nigh him, he cried, Abide, thou proud knight Sir Kay, for thou shalt not pass quit. So Sir Launcelot turned him, and either feutred their spears, and came together with all their mights, and Sir Gaunter's spear brake, but Sir Launcelot smote him down horse and man. And when Sir Gaunter was at the earth his brethren said each one to other, Yonder knight is not Sir Kay, for he is bigger than he. I dare lay my head, said Sir Gilmere, yonder knight hath slain Sir Kay and hath taken his horse and his harness. Whether it be so or no, said Sir Raynold, the third brother, let us now go mount upon our horses and rescue our brother Sir Gaunter, upon pain of death. We all shall have work enough to match that knight, for ever meseemeth by his person it is Sir Launcelot, or Sir Tristram, or Sir Pelleas, the good knight.

Then anon they took their horses and overtook Sir Launcelot, and Sir Gilmere put forth his spear, and ran to Sir Launcelot, and Sir Launcelot smote him down that he lay in a swoon. Sir knight, said Sir Raynold, thou art a strong man, and as I suppose thou hast slain my two brethren, for the which raseth my heart sore against thee, and if I might with my worship I would not have ado with you, but needs I must take part as they do, and therefore, knight, he said, keep thyself. And so they hurtled together with all their mights, and all to-shivered both their spears. And then they drew their swords and lashed together eagerly. Anon therewith arose Sir Gaunter, and came unto his brother Sir Gilmere, and bade him, Arise, and help we our brother Sir Raynold, that yonder marvellously matched yonder good knight. Therewithal, they leapt on their horses and hurtled unto Sir Launcelot.

And when he saw them come he smote a sore stroke unto Sir Raynold, that he fell off his horse to the ground, and then he struck to the other two brethren, and at two strokes he struck them down to the earth. With that Sir Raynold began to start up with his head all bloody, and came straight unto Sir Launcelot. Now let be, said Sir Launcelot, I was not far from thee when thou wert made knight, Sir Raynold, and also I know thou art a good knight, and loath I were to slay thee. Gramercy, said Sir Raynold, as for your goodness; and I dare say as for me and my brethren, we will not be loath to yield us unto you, with that we knew your name, for well we know ye are not Sir Kay. As for that be it as it be may, for ye shall yield you unto dame Guenever, and look that ye be with her on Whitsunday, and yield you unto her as prisoners, and say that Sir Kay sent you unto her. Then they swore it should be done, and so passed forth Sir Launcelot, and each one of the brethren help other as well as they might.

### **CHAPTER XIII. How Sir Launcelot jousted against four knights of the Round Table and overthrew them.**

SO Sir Launcelot rode into a deep forest, and thereby in a slade, he saw four knights hoving under an oak, and they were of Arthur's court, one was Sir Sagramour le Desirous, and Ector de Maris, and Sir Gawaine, and Sir Uwaine. Anon as these four knights had espied Sir Launcelot, they weened by his arms it had been Sir Kay. Now by my faith, said Sir Sagramour, I will prove Sir Kay's might, and gat his spear in his hand, and came toward Sir Launcelot. Therewith Sir Launcelot was ware and knew him well, and feutred his spear against him, and smote Sir Sagramour so sore that horse and man fell both to the earth. Lo, my fellows, said he, yonder ye may see what a buffet he hath; that knight is much bigger than ever was Sir Kay. Now shall ye see what I may do to him. So Sir Ector gat his spear in his hand and walloped toward Sir Launcelot, and Sir

Launcelot smote him through the shield and shoulder, that man and horse went to the earth, and ever his spear held.

By my faith, said Sir Uwaine, yonder is a strong knight, and I am sure he hath slain Sir Kay; and I see by his great strength it will be hard to match him. And therewithal, Sir Uwaine gat his spear in his hand and rode toward Sir Launcelot, and Sir Launcelot knew him well, and so he met him on the plain, and gave him such a buffet that he was astonied, that long he wist not where he was. Now see I well, said Sir Gawaine, I must encounter with that knight. Then he dressed his shield and gat a good spear in his hand, and Sir Launcelot knew him well; and then they let run their horses with all their mights, and either knight smote other in midst of the shield. But Sir Gawaine's spear to-brast, and Sir Launcelot charged so sore upon him that his horse reversed up-so-down. And much sorrow had Sir Gawaine to avoid his horse, and so Sir Launcelot passed on a pace and smiled, and said, God give him joy that this spear made, for there came never a better in my hand.

Then the four knights went each one to other and comforted each other. What say ye by this guest? said Sir Gawaine, that one spear hath felled us all four. We commend him unto the devil, they said all, for he is a man of great might. Ye may well say it, said Sir Gawaine, that he is a man of might, for I dare lay my head it is Sir Launcelot, I know it by his riding. Let him go, said Sir Gawaine, for when we come to the court then shall we wit; and then had they much sorrow to get their horses again.

#### **CHAPTER XIV. How Sir Launcelot followed a brachet into a castle, where he found a dead knight, and how he after was required of a damosel to heal her**

brother.

NOW leave we there and speak of Sir Launcelot that rode a great while in a deep forest, where he saw a black brachet, seeking in manner as it had been in the feute of an hurt deer. And therewith he rode after the brachet, and he saw lie on the ground a large feute of blood. And then Sir Launcelot rode after. And ever the brachet looked behind her, and so she went through a great marsh, and ever Sir Launcelot followed. And then was he ware of an old manor, and thither ran the brachet, and so over the bridge. So Sir Launcelot rode over that bridge that was old and feeble; and when he came in midst of a great hall, there he saw lie a dead knight that was a seemly man, and that brachet licked his wounds. And therewithal came out a lady weeping and wringing her hands; and then she said, O knight, too much sorrow hast thou brought me. Why say ye so? said Sir Launcelot, I did never this knight no harm, for hither by feute of blood this

brachet brought me; and therefore, fair lady, be not displeased with me, for I am full sore aggrieved of your grievance. Truly, sir, she said, I trow it be not ye that hath slain my husband, for he that did that deed is sore wounded, and he is never likely to recover, that shall I ensure him. What was your husband's name? said Sir Launcelot. Sir, said she, his name was called Sir Gilbert the Bastard, one of the best knights of the world, and he that hath slain him I know not his name. Now God send you better comfort, said Sir Launcelot; and so he departed and went into the forest again, and there he met with a damosel, the which knew him well, and she said aloud, Well be ye found, my lord; and now I require thee, on thy knighthood, help my brother that is sore wounded, and never stinteth bleeding; for this day he fought with Sir Gilbert the Bastard and slew him in plain battle, and there was my brother sore wounded, and there is a lady a sorceress that dwelleth in a castle here beside, and this day she told me my brother's wounds should never be whole till I could find a knight that would go into the Chapel Perilous, and there he should find a sword and a bloody cloth that the wounded knight was lapped in, and a piece of that cloth and sword should heal my brother's wounds, so that his wounds were searched with the sword and the cloth. This is a marvellous thing, said Sir Launcelot, but what is your brother's name? Sir, she said, his name was Sir Meliot de Logres. That me repenteth, said Sir Launcelot, for he is a fellow of the Table Round, and to his help I will do my power. Then, sir, said she, follow even this highway, and it will bring you unto the Chapel Perilous; and here I shall abide till God send you here again, and, but you speed, I know no knight living that may achieve that adventure.

#### **CHAPTER XV. How Sir Launcelot came into the Chapel Perilous and gat there of a dead corpse a piece of the cloth and a sword.**

RIGHT so Sir Launcelot departed, and when he came unto the Chapel Perilous he alighted down, and tied his horse unto a little gate. And as soon as he was within the churchyard he saw on the front of the chapel many fair rich shields turned up-so-down, and many of the shields Sir Launcelot had seen knights bear beforehand. With that he saw by him there stand a thirty great knights, more by a yard than any man that ever he had seen, and all those grinned and gnashed at Sir Launcelot. And when he saw their countenance he dreaded him sore, and so put his shield afore him, and took his sword ready in his hand ready unto battle, and they were all armed in black harness ready with their shields and their swords drawn. And when Sir Launcelot would have gone throughout them, they scattered on every side of him, and gave him the way, and therewith he waxed all bold, and entered into the chapel, and then he saw no



light but a dim lamp burning, and then was he ware of a corpse hilled with a cloth of silk. Then Sir Launcelot stooped down, and cut a piece away of that cloth, and then it fared under him as the earth had quaked a little; therewithal he feared. And then he saw a fair sword lie by the dead knight, and that he gat in his hand and hied him out of the chapel.

Anon as ever he was in the chapel yard all the knights spake to him with a grimly voice, and said, Knight, Sir Launcelot, lay that sword from thee or else thou shalt die. Whether that I live or die, said Sir Launcelot, with no great word get ye it again, therefore fight for it an ye list. Then right so he passed throughout them, and beyond the chapel yard there met him a fair damosel, and said, Sir Launcelot, leave that sword behind thee, or thou wilt die for it. I leave it not, said Sir Launcelot, for no treaties. No, said she, an thou didst leave that sword, Queen Guenever should thou never see. Then were I a fool an I would leave this sword, said Launcelot. Now, gentle knight, said the damosel, I require thee to kiss me but once. Nay, said Sir Launcelot, that God me forbid. Well, sir, said she, an thou hadst kissed me thy life days had been done, but now, alas, she said, I have lost all my labour, for I ordained this chapel for thy sake, and for Sir Gawaine. And once I had Sir Gawaine within me, and at that time he fought with that knight that lieth there dead in yonder chapel, Sir Gilbert the Bastard; and at that time he smote the left hand off of Sir Gilbert the Bastard. And, Sir Launcelot, now I tell thee, I have loved thee this seven year, but there may no woman have thy love but Queen Guenever. But sithen I may not rejoice thee to have thy body alive, I had kept no more joy in this world but to have thy body dead. Then would I have balmed it and served it, and so have kept it my life days, and daily I should have clipped thee, and kissed thee, in despite of Queen Guenever. Ye say well, said Sir Launcelot, Jesu preserve me from your subtile crafts. And therewithal he took his horse and so departed from her. And as the book saith, when Sir Launcelot was departed she took such sorrow that she died within a fourteen night, and her name was Hellawes the sorceress, Lady of the Castle Nigramous.

Anon Sir Launcelot met with the damosel, Sir Meliot's sister. And when she saw him she clapped her hands, and wept for joy. And then they rode unto a castle thereby where lay Sir Meliot. And anon as Sir Launcelot saw him he knew him, but he was passing pale, as the earth, for bleeding. When Sir Meliot saw Sir Launcelot he kneeled upon his knees and cried on high: O lord Sir Launcelot, help me! Anon Sir Launcelot leapt unto him and touched his wounds with Sir Gilbert's sword. And then he wiped his wounds with a part of the bloody cloth that Sir Gilbert was wrapped in, and anon an wholer man in his life was he never. And then there was great joy between them, and they made Sir Launcelot

all the cheer that they might, and so on the morn Sir Launcelot took his leave, and bade Sir Meliot hie him to the court of my lord Arthur, for it draweth nigh to the Feast of Pentecost, and there by the grace of God ye shall find me. And therewith they departed.

**CHAPTER XVI. How Sir Launcelot at the request of a lady recovered a falcon, by which he was deceived.**

AND so Sir Launcelot rode through many strange countries, over marshes and valleys, till by fortune he came to a fair castle, and as he passed beyond the castle him thought he heard two bells ring. And then was he ware of a falcon came flying over his head toward an high elm, and long lunes about her feet, and as she flew unto the elm to take her perch the lunes over-cast about a bough. And when she would have taken her flight she hung by the legs fast; and Sir Launcelot saw how she hung, and beheld the fair falcon perigot, and he was sorry for her.

The meanwhile came a lady out of the castle and cried on high: O Launcelot, Launcelot, as thou art flower of all knights, help me to get my hawk, for an my hawk be lost my lord will destroy me; for I kept the hawk and she slipped from me, and if my lord my husband wit it he is so hasty that he will slay me. What is your lord's name? said Sir Launcelot. Sir, she said, his name is Sir Phelot, a knight that longeth unto the King of Northgalis. Well, fair lady, since that ye know my name, and require me of knighthood to help you, I will do what I may to get your hawk, and yet God knoweth I am an ill climber, and the tree is passing high, and few boughs to help me withal. And therewith Sir Launcelot alighted, and tied his horse to the same tree, and prayed the lady to unarm him. And so when he was unarmed, he put off all his clothes unto his shirt and breech, and with might and force he clomb up to the falcon, and tied the lines to a great rotten boyshe, and threw the hawk down and it withal.

Anon the lady gat the hawk in her hand; and therewithal came out Sir Phelot out of the groves suddenly, that was her husband, all armed and with his naked sword in his hand, and said: O knight Launcelot, now have I found thee as I would, and stood at the bole of the tree to slay him. Ah, lady, said Sir Launcelot, why have ye betrayed me? She hath done, said Sir Phelot, but as I commanded her, and therefore there nis none other boot but thine hour is come that thou must die. That were shame unto thee, said Sir Launcelot, thou an armed knight to slay a naked man by treason. Thou gettest none other grace, said Sir Phelot, and therefore help thyself an thou canst. Truly, said Sir Launcelot, that shall be thy shame, but since thou wilt do none other, take mine harness with thee, and hang my sword upon a bough that I may get it, and then do thy best to slay me an thou

canst. Nay, nay, said Sir Phelot, for I know thee better than thou weenest, therefore thou gettest no weapon, an I may keep you therefrom. Alas, said Sir Launcelot, that ever a knight should die weaponless. And therewith he waited above him and under him, and over his head he saw a rownsepyk, a big bough leafless, and therewith he brake it off by the body. And then he came lower and awaited how his own horse stood, and suddenly he leapt on the further side of the horse, fro-ward the knight. And then Sir Phelot lashed at him eagerly, weening to have slain him. But Sir Launcelot put away the stroke with the rownsepyk, and therewith he smote him on the one side of the head, that he fell down in a swoon to the ground. So then Sir Launcelot took his sword out of his hand, and struck his neck from the body. Then cried the lady, Alas! why hast thou slain my husband? I am not causer, said Sir Launcelot, for with falsehood ye would have had slain me with treason, and now it is fallen on you both. And then she swooned as though she would die. And therewithal Sir Launcelot gat all his armour as well as he might, and put it upon him for dread of more resort, for he dreaded that the knight's castle was so nigh. And so, as soon as he might, he took his horse and departed, and thanked God that he had escaped that adventure.

#### **CHAPTER XVII. How Sir Launcelot overtook a knight which chased his wife to have slain her, and how he said to him.**

SO Sir Launcelot rode many wild ways, throughout marches and many wild ways. And as he rode in a valley he saw a knight chasing a lady, with a naked sword, to have slain her. And by fortune as this knight should have slain this lady, she cried on Sir Launcelot and prayed him to rescue her. When Sir Launcelot saw that mischief, he took his horse and rode between them, saying, Knight, fie for shame, why wilt thou slay this lady? thou dost shame unto thee and all knights. What hast thou to do betwixt me and my wife? said the knight. I will slay her maugre thy head. That shall ye not, said Sir Launcelot, for rather we two will have ado together. Sir Launcelot, said the knight, thou dost not thy part, for this lady hath betrayed me. It is not so, said the lady, truly he saith wrong on me. And for because I love and cherish my cousin germain, he is jealous betwixt him and me; and as I shall answer to God there was never sin betwixt us. But, sir, said the lady, as thou art called the worshipfullest knight of the world, I require thee of true knighthood, keep me and save me. For whatsomever ye say he will slay me, for he is without mercy. Have ye no doubt, said Launcelot, it shall not lie in his power. Sir, said the knight, in your sight I will be ruled as ye will have me. And so Sir Launcelot rode on the one side and she on the other: he had not ridden but a while, but the knight bade Sir Launcelot turn him and look

behind him, and said, Sir, yonder come men of arms after us riding. And so Sir Launcelot turned him and thought no treason, and therewith was the knight and the lady on one side, and suddenly he swapped off his lady's head.

And when Sir Launcelot had espied him what he had done, he said, and called him, Traitor, thou hast shamed me for ever. And suddenly Sir Launcelot alighted off his horse, and pulled out his sword to slay him, and therewithal he fell flat to the earth, and gripped Sir Launcelot by the thighs, and cried mercy. Fie on thee, said Sir Launcelot, thou shameful knight, thou mayest have no mercy, and therefore arise and fight with me. Nay, said the knight, I will never arise till ye grant me mercy. Now will I proffer thee fair, said Launcelot, I will unarm me unto my shirt, and I will have nothing upon me but my shirt, and my sword and my hand. And if thou canst slay me, quit be thou for ever. Nay, sir, said Pedivere, that will I never. Well, said Sir Launcelot, take this lady and the head, and bear it upon thee, and here shalt thou swear upon my sword, to bear it always upon thy back, and never to rest till thou come to Queen Guenever. Sir, said he, that will I do, by the faith of my body. Now, said Launcelot, tell me what is your name? Sir, my name is Pedivere. In a shameful hour wert thou born, said Launcelot.

So Pedivere departed with the dead lady and the head, and found the queen with King Arthur at Winchester, and there he told all the truth. Sir knight, said the queen, this is an horrible deed and a shameful, and a great rebuke unto Sir Launcelot; but notwithstanding his worship is not known in many divers countries; but this shall I give you in penance, make ye as good shift as ye can, ye shall bear this lady with you on horseback unto the Pope of Rome, and of him receive your penance for your foul deeds; and ye shall never rest one night whereas ye do another; an ye go to any bed the dead body shall lie with you. This oath there he made, and so departed. And as it telleth in the French book, when he came to Rome, the Pope bade him go again unto Queen Guenever, and in Rome was his lady buried by the Pope's commandment. And after this Sir Pedivere fell to great goodness, and was an holy man and an hermit.

### **CHAPTER XVIII. How Sir Launcelot came to King Arthur's Court, and how there were recounted all his noble feats and acts.**

NOW turn we unto Sir Launcelot du Lake, that came home two days afore the Feast of Pentecost; and the king and all the court were passing fain of his coming. And when Sir Gawaine, Sir Uwaine, Sir Sagamore, Sir Ector de Maris, saw Sir Launcelot in Kay's armour, then they wist well it was he that smote them down all with one spear. Then there was laughing and smiling among them. And ever now and now came all the knights home that Sir Turquine had prisoners,

and they all honoured and worshipped Sir Launcelot.

When Sir Gaheris heard them speak, he said, I saw all the battle from the beginning to the ending, and there he told King Arthur all how it was, and how Sir Turquine was the strongest knight that ever he saw except Sir Launcelot: there were many knights bare him record, nigh three score. Then Sir Kay told the king how Sir Launcelot had rescued him when he should have been slain, and how he made the knights yield them to me, and not to him. And there they were all three, and bare record. And by Jesu, said Sir Kay, because Sir Launcelot took my harness and left me his I rode in good peace, and no man would have ado with me.

Anon therewithal there came the three knights that fought with Sir Launcelot at the long bridge. And there they yielded them unto Sir Kay, and Sir Kay forsook them and said he fought never with them. But I shall ease your heart, said Sir Kay, yonder is Sir Launcelot that overcame you. When they wist that they were glad. And then Sir Meliot de Logres came home, and told the king how Sir Launcelot had saved him from the death. And all his deeds were known, how four queens, sorceresses, had him in prison, and how he was delivered by King Bagdemagus' daughter. Also there were told all the great deeds of arms that Sir Launcelot did betwixt the two kings, that is for to say the King of Northgalis and King Bagdemagus. All the truth Sir Gahalantine did tell, and Sir Mador de la Porte and Sir Mordred, for they were at that same tournament. Then came in the lady that knew Sir Launcelot when that he wounded Sir Belleus at the pavilion. And there, at request of Sir Launcelot, Sir Belleus was made knight of the Round Table. And so at that time Sir Launcelot had the greatest name of any knight of the world, and most he was honoured of high and low.

Explicit the noble tale of Sir Launcelot du Lake, which is the vi. book. Here followeth the tale of Sir Gareth of Orkney that was called Beaumains by Sir Kay, and is the seventh book.

## BOOK VII

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### **CHAPTER I. How Beaumains came to King Arthur's Court and demanded three petitions of King Arthur.**

WHEN Arthur held his Round Table most plenour, it fortunéd that he commanded that the high feast of Pentecost should be holden at a city and a castle, the which in those days was called Kynke Kenadonne, upon the sands that marched nigh Wales. So ever the king had a custom that at the feast of Pentecost in especial, afore other feasts in the year, he would not go that day to meat until he had heard or seen of a great marvel. And for that custom all manner of strange adventures came before Arthur as at that feast before all other feasts. And so Sir Gawaine, a little to-fore noon of the day of Pentecost, espied at a window three men upon horseback, and a dwarf on foot, and so the three men alighted, and the dwarf kept their horses, and one of the three men was higher than the other twain by a foot and an half. Then Sir Gawaine went unto the king and said, Sir, go to your meat, for here at the hand come strange adventures. So Arthur went unto his meat with many other kings. And there were all the knights of the Round Table, [save] only those that were prisoners or slain at a recounter. Then at the high feast evermore they should be fulfilled the whole number of an hundred and fifty, for then was the Round Table fully accomplished.

Right so came into the hall two men well beseen and richly, and upon their shoulders there leaned the goodliest young man and the fairest that ever they all saw, and he was large and long, and broad in the shoulders, and well visaged, and the fairest and the largest handed that ever man saw, but he fared as though he might not go nor bear himself but if he leaned upon their shoulders. Anon as Arthur saw him there was made peace and room, and right so they yede with him unto the high dais, without saying of any words. Then this much young man pulled him aback, and easily stretched up straight, saying, King Arthur, God you bless and all your fair fellowship, and in especial the fellowship of the Table Round. And for this cause I am come hither, to pray you and require you to give me three gifts, and they shall not be unreasonably asked, but that ye may worshipfully and honourably grant them me, and to you no great hurt nor loss.

And the first don and gift I will ask now, and the other two gifts I will ask this day twelvemonth, wheresomever ye hold your high feast. Now ask, said Arthur, and ye shall have your asking.

Now, sir, this is my petition for this feast, that ye will give me meat and drink sufficiently for this twelvemonth, and at that day I will ask mine other two gifts.

My fair son, said Arthur, ask better, I counsel thee, for this is but a simple asking; for my heart giveth me to thee greatly, that thou art come of men of worship, and greatly my conceit faileth me but thou shalt prove a man of right great worship. Sir, he said, thereof be as it be may, I have asked that I will ask. Well, said the king, ye shall have meat and drink enough; I never defended that none, neither my friend nor my foe. But what is thy name I would wit? I cannot tell you, said he. That is marvel, said the king, that thou knowest not thy name, and thou art the goodliest young man that ever I saw. Then the king betook him to Sir Kay the steward, and charged him that he should give him of all manner of meats and drinks of the best, and also that he had all manner of finding as though he were a lord's son. That shall little need, said Sir Kay, to do such cost upon him; for I dare undertake he is a villain born, and never will make man, for an he had come of gentlemen he would have asked of you horse and armour, but such as he is, so he asketh. And sithen he hath no name, I shall give him a name that shall be Beaumains, that is Fair-hands, and into the kitchen I shall bring him, and there he shall have fat brose every day, that he shall be as fat by the twelvemonths' end as a pork hog. Right so the two men departed and beleft him to Sir Kay, that scorned him and mocked him.

## **CHAPTER II. How Sir Launcelot and Sir Gawaine were wroth because Sir Kay mocked Beaumains, and of a damosel which desired a knight to fight for a**

lady.

THEREAT was Sir Gawaine wroth, and in especial Sir Launcelot bade Sir Kay leave his mocking, for I dare lay my head he shall prove a man of great worship. Let be said Sir Kay, it may not be by no reason, for as he is, so he hath asked. Beware, said Sir Launcelot, so ye gave the good knight Brewnor, Sir Dinadan's brother, a name, and ye called him La Cote Male Taile, and that turned you to anger afterward. As for that, said Sir Kay, this shall never prove none such. For Sir Brewnor desired ever worship, and this desireth bread and drink and broth; upon pain of my life he was fostered up in some abbey, and, howsomever it was, they failed meat and drink, and so hither he is come for his sustenance.

And so Sir Kay bade get him a place, and sit down to meat; so Beaumains went to the hall door, and set him down among boys and lads, and there he ate sadly. And then Sir Launcelot after meat bade him come to his chamber, and there he should have meat and drink enough. And so did Sir Gawaine: but he refused them all; he would do none other but as Sir Kay commanded him, for no proffer. But as touching Sir Gawaine, he had reason to proffer him lodging, meat, and drink, for that proffer came of his blood, for he was nearer kin to him than he wist. But that as Sir Launcelot did was of his great gentleness and courtesy.

So thus he was put into the kitchen, and lay nightly as the boys of the kitchen did. And so he endured all that twelvemonth, and never displeased man nor child, but always he was meek and mild. But ever when that he saw any jousting of knights, that would he see an he might. And ever Sir Launcelot would give him gold to spend, and clothes, and so did Sir Gawaine, and where there were any masteries done, thereat would he be, and there might none cast bar nor stone to him by two yards. Then would Sir Kay say, How liketh you my boy of the kitchen? So it passed on till the feast of Whitsuntide. And at that time the king held it at Carlion in the most royallest wise that might be, like as he did yearly. But the king would no meat eat upon the Whitsunday, until he heard some adventures. Then came there a squire to the king and said, Sir, ye may go to your meat, for here cometh a damosel with some strange adventures. Then was the king glad and sat him down.

Right so there came a damosel into the hall and saluted the king, and prayed him of succour. For whom? said the king, what is the adventure?

Sir, she said, I have a lady of great worship and renown, and she is besieged with a tyrant, so that she may not out of her castle; and because here are called the noblest knights of the world, I come to you to pray you of succour. What hight your lady, and where dwelleth she, and who is she, and what is his name that hath besieged her? Sir king, she said, as for my lady's name that shall not ye know for me as at this time, but I let you wit she is a lady of great worship and of great lands; and as for the tyrant that besiegeth her and destroyeth her lands, he is called the Red Knight of the Red Launds. I know him not, said the king. Sir, said Sir Gawaine, I know him well, for he is one of the perilloust knights of the world; men say that he hath seven men's strength, and from him I escaped once full hard with my life. Fair damosel, said the king, there be knights here would do their power for to rescue your lady, but because you will not tell her name, nor where she dwelleth, therefore none of my knights that here be now shall go with you by my will. Then must I speak further, said the damosel.



### **CHAPTER III. How Beaumains desired the battle, and how it was granted to him, and how he desired to be made knight of Sir Launcelot.**

WITH these words came before the king Beaumains, while the damosel was there, and thus he said, Sir king, God thank you, I have been this twelvemonth in your kitchen, and have had my full sustenance, and now I will ask my two gifts that be behind. Ask, upon my peril, said the king. Sir, this shall be my two gifts, first that ye will grant me to have this adventure of the damosel, for it belongeth unto me. Thou shalt have it, said the king, I grant it thee. Then, sir, this is the other gift, that ye shall bid Launcelot du Lake to make me knight, for of him I will be made knight and else of none. And when I am passed I pray you let him ride after me, and make me knight when I require him. All this shall be done, said the king. Fie on thee, said the damosel, shall I have none but one that is your kitchen page? Then was she wroth and took her horse and departed. And with that there came one to Beaumains and told him his horse and armour was come for him; and there was the dwarf come with all thing that him needed, in the richest manner; thereat all the court had much marvel from whence came all that gear. So when he was armed there was none but few so goodly a man as he was; and right so as he came into the hall and took his leave of King Arthur, and Sir Gawaine, and Sir Launcelot, and prayed that he would hie after him, and so departed and rode after the damosel.

### **CHAPTER IV. How Beaumains departed, and how he gat of Sir Kay a spear and a shield, and how he joustet with Sir Launcelot.**

BUT there went many after to behold how well he was horsed and trapped in cloth of gold, but he had neither shield nor spear. Then Sir Kay said all open in the hall, I will ride after my boy in the kitchen, to wit whether he will know me for his better. Said Sir Launcelot and Sir Gawaine, Yet abide at home. So Sir Kay made him ready and took his horse and his spear, and rode after him. And right as Beaumains overtook the damosel, right so came Sir Kay and said, Beaumains, what, sir, know ye not me? Then he turned his horse, and knew it was Sir Kay, that had done him all the despite as ye have heard afore. Yea, said Beaumains, I know you for an ungentle knight of the court, and therefore beware of me. Therewith Sir Kay put his spear in the rest, and ran straight upon him; and Beaumains came as fast upon him with his sword in his hand, and so he put away his spear with his sword, and with a foin thrust him through the side, that Sir Kay fell down as he had been dead; and he alighted down and took Sir Kay's shield and his spear, and stert upon his own horse and rode his way.

All that saw Sir Launcelot, and so did the damosel. And then he bade his dwarf stert upon Sir Kay's horse, and so he did. By that Sir Launcelot was come,

then he proffered Sir Launcelot to joust; and either made them ready, and they came together so fiercely that either bare down other to the earth, and sore were they bruised. Then Sir Launcelot arose and helped him from his horse. And then Beaumains threw his shield from him, and proffered to fight with Sir Launcelot on foot; and so they rushed together like boars, tracing, rasing, and foining to the mountenance of an hour; and Sir Launcelot felt him so big that he marvelled of his strength, for he fought more liker a giant than a knight, and that his fighting was durable and passing perilous. For Sir Launcelot had so much ado with him that he dreaded himself to be shamed, and said, Beaumains, fight not so sore, your quarrel and mine is not so great but we may leave off. Truly that is truth, said Beaumains, but it doth me good to feel your might, and yet, my lord, I showed not the utterance.

**CHAPTER V. How Beaumains told to Sir Launcelot his name, and how he was dubbed knight of Sir Launcelot, and after overtook the damosel.**

IN God's name, said Sir Launcelot, for I promise you, by the faith of my body, I had as much to do as I might to save myself from you unshamed, and therefore have ye no doubt of none earthly knight. Hope ye so that I may any while stand a proved knight? said Beaumains. Yea, said Launcelot, do as ye have done, and I shall be your warrant. Then, I pray you, said Beaumains, give me the order of knighthood. Then must ye tell me your name, said Launcelot, and of what kin ye be born. Sir, so that ye will not discover me I shall, said Beaumains. Nay, said Sir Launcelot, and that I promise you by the faith of my body, until it be openly known. Then, sir, he said, my name is Gareth, and brother unto Sir Gawaine of father and mother. Ah, sir, said Sir Launcelot, I am more gladder of you than I was; for ever me thought ye should be of great blood, and that ye came not to the court neither for meat nor for drink. And then Sir Launcelot gave him the order of knighthood, and then Sir Gareth prayed him for to depart and let him go.

So Sir Launcelot departed from him and came to Sir Kay, and made him to be borne home upon his shield, and so he was healed hard with the life; and all men scorned Sir Kay, and in especial Sir Gawaine and Sir Launcelot said it was not his part to rebuke no young man, for full little knew he of what birth he is come, and for what cause he came to this court; and so we leave Sir Kay and turn we unto Beaumains.

When he had overtaken the damosel, anon she said, What dost thou here? thou stinkest all of the kitchen, thy clothes be bawdy of the grease and tallow that thou gainest in King Arthur's kitchen; weenest thou, said she, that I allow thee, for yonder knight that thou killest. Nay truly, for thou slewest him

unhappily and cowardly; therefore turn again, bawdy kitchen page, I know thee well, for Sir Kay named thee Beaumains. What art thou but a lusk and a turner of broaches and a ladle-washer? Damosel, said Beaumains, say to me what ye will, I will not go from you whatsoever ye say, for I have undertaken to King Arthur for to achieve your adventure, and so shall I finish it to the end, either I shall die therefore. Fie on thee, kitchen knave, wilt thou finish mine adventure? thou shalt anon be met withal, that thou wouldest not for all the broth that ever thou suppest once look him in the face. I shall assay, said Beaumains.

So thus as they rode in the wood, there came a man flying all that ever he might. Whither wilt thou? said Beaumains. O lord, he said, help me, for here by in a slade are six thieves that have taken my lord and bound him, so I am afeard lest they will slay him. Bring me thither, said Beaumains. And so they rode together until they came thereas was the knight bounden; and then he rode unto them, and struck one unto the death, and then another, and at the third stroke he slew the third thief, and then the other three fled. And he rode after them, and he overtook them; and then those three thieves turned again and assailed Beaumains hard, but at the last he slew them, and returned and unbound the knight. And the knight thanked him, and prayed him to ride with him to his castle there a little beside, and he should worshipfully reward him for his good deeds. Sir, said Beaumains, I will no reward have: I was this day made knight of noble Sir Launcelot, and therefore I will no reward have, but God reward me. And also I must follow this damosel.

And when he came nigh her she bade him ride from her, For thou smellest all of the kitchen: weenest thou that I have joy of thee, for all this deed that thou hast done is but mishapped thee: but thou shalt see a sight shall make thee turn again, and that lightly. Then the same knight which was rescued of the thieves rode after that damosel, and prayed her to lodge with him all that night. And because it was near night the damosel rode with him to his castle, and there they had great cheer, and at supper the knight sat Sir Beaumains afore the damosel. Fie, fie, said she, Sir knight, ye are uncourteous to set a kitchen page afore me; him beseemeth better to stick a swine than to sit afore a damosel of high parage. Then the knight was ashamed at her words, and took him up, and set him at a sideboard, and set himself afore him, and so all that night they had good cheer and merry rest.

## **CHAPTER VI. How Beaumains fought and slew two knights at a passage.**

AND on the morn the damosel and he took their leave and thanked the knight, and so departed, and rode on their way until they came to a great forest.

And there was a great river and but one passage, and there were ready two knights on the farther side to let them the passage. What sayest thou, said the damosel, wilt thou match yonder knights or turn again? Nay, said Sir Beaumains, I will not turn again an they were six more. And therewithal he rushed into the water, and in midst of the water either brake their spears upon other to their hands, and then they drew their swords, and smote eagerly at other. And at the last Sir Beaumains smote the other upon the helm that his head stonied, and therewithal he fell down in the water, and there was he drowned. And then he spurred his horse upon the land, where the other knight fell upon him, and brake his spear, and so they drew their swords and fought long together. At the last Sir Beaumains clave his helm and his head down to the shoulders; and so he rode unto the damosel and bade her ride forth on her way.

Alas, she said, that ever a kitchen page should have that fortune to destroy such two doughty knights: thou weenest thou hast done doughtily, that is not so; for the first knight his horse stumbled, and there he was drowned in the water, and never it was by thy force, nor by thy might. And the last knight by mishap thou camest behind him and mishappily thou slew him.

Damosel, said Beaumains, ye may say what ye will, but with whomsomever I have ado withal, I trust to God to serve him or he depart. And therefore I reckon not what ye say, so that I may win your lady. Fie, fie, foul kitchen knave, thou shalt see knights that shall abate thy boast. Fair damosel, give me goodly language, and then my care is past, for what knights somever they be, I care not, nor I doubt them not. Also, said she, I say it for thine avail, yet mayest thou turn again with thy worship; for an thou follow me, thou art but slain, for I see all that ever thou dost is but by misadventure, and not by prowess of thy hands. Well, damosel, ye may say what ye will, but wheresomever ye go I will follow you. So this Beaumains rode with that lady till evensong time, and ever she chid him, and would not rest. And they came to a black laund; and there was a black hawthorn, and thereon hung a black banner, and on the other side there hung a black shield, and by it stood a black spear great and long, and a great black horse covered with silk, and a black stone fast by.

## **CHAPTER VII. How Beaumains fought with the Knight of the Black Launds, and fought with him till he fell down and died.**

THERE sat a knight all armed in black harness, and his name was the Knight of the Black Laund. Then the damosel, when she saw that knight, she bade him flee down that valley, for his horse was not saddled. Gramercy, said Beaumains, for always ye would have me a coward. With that the Black Knight, when she came nigh him, spake and said, Damosel, have ye brought this knight of King

Arthur to be your champion? Nay, fair knight, said she, this is but a kitchen knave that was fed in King Arthur's kitchen for alms. Why cometh he, said the knight, in such array? it is shame that he beareth you company. Sir, I cannot be delivered of him, said she, for with me he rideth maugre mine head: God would that ye should put him from me, other to slay him an ye may, for he is an unhappy knave, and unhappily he hath done this day: through mishap I saw him slay two knights at the passage of the water; and other deeds he did before right marvellous and through unhappiness. That marvelleth me, said the Black Knight, that any man that is of worship will have ado with him. They know him not, said the damosel, and for because he rideth with me, they ween that he be some man of worship born. That may be, said the Black Knight; howbeit as ye say that he be no man of worship, he is a full likely person, and full like to be a strong man: but thus much shall I grant you, said the Black Knight; I shall put him down upon one foot, and his horse and his harness he shall leave with me, for it were shame to me to do him any more harm.

When Sir Beaumains heard him say thus, he said, Sir knight, thou art full large of my horse and my harness; I let thee wit it cost thee nought, and whether it liketh thee or not, this laund will I pass maugre thine head. And horse nor harness gettest thou none of mine, but if thou win them with thy hands; and therefore let see what thou canst do. Sayest thou that? said the Black Knight, now yield thy lady from thee, for it beseemeth never a kitchen page to ride with such a lady. Thou liest, said Beaumains, I am a gentleman born, and of more high lineage than thou, and that will I prove on thy body.

Then in great wrath they departed with their horses, and came together as it had been the thunder, and the Black Knight's spear brake, and Beaumains thrust him through both his sides, and therewith his spear brake, and the truncheon left still in his side. But nevertheless the Black Knight drew his sword, and smote many eager strokes, and of great might, and hurt Beaumains full sore. But at the last the Black Knight, within an hour and an half, he fell down off his horse in swoon, and there he died. And when Beaumains saw him so well horsed and armed, then he alighted down and armed him in his armour, and so took his horse and rode after the damosel.

When she saw him come nigh, she said, Away, kitchen knave, out of the wind, for the smell of thy bawdy clothes grieveth me. Alas, she said, that ever such a knave should by mishap slay so good a knight as thou hast done, but all this is thine unhappiness. But here by is one shall pay thee all thy payment, and therefore yet I counsel thee, flee. It may happen me, said Beaumains, to be beaten or slain, but I warn you, fair damosel, I will not flee away, a nor leave your company, for all that ye can say; for ever ye say that they will kill me or

beat me, but howsomever it happeneth I escape, and they lie on the ground. And therefore it were as good for you to hold you still thus all day rebuking me, for away will I not till I see the uttermost of this journey, or else I will be slain, other truly beaten; therefore ride on your way, for follow you I will whatsomever happen.

**CHAPTER VIII. How the brother of the knight that was slain met with Beaumains, and fought with Beaumains till he was yelden.**

THUS as they rode together, they saw a knight come driving by them all in green, both his horse and his harness; and when he came nigh the damosel, he asked her, Is that my brother the Black Knight that ye have brought with you? Nay, nay, she said, this unhappy kitchen knave hath slain your brother through unhappiness. Alas, said the Green Knight, that is great pity, that so noble a knight as he was should so unhappily be slain, and namely of a knave's hand, as ye say that he is. Ah! traitor, said the Green Knight, thou shalt die for slaying of my brother; he was a full noble knight, and his name was Sir Perard. I defy thee, said Beaumains, for I let thee wit I slew him knightly and not shamefully.

Therewithal the Green Knight rode unto an horn that was green, and it hung upon a thorn, and there he blew three deadly motes, and there came two damosels and armed him lightly. And then he took a great horse, and a green shield and a green spear. And then they ran together with all their mights, and brake their spears unto their hands. And then they drew their swords, and gave many sad strokes, and either of them wounded other full ill. And at the last, at an overthwart, Beaumains with his horse struck the Green Knight's horse upon the side, that he fell to the earth. And then the Green Knight avoided his horse lightly, and dressed him upon foot. That saw Beaumains, and therewithal he alighted, and they rushed together like two mighty kempes a long while, and sore they bled both. With that came the damosel, and said, My lord the Green Knight, why for shame stand ye so long fighting with the kitchen knave? Alas, it is shame that ever ye were made knight, to see such a lad to match such a knight, as the weed overgrew the corn. Therewith the Green Knight was ashamed, and therewithal he gave a great stroke of might, and clave his shield through. When Beaumains saw his shield cloven asunder he was a little ashamed of that stroke and of her language; and then he gave him such a buffet upon the helm that he fell on his knees. And so suddenly Beaumains pulled him upon the ground grovelling. And then the Green Knight cried him mercy, and yielded him unto Sir Beaumains, and prayed him to slay him not. All is in vain, said Beaumains, for thou shalt die but if this damosel that came with me pray me to save thy life. And therewithal he unlaced his helm like as he would slay him. Fie upon thee,

false kitchen page, I will never pray thee to save his life, for I will never be so much in thy danger. Then shall he die, said Beaumains. Not so hardy, thou bawdy knave, said the damosel, that thou slay him. Alas, said the Green Knight, suffer me not to die for a fair word may save me. Fair knight, said the Green Knight, save my life, and I will forgive thee the death of my brother, and for ever to become thy man, and thirty knights that hold of me for ever shall do you service. In the devil's name, said the damosel, that such a bawdy kitchen knave should have thee and thirty knights' service.

Sir knight, said Beaumains, all this availeth thee not, but if my damosel speak with me for thy life. And therewithal he made a semblant to slay him. Let be, said the damosel, thou bawdy knave; slay him not, for an thou do thou shalt repent it. Damosel, said Beaumains, your charge is to me a pleasure, and at your commandment his life shall be saved, and else not. Then he said, Sir knight with the green arms, I release thee quit at this damosel's request, for I will not make her wroth, I will fulfil all that she chargeth me. And then the Green Knight kneeled down, and did him homage with his sword. Then said the damosel, Me repenteth, Green Knight, of your damage, and of your brother's death, the Black Knight, for of your help I had great mister, for I dread me sore to pass this forest. Nay, dread you not, said the Green Knight, for ye shall lodge with me this night, and to-morn I shall help you through this forest. So they took their horses and rode to his manor, which was fast there beside.

#### **CHAPTER IX. How the damosel again rebuked Beaumains, and would not suffer him to sit at her table, but called him kitchen boy.**

AND ever she rebuked Beaumains, and would not suffer him to sit at her table, but as the Green Knight took him and sat him at a side table. Marvel methinketh, said the Green Knight to the damosel, why ye rebuke this noble knight as ye do, for I warn you, damosel, he is a full noble knight, and I know no knight is able to match him; therefore ye do great wrong to rebuke him, for he shall do you right good service, for whatsoever he maketh himself, ye shall prove at the end that he is come of a noble blood and of king's lineage. Fie, fie, said the damosel, it is shame for you to say of him such worship. Truly, said the Green Knight, it were shame for me to say of him any disworship, for he hath proved himself a better knight than I am, yet have I met with many knights in my days, and never or this time have I found no knight his match. And so that night they yede unto rest, and all that night the Green Knight commanded thirty knights privily to watch Beaumains, for to keep him from all treason.

And so on the morn they all arose, and heard their mass and brake their fast; and then they took their horses and rode on their way, and the Green Knight

conveyed them through the forest; and there the Green Knight said, My lord Beaumains, I and these thirty knights shall be always at your summons, both early and late, at your calling and whither that ever ye will send us. It is well said, said Beaumains; when that I call upon you ye must yield you unto King Arthur, and all your knights. If that ye so command us, we shall be ready at all times, said the Green Knight. Fie, fie upon thee, in the devil's name, said the damosel, that any good knights should be obedient unto a kitchen knave. So then departed the Green Knight and the damosel. And then she said unto Beaumains, Why followest thou me, thou kitchen boy? Cast away thy shield and thy spear, and flee away; yet I counsel thee betimes or thou shalt say right soon, alas; for wert thou as wight as ever was Wade or Launcelot, Tristram, or the good knight Sir Lamorak, thou shalt not pass a pass here that is called the Pass Perilous. Damosel, said Beaumains, who is afeard let him flee, for it were shame to turn again sithen I have ridden so long with you. Well, said the damosel, ye shall soon, whether ye will or not.

#### **CHAPTER X. How the third brother, called the Red Knight, jousted and fought against Beaumains, and how Beaumains overcame him.**

SO within a while they saw a tower as white as any snow, well matchecold all about, and double dyked. And over the tower gate there hung a fifty shields of divers colours, and under that tower there was a fair meadow. And therein were many knights and squires to behold, scaffolds and pavilions; for there upon the morn should be a great tournament: and the lord of the tower was in his castle and looked out at a window, and saw a damosel, a dwarf, and a knight armed at all points. So God me help, said the lord, with that knight will I joust, for I see that he is a knight-errant. And so he armed him and horsed him hastily. And when he was on horseback with his shield and his spear, it was all red, both his horse and his harness, and all that to him longeth. And when that he came nigh him he weened it had been his brother the Black Knight; and then he cried aloud, Brother, what do ye in these marches? Nay, nay, said the damosel, it is not he; this is but a kitchen knave that was brought up for alms in King Arthur's court. Nevertheless, said the Red Knight, I will speak with him or he depart. Ah, said the damosel, this knave hath killed thy brother, and Sir Kay named him Beaumains, and this horse and this harness was thy brother's, the Black Knight. Also I saw thy brother the Green Knight overcome of his hands. Now may ye be revenged upon him, for I may never be quit of him.

With this either knights departed in sunder, and they came together with all their might, and either of their horses fell to the earth, and they avoided their horses, and put their shields afore them and drew their swords, and either gave



other sad strokes, now here, now there, rasing, tracing, foining, and hurling like two boars, the space of two hours. And then she cried on high to the Red Knight, Alas, thou noble Red Knight, think what worship hath followed thee, let never a kitchen knave endure thee so long as he doth. Then the Red Knight waxed wroth and doubled his strokes, and hurt Beaumains wonderly sore, that the blood ran down to the ground, that it was wonder to see that strong battle. Yet at the last Sir Beaumains struck him to the earth, and as he would have slain the Red Knight, he cried mercy, saying, Noble knight, slay me not, and I shall yield me to thee with fifty knights with me that be at my commandment. And I forgive thee all the despite that thou hast done to me, and the death of my brother the Black Knight. All this availeth not, said Beaumains, but if my damosel pray me to save thy life. And therewith he made semblant to strike off his head. Let be, thou Beaumains, slay him not, for he is a noble knight, and not so hardy, upon thine head, but thou save him.

Then Beaumains bade the Red Knight, Stand up, and thank the damosel now of thy life. Then the Red Knight prayed him to see his castle, and to be there all night. So the damosel then granted him, and there they had merry cheer. But always the damosel spake many foul words unto Beaumains, whereof the Red Knight had great marvel; and all that night the Red Knight made three score knights to watch Beaumains, that he should have no shame nor villainy. And upon the morn they heard mass and dined, and the Red Knight came before Beaumains with his three score knights, and there he proffered him his homage and fealty at all times, he and his knights to do him service. I thank you, said Beaumains, but this ye shall grant me: when I call upon you, to come afore my lord King Arthur, and yield you unto him to be his knights. Sir, said the Red Knight, I will be ready, and my fellowship, at your summons. So Sir Beaumains departed and the damosel, and ever she rode chiding him in the foulest manner.

### **CHAPTER XI. How Sir Beaumains suffered great rebukes of the damosel, and he suffered it patiently.**

DAMOSEL, said Beaumains, ye are uncourteous so to rebuke me as ye do, for meseemeth I have done you good service, and ever ye threaten me I shall be beaten with knights that we meet, but ever for all your boast they lie in the dust or in the mire, and therefore I pray you rebuke me no more; and when ye see me beaten or yelden as recreant, then may ye bid me go from you shamefully; but first I let you wit I will not depart from you, for I were worse than a fool an I would depart from you all the while that I win worship. Well, said she, right soon there shall meet a knight shall pay thee all thy wages, for he is the most man of worship of the world, except King Arthur. I will well, said Beaumains,

the more he is of worship, the more shall be my worship to have ado with him.

Then anon they were ware where was afore them a city rich and fair. And betwixt them and the city a mile and an half there was a fair meadow that seemed new mown, and therein were many pavilions fair to behold. Lo, said the damosel, yonder is a lord that owneth yonder city, and his custom is, when the weather is fair, to lie in this meadow to joust and tourney. And ever there be about him five hundred knights and gentlemen of arms, and there be all manner of games that any gentleman can devise. That goodly lord, said Beaumains, would I fain see. Thou shalt see him time enough, said the damosel, and so as she rode near she espied the pavilion where he was. Lo, said she, seest thou yonder pavilion that is all of the colour of Inde, and all manner of thing that there is about, men and women, and horses trapped, shields and spears were all of the colour of Inde, and his name is Sir Persant of Inde, the most lordliest knight that ever thou lookedst on. It may well be, said Beaumains, but be he never so stout a knight, in this field I shall abide till that I see him under his shield. Ah, fool, said she, thou wert better flee betimes. Why, said Beaumains, an he be such a knight as ye make him, he will not set upon me with all his men, or with his five hundred knights. For an there come no more but one at once, I shall him not fail whilst my life lasteth. Fie, fie, said the damosel, that ever such a stinking knave should blow such a boast. Damosel, he said, ye are to blame so to rebuke me, for I had liefer do five battles than so to be rebuked, let him come and then let him do his worst.

Sir, she said, I marvel what thou art and of what kin thou art come; boldly thou speakest, and boldly thou hast done, that have I seen; therefore I pray thee save thyself an thou mayest, for thy horse and thou have had great travail, and I dread we dwell over long from the siege, for it is but hence seven mile, and all perilous passages we are passed save all only this passage; and here I dread me sore lest ye shall catch some hurt, therefore I would ye were hence, that ye were not bruised nor hurt with this strong knight. But I let you wit that Sir Persant of Inde is nothing of might nor strength unto the knight that laid the siege about my lady. As for that, said Sir Beaumains, be it as it be may. For sithen I am come so nigh this knight I will prove his might or I depart from him, and else I shall be shamed an I now withdraw me from him. And therefore, damosel, have ye no doubt by the grace of God I shall so deal with this knight that within two hours after noon I shall deliver him. And then shall we come to the siege by daylight. O Jesu, marvel have I, said the damosel, what manner a man ye be, for it may never be otherwise but that ye be come of a noble blood, for so foul nor shamefully did never woman rule a knight as I have done you, and ever courteously ye have suffered me, and that came never but of a gentle blood.

Damosel, said Beaumains, a knight may little do that may not suffer a damosel, for whatsoever ye said unto me I took none heed to your words, for the more ye said the more ye angered me, and my wrath I wreaked upon them that I had ado withal. And therefore all the missaying that ye missaid me furthered me in my battle, and caused me to think to show and prove myself at the end what I was; for peradventure though I had meat in King Arthur's kitchen, yet I might have had meat enough in other places, but all that I did it for to prove and assay my friends, and that shall be known another day; and whether that I be a gentleman born or none, I let you wit, fair damosel, I have done you gentleman's service, and peradventure better service yet will I do or I depart from you. Alas, she said, fair Beaumains, forgive me all that I have missaid or done against thee. With all my heart, said he, I forgive it you, for ye did nothing but as ye should do, for all your evil words pleased me; and damosel, said Beaumains, since it liketh you to say thus fair unto me, wit ye well it gladdeth my heart greatly, and now meseemeth there is no knight living but I am able enough for him.

## **CHAPTER XII. How Beaumains fought with Sir Persant of Inde, and made him to be yelden.**

WITH this Sir Persant of Inde had espied them as they hoved in the field, and knightly he sent to them whether he came in war or in peace. Say to thy lord, said Beaumains, I take no force, but whether as him list himself. So the messenger went again unto Sir Persant and told him all his answer. Well then will I have ado with him to the utterance, and so he purveyed him and rode against him. And Beaumains saw him and made him ready, and there they met with all that ever their horses might run, and brast their spears either in three pieces, and their horses rushed so together that both their horses fell dead to the earth; and lightly they avoided their horses and put their shields afore them, and drew their swords, and gave many great strokes that sometime they hurtled together that they fell grovelling on the ground. Thus they fought two hours and more, that their shields and their hauberks were all forhewen, and in many steads they were wounded. So at the last Sir Beaumains smote him through the cost of the body, and then he retrayed him here and there, and knightly maintained his battle long time. And at the last, though him loath were, Beaumains smote Sir Persant above upon the helm, that he fell grovelling to the earth; and then he leapt upon him overthwart and unlaced his helm to have slain him.

Then Sir Persant yielded him and asked him mercy. With that came the damosel and prayed to save his life. I will well, for it were pity this noble knight should die. Gramercy, said Persant, gentle knight and damosel. For certainly

now I wot well it was ye that slew my brother the Black Knight at the black thorn; he was a full noble knight, his name was Sir Percard. Also I am sure that ye are he that won mine other brother the Green Knight, his name was Sir Pertolepe. Also ye won my brother the Red Knight, Sir Perimones. And now since ye have won these, this shall I do for to please you: ye shall have homage and fealty of me, and an hundred knights to be always at your commandment, to go and ride where ye will command us. And so they went unto Sir Persant's pavilion and drank the wine, and ate spices, and afterward Sir Persant made him to rest upon a bed until supper time, and after supper to bed again. When Beaumains was abed, Sir Persant had a lady, a fair daughter of eighteen year of age, and there he called her unto him, and charged her and commanded her upon his blessing to go unto the knight's bed, and lie down by his side, and make him no strange cheer, but good cheer, and take him in thine arms and kiss him, and look that this be done, I charge you, as ye will have my love and my good will. So Sir Persant's daughter did as her father bade her, and so she went unto Sir Beaumains' bed, and privily she dispoiled her, and laid her down by him, and then he awoke and saw her, and asked her what she was. Sir, she said, I am Sir Persant's daughter, that by the commandment of my father am come hither. Be ye a maid or a wife? said he. Sir, she said, I am a clean maiden. God defend, said he, that I should defoil you to do Sir Persant such a shame; therefore, fair damosel, arise out of this bed or else I will. Sir, she said, I came not to you by mine own will, but as I was commanded. Alas, said Sir Beaumains, I were a shameful knight an I would do your father any disworship; and so he kissed her, and so she departed and came unto Sir Persant her father, and told him all how she had sped. Truly, said Sir Persant, whatsoever he be, he is come of a noble blood. And so we leave them there till on the morn.

### **CHAPTER XIII. Of the goodly communication between Sir Persant and Beaumains, and how he told him that his name was Sir Gareth.**

AND so on the morn the damosel and Sir Beaumains heard mass and brake their fast, and so took their leave. Fair damosel, said Persant, whitherward are ye way-leading this knight? Sir, she said, this knight is going to the siege that besiegeth my sister in the Castle Dangerous. Ah, ah, said Persant, that is the Knight of the Red Laund, the which is the most perilous knight that I know now living, and a man that is without mercy, and men say that he hath seven men's strength. God save you, said he to Beaumains, from that knight, for he doth great wrong to that lady, and that is great pity, for she is one of the fairest ladies of the world, and meseemeth that your damosel is her sister: is not your name Linet? said he. Yea, sir, said she, and my lady my sister's name is Dame Lionesse. Now

shall I tell you, said Sir Persant, this Red Knight of the Red Laund hath lain long at the siege, well-nigh this two years, and many times he might have had her an he had would, but he prolongeth the time to this intent, for to have Sir Launcelot du Lake to do battle with him, or Sir Tristram, or Sir Lamorak de Galis, or Sir Gawaine, and this is his tarrying so long at the siege.

Now my lord Sir Persant of Inde, said the damosel Linet, I require you that ye will make this gentleman knight or ever he fight with the Red Knight. I will with all my heart, said Sir Persant, an it please him to take the order of knighthood of so simple a man as I am. Sir, said Beaumains, I thank you for your good will, for I am better sped, for certainly the noble knight Sir Launcelot made me knight. Ah, said Sir Persant, of a more renowned knight might ye not be made knight; for of all knights he may be called chief of knighthood; and so all the world saith, that betwixt three knights is departed clearly knighthood, that is Launcelot du Lake, Sir Tristram de Liones, and Sir Lamorak de Galis: these bear now the renown. There be many other knights, as Sir Palamides the Saracen and Sir Safere his brother; also Sir Bleoberis and Sir Blamore de Ganis his brother; also Sir Bors de Ganis and Sir Ector de Maris and Sir Percivale de Galis; these and many more be noble knights, but there be none that pass the three above said; therefore God speed you well, said Sir Persant, for an ye may match the Red Knight ye shall be called the fourth of the world.

Sir, said Beaumains, I would fain be of good fame and of knighthood. And I let you wit I came of good men, for I dare say my father was a noble man, and so that ye will keep it in close, and this damosel, I will tell you of what kin I am. We will not discover you, said they both, till ye command us, by the faith we owe unto God. Truly then, said he, my name is Gareth of Orkney, and King Lot was my father, and my mother is King Arthur's sister, her name is Dame Morgawse, and Sir Gawaine is my brother, and Sir Agravaine and Sir Gaheris, and I am the youngest of them all. And yet wot not King Arthur nor Sir Gawaine what I am.

#### **CHAPTER XIV. How the lady that was besieged had word from her sister how she had brought a knight to fight for her, and what battles he had achieved.**

SO the book saith that the lady that was besieged had word of her sister's coming by the dwarf, and a knight with her, and how he had passed all the perilous passages. What manner a man is he? said the lady. He is a noble knight, truly, madam, said the dwarf, and but a young man, but he is as likely a man as ever ye saw any. What is he? said the damosel, and of what kin is he come, and of whom was he made knight? Madam, said the dwarf, he is the king's son of

Orkney, but his name I will not tell you as at this time; but wit ye well, of Sir Launcelot was he made knight, for of none other would he be made knight, and Sir Kay named him Beaumains. How escaped he, said the lady, from the brethren of Persant? Madam, he said, as a noble knight should. First, he slew two brethren at a passage of a water. Ah! said she, they were good knights, but they were murderers, the one hight Gherard le Breuse, and the other knight hight Sir Arnold le Breuse. Then, madam, he recountered with the Black Knight, and slew him in plain battle, and so he took his horse and his armour and fought with the Green Knight and won him in plain battle, and in like wise he served the Red Knight, and after in the same wise he served the Blue Knight and won him in plain battle. Then, said the lady, he hath overcome Sir Persant of Inde, one of the noblest knights of the world, and the dwarf said, He hath won all the four brethren and slain the Black Knight, and yet he did more to-fore: he overthrew Sir Kay and left him nigh dead upon the ground; also he did a great battle with Sir Launcelot, and there they departed on even hands: and then Sir Launcelot made him knight.

Dwarf, said the lady, I am glad of these tidings, therefore go thou in an hermitage of mine hereby, and there shalt thou bear with thee of my wine in two flagons of silver, they are of two gallons, and also two cast of bread with fat venison baked, and dainty fowls; and a cup of gold here I deliver thee, that is rich and precious; and bear all this to mine hermitage, and put it in the hermit's hands. And sithen go thou unto my sister and greet her well, and commend me unto that gentle knight, and pray him to eat and to drink and make him strong, and say ye him I thank him of his courtesy and goodness, that he would take upon him such labour for me that never did him bounty nor courtesy. Also pray him that he be of good heart and courage, for he shall meet with a full noble knight, but he is neither of bounty, courtesy, nor gentleness; for he attendeth unto nothing but to murder, and that is the cause I cannot praise him nor love him.

So this dwarf departed, and came to Sir Persant, where he found the damosel Linet and Sir Beaumains, and there he told them all as ye have heard; and then they took their leave, but Sir Persant took an ambling hackney and conveyed them on their ways, and then beleft them to God; and so within a little while they came to that hermitage, and there they drank the wine, and ate the venison and the fowls baken. And so when they had repasted them well, the dwarf returned again with his vessel unto the castle again; and there met with him the Red Knight of the Red Launds, and asked him from whence that he came, and where he had been. Sir, said the dwarf, I have been with my lady's sister of this castle, and she hath been at King Arthur's court, and brought a knight with her. Then I

account her travail but lost; for though she had brought with her Sir Launcelot, Sir Tristram, Sir Lamorak, or Sir Gawaine, I would think myself good enough for them all.

It may well be, said the dwarf, but this knight hath passed all the perilous passages, and slain the Black Knight and other two more, and won the Green Knight, the Red Knight, and the Blue Knight. Then is he one of these four that I have afore rehearsed. He is none of those, said the dwarf, but he is a king's son. What is his name? said the Red Knight of the Red Launds. That will I not tell you, said the dwarf, but Sir Kay upon scorn named him Beaumains. I care not, said the knight, what knight so ever he be, for I shall soon deliver him. And if I ever match him he shall have a shameful death as many other have had. That were pity, said the dwarf, and it is marvel that ye make such shameful war upon noble knights.

**CHAPTER XV. How the damosel and Beaumains came to the siege; and came to a sycamore tree, and there Beaumains blew a horn, and then the Knight of the**

Red Launds came to fight with him.

NOW leave we the knight and the dwarf, and speak we of Beaumains, that all night lay in the hermitage; and upon the morn he and the damosel Linet heard their mass and brake their fast. And then they took their horses and rode throughout a fair forest; and then they came to a plain, and saw where were many pavilions and tents, and a fair castle, and there was much smoke and great noise; and when they came near the siege Sir Beaumains espied upon great trees, as he rode, how there hung full goodly armed knights by the neck, and their shields about their necks with their swords, and gilt spurs upon their heels, and so there hung nigh a forty knights shamefully with full rich arms.

Then Sir Beaumains abated his countenance and said, What meaneth this? Fair sir, said the damosel, abate not your cheer for all this sight, for ye must courage yourself, or else ye be all shent, for all these knights came hither to this siege to rescue my sister Dame Lionesse, and when the Red Knight of the Red Launds had overcome them, he put them to this shameful death without mercy and pity. And in the same wise he will serve you but if you quit you the better.

Now Jesu defend me, said Beaumains, from such a villainous death and shenship of arms. For rather than I should so be faren withal, I would rather be slain manly in plain battle. So were ye better, said the damosel; for trust not, in him is no courtesy, but all goeth to the death or shameful murder, and that is pity, for he is a full likely man, well made of body, and a full noble knight of prowess, and a lord of great lands and possessions. Truly, said Beaumains, he

may well be a good knight, but he useth shameful customs, and it is marvel that he endureth so long that none of the noble knights of my lord Arthur's have not dealt with him.

And then they rode to the dykes, and saw them double dyked with full warlike walls; and there were lodged many great lords nigh the walls; and there was great noise of minstrelsy; and the sea beat upon the one side of the walls, where were many ships and mariners' noise with "hale and how." And also there was fast by a sycamore tree, and there hung an horn, the greatest that ever they saw, of an elephant's bone; and this Knight of the Red Launds had hanged it up there, that if there came any errant-knight, he must blow that horn, and then will he make him ready and come to him to do battle. But, sir, I pray you, said the damosel Linet, blow ye not the horn till it be high noon, for now it is about prime, and now increaseth his might, that as men say he hath seven men's strength. Ah, fie for shame, fair damosel, say ye never so more to me; for, an he were as good a knight as ever was, I shall never fail him in his most might, for either I will win worship worshipfully, or die knightly in the field. And therewith he spurred his horse straight to the sycamore tree, and blew so the horn eagerly that all the siege and the castle rang thereof. And then there leapt out knights out of their tents and pavilions, and they within the castle looked over the walls and out at windows.

Then the Red Knight of the Red Launds armed him hastily, and two barons set on his spurs upon his heels, and all was blood red, his armour, spear and shield. And an earl buckled his helm upon his head, and then they brought him a red spear and a red steed, and so he rode into a little vale under the castle, that all that were in the castle and at the siege might behold the battle.

#### **CHAPTER XVI. How the two knights met together, and of their talking, and how they began their battle.**

SIR, said the damosel Linet unto Sir Beaumains, look ye be glad and light, for yonder is your deadly enemy, and at yonder window is my lady, my sister, Dame Lionesse. Where? said Beaumains. Yonder, said the damosel, and pointed with her finger. That is truth, said Beaumains. She beseemeth afar the fairest lady that ever I looked upon; and truly, he said, I ask no better quarrel than now for to do battle, for truly she shall be my lady, and for her I will fight. And ever he looked up to the window with glad countenance, and the Lady Lionesse made curtesy to him down to the earth, with holding up both their hands.

With that the Red Knight of the Red Launds called to Sir Beaumains, Leave, sir knight, thy looking, and behold me, I counsel thee; for I warn thee well she is my lady, and for her I have done many strong battles. If thou have so done, said



Beaumains, meseemeth it was but waste labour, for she loveth none of thy fellowship, and thou to love that loveth not thee is but great folly. For an I understood that she were not glad of my coming, I would be advised or I did battle for her. But I understand by the besieging of this castle she may forbear thy fellowship. And therefore wit thou well, thou Red Knight of the Red Launds, I love her, and will rescue her, or else to die. Sayst thou that? said the Red Knight, meseemeth thou ought of reason to be ware by yonder knights that thou sawest hang upon yonder trees. Fie for shame, said Beaumains, that ever thou shouldest say or do so evil, for in that thou shamest thyself and knighthood, and thou mayst be sure there will no lady love thee that knoweth thy wicked customs. And now thou weenest that the sight of these hanged knights should fear me. Nay truly, not so; that shameful sight causeth me to have courage and hardiness against thee, more than I would have had against thee an thou wert a well-ruled knight. Make thee ready, said the Red Knight of the Red Launds, and talk no longer with me.

Then Sir Beaumains bade the damosel go from him; and then they put their spears in their rests, and came together with all their might that they had both, and either smote other in midst of their shields that the paitrelles, surcingles, and cruppers brast, and fell to the earth both, and the reins of their bridles in their hands; and so they lay a great while sore astonied, that all that were in the castle and in the siege weened their necks had been broken; and then many a stranger and other said the strange knight was a big man, and a noble joustier, for or now we saw never no knight match the Red Knight of the Red Launds: thus they said, both within the castle and without. Then lightly they avoided their horses and put their shields afore them, and drew their swords and ran together like two fierce lions, and either gave other such buffets upon their helms that they reeled backward both two strides; and then they recovered both, and hewed great pieces off their harness and their shields that a great part fell into the fields.

**CHAPTER XVII. How after long fighting Beaumains overcame the knight and would have slain him, but at the request of the lords he saved his life, and**

made him to yield him to the lady.

AND then thus they fought till it was past noon, and never would stint, till at the last they lacked wind both; and then they stood wagging and scattering, panting, blowing and bleeding, that all that beheld them for the most part wept for pity. So when they had rested them a while they yede to battle again, tracing, racing, foining as two boars. And at some time they took their run as it had been two rams, and hurtled together that sometime they fell grovelling to the earth:

and at some time they were so amazed that either took other's sword instead of his own.

Thus they endured till evensong time, that there was none that beheld them might know whether was like to win the battle; and their armour was so forhewn that men might see their naked sides; and in other places they were naked, but ever the naked places they did defend. And the Red Knight was a wily knight of war, and his wily fighting taught Sir Beaumains to be wise; but he abought it full sore or he did espy his fighting.

And thus by assent of them both they granted either other to rest; and so they set them down upon two mole-hills there beside the fighting place, and either of them unlaced his helm, and took the cold wind; for either of their pages was fast by them, to come when they called to unlace their harness and to set them on again at their commandment. And then when Sir Beaumains' helm was off, he looked up to the window, and there he saw the fair lady Dame Lionesse, and she made him such countenance that his heart waxed light and jolly; and therewith he bade the Red Knight of the Red Launds make him ready, and let us do the battle to the utterance. I will well, said the knight, and then they laced up their helms, and their pages avoided, and they stepped together and fought freshly; but the Red Knight of the Red Launds awaited him, and at an overthwart smote him within the hand, that his sword fell out of his hand; and yet he gave him another buffet upon the helm that he fell grovelling to the earth, and the Red Knight fell over him, for to hold him down.

Then cried the maiden Linet on high: O Sir Beaumains, where is thy courage become? Alas, my lady my sister beholdeth thee, and she sobbeth and weepeth, that maketh mine heart heavy. When Sir Beaumains heard her say so, he abraid up with a great might and gat him upon his feet, and lightly he leapt to his sword and gripped it in his hand, and doubled his pace unto the Red Knight, and there they fought a new battle together. But Sir Beaumains then doubled his strokes, and smote so thick that he smote the sword out of his hand, and then he smote him upon the helm that he fell to the earth, and Sir Beaumains fell upon him, and unlaced his helm to have slain him; and then he yielded him and asked mercy, and said with a loud voice: O noble knight, I yield me to thy mercy.

Then Sir Beaumains bethought him upon the knights that he had made to be hanged shamefully, and then he said: I may not with my worship save thy life, for the shameful deaths that thou hast caused many full good knights to die. Sir, said the Red Knight of the Red Launds, hold your hand and ye shall know the causes why I put them to so shameful a death. Say on, said Sir Beaumains. Sir, I loved once a lady, a fair damosel, and she had her brother slain; and she said it was Sir Launcelot du Lake, or else Sir Gawaine; and she prayed me as that I

loved her heartily, that I would make her a promise by the faith of my knighthood, for to labour daily in arms unto I met with one of them; and all that I might overcome I should put them unto a villainous death; and this is the cause that I have put all these knights to death, and so I ensured her to do all the villainy unto King Arthur's knights, and that I should take vengeance upon all these knights. And, sir, now I will thee tell that every day my strength increaseth till noon, and all this time have I seven men's strength.

**CHAPTER XVIII. How the knight yielded him, and how Beaumains made him to go unto King Arthur's court, and to cry Sir Launcelot mercy.**

THEN came there many earls, and barons, and noble knights, and prayed that knight to save his life, and take him to your prisoner. And all they fell upon their knees, and prayed him of mercy, and that he would save his life; and, Sir, they all said, it were fairer of him to take homage and fealty, and let him hold his lands of you than for to slay him; by his death ye shall have none advantage, and his misdeeds that be done may not be undone; and therefore he shall make amends to all parties, and we all will become your men and do you homage and fealty. Fair lords, said Beaumains, wit you well I am full loath to slay this knight, nevertheless he hath done passing ill and shamefully; but insomuch all that he did was at a lady's request I blame him the less; and so for your sake I will release him that he shall have his life upon this covenant, that he go within the castle, and yield him there to the lady, and if she will forgive and quit him, I will well; with this he make her amends of all the trespass he hath done against her and her lands. And also, when that is done, that ye go unto the court of King Arthur, and there that ye ask Sir Launcelot mercy, and Sir Gawaine, for the evil will ye have had against them. Sir, said the Red Knight of the Red Launds, all this will I do as ye command, and siker assurance and borrows ye shall have. And so then when the assurance was made, he made his homage and fealty, and all those earls and barons with him.

And then the maiden Linet came to Sir Beaumains, and unarmed him and searched his wounds, and stinted his blood, and in likewise she did to the Red Knight of the Red Launds. And there they sojourned ten days in their tents; and the Red Knight made his lords and servants to do all the pleasure that they might unto Sir Beaumains. And so within a while the Red Knight of the Red Launds yede unto the castle, and put him in her grace. And so she received him upon sufficient surety, so all her hurts were well restored of all that she could complain. And then he departed unto the court of King Arthur, and there openly the Red Knight of the Red Launds put him in the mercy of Sir Launcelot and Sir Gawaine, and there he told openly how he was overcome and by whom, and also

he told all the battles from the beginning unto the ending. Jesu mercy, said King Arthur and Sir Gawaine, we marvel much of what blood he is come, for he is a noble knight. Have ye no marvel, said Sir Launcelot, for ye shall right well wit that he is come of a full noble blood; and as for his might and hardiness, there be but few now living that is so mighty as he is, and so noble of prowess. It seemeth by you, said King Arthur, that ye know his name, and from whence he is come, and of what blood he is. I suppose I do so, said Launcelot, or else I would not have given him the order of knighthood; but he gave me such charge at that time that I should never discover him until he required me, or else it be known openly by some other.

**CHAPTER XIX How Beaumains came to the lady, and when he came to the castle the gates were closed against him, and of the words that the lady said to**

him.

NOW turn we unto Sir Beaumains that desired of Linet that he might see her sister, his lady. Sir, she said, I would fain ye saw her. Then Sir Beaumains all armed him, and took his horse and his spear, and rode straight unto the castle. And when he came to the gate he found there many men armed, and pulled up the drawbridge and drew the port close.

Then marvelled he why they would not suffer him to enter. And then he looked up to the window; and there he saw the fair Lionesse that said on high: Go thy way, Sir Beaumains, for as yet thou shalt not have wholly my love, unto the time that thou be called one of the number of the worthy knights. And therefore go labour in worship this twelvemonth, and then thou shalt hear new tidings. Alas, fair lady, said Beaumains, I have not deserved that ye should show me this strangeness, and I had weened that I should have right good cheer with you, and unto my power I have deserved thank, and well I am sure I have bought your love with part of the best blood within my body. Fair courteous knight, said Dame Lionesse, be not displeased nor over-hasty; for wit you well your great travail nor good love shall not be lost, for I consider your great travail and labour, your bounty and your goodness as me ought to do. And therefore go on your way, and look that ye be of good comfort, for all shall be for your worship and for the best, and perdy a twelvemonth will soon be done, and trust me, fair knight, I shall be true to you, and never to betray you, but to my death I shall love you and none other. And therewithal she turned her from the window, and Sir Beaumains rode awayward from the castle, making great dole, and so he rode here and there and wist not where he rode, till it was dark night. And then it happened him to come to a poor man's house, and there he was harboured all that

night.

But Sir Beaumains had no rest, but wallowed and writhed for the love of the lady of the castle. And so upon the morrow he took his horse and rode until underne, and then he came to a broad water, and thereby was a great lodge, and there he alighted to sleep and laid his head upon the shield, and betook his horse to the dwarf, and commanded him to watch all night.

Now turn we to the lady of the same castle, that thought much upon Beaumains, and then she called unto her Sir Gringamore her brother, and prayed him in all manner, as he loved her heartily, that he would ride after Sir Beaumains: And ever have ye wait upon him till ye may find him sleeping, for I am sure in his heaviness he will alight down in some place, and lie him down to sleep; and therefore have ye your wait upon him, and in the priviest manner ye can, take his dwarf, and go ye your way with him as fast as ever ye may or Sir Beaumains awake. For my sister Linet telleth me that he can tell of what kindred he is come, and what is his right name. And the meanwhile I and my sister will ride unto your castle to await when ye bring with you the dwarf. And then when ye have brought him unto your castle, I will have him in examination myself. Unto the time that I know what is his right name, and of what kindred he is come, shall I never be merry at my heart. Sister, said Sir Gringamore, all this shall be done after your intent.

And so he rode all the other day and the night till that he found Sir Beaumains lying by a water, and his head upon his shield, for to sleep. And then when he saw Sir Beaumains fast asleep, he came stilly stalking behind the dwarf, and plucked him fast under his arm, and so he rode away with him as fast as ever he might unto his own castle. And this Sir Gringamore's arms were all black, and that to him longeth. But ever as he rode with the dwarf toward his castle, he cried unto his lord and prayed him of help. And therewith awoke Sir Beaumains, and up he leapt lightly, and saw where Sir Gringamore rode his way with the dwarf, and so Sir Gringamore rode out of his sight.

## **CHAPTER XX. How Sir Beaumains rode after to rescue his dwarf, and came into the castle where he was.**

THEN Sir Beaumains put on his helm anon, and buckled his shield, and took his horse, and rode after him all that ever he might ride through marshes, and fields, and great dales, that many times his horse and he plunged over the head in deep mires, for he knew not the way, but took the gainest way in that woodness, that many times he was like to perish. And at the last him happened to come to a fair green way, and there he met with a poor man of the country, whom he saluted and asked him whether he met not with a knight upon a black horse and

all black harness, a little dwarf sitting behind him with heavy cheer. Sir, said the poor man, here by me came Sir Gringamore the knight, with such a dwarf mourning as ye say; and therefore I rede you not follow him, for he is one of the periloust knights of the world, and his castle is here nigh hand but two mile; therefore we advise you ride not after Sir Gringamore, but if ye owe him good will.

So leave we Sir Beaumains riding toward the castle, and speak we of Sir Gringamore and the dwarf. Anon as the dwarf was come to the castle, Dame Lionesse and Dame Linet her sister, asked the dwarf where was his master born, and of what lineage he was come. And but if thou tell me, said Dame Lionesse, thou shalt never escape this castle, but ever here to be prisoner. As for that, said the dwarf, I fear not greatly to tell his name and of what kin he is come. Wit you well he is a king's son, and his mother is sister to King Arthur, and he is brother to the good knight Sir Gawaine, and his name is Sir Gareth of Orkney. And now I have told you his right name, I pray you, fair lady, let me go to my lord again, for he will never out of this country until that he have me again. And if he be angry he will do much harm or that he be stint, and work you wrack in this country. As for that threatening, said Sir Gringamore, be it as it be may, we will go to dinner. And so they washed and went to meat, and made them merry and well at ease, and because the Lady Lionesse of the castle was there, they made great joy. Truly, madam, said Linet unto her sister, well may he be a king's son, for he hath many good tatches on him, for he is courteous and mild, and the most suffering man that ever I met withal. For I dare say there was never gentlewoman reviled man in so foul a manner as I have rebuked him; and at all times he gave me goodly and meek answers again.

And as they sat thus talking, there came Sir Gareth in at the gate with an angry countenance, and his sword drawn in his hand, and cried aloud that all the castle might hear it, saying: Thou traitor, Sir Gringamore, deliver me my dwarf again, or by the faith that I owe to the order of knighthood, I shall do thee all the harm that I can. Then Sir Gringamore looked out at a window and said, Sir Gareth of Orkney, leave thy boasting words, for thou gettest not thy dwarf again. Thou coward knight, said Sir Gareth, bring him with thee, and come and do battle with me, and win him and take him. So will I do, said Sir Gringamore, an me list, but for all thy great words thou gettest him not. Ah! fair brother, said Dame Lionesse, I would he had his dwarf again, for I would he were not wroth, for now he hath told me all my desire I keep no more of the dwarf. And also, brother, he hath done much for me, and delivered me from the Red Knight of the Red Launds, and therefore, brother, I owe him my service afore all knights living. And wit ye well that I love him before all other, and full fain I would

speak with him. But in nowise I would that he wist what I were, but that I were another strange lady.

Well, said Sir Gringamore, sithen I know now your will, I will obey now unto him. And right therewithal he went down unto Sir Gareth, and said: Sir, I cry you mercy, and all that I have misdome I will amend it at your will. And therefore I pray you that ye would alight, and take such cheer as I can make you in this castle. Shall I have my dwarf? said Sir Gareth. Yea, sir, and all the pleasaunce that I can make you, for as soon as your dwarf told me what ye were and of what blood ye are come, and what noble deeds ye have done in these marches, then I repented of my deeds. And then Sir Gareth alighted, and there came his dwarf and took his horse. O my fellow, said Sir Gareth, I have had many adventures for thy sake. And so Sir Gringamore took him by the hand and led him into the hall where his own wife was.

### **CHAPTER XXI. How Sir Gareth, otherwise called Beaumains, came to the presence of his lady, and how they took acquaintance, and of their love.**

AND then came forth Dame Lionesse arrayed like a princess, and there she made him passing good cheer, and he her again; and they had goodly language and lovely countenance together. And Sir Gareth thought many times, Jesu, would that the lady of the Castle Perilous were so fair as she was. There were all manner of games and plays, of dancing and singing. And ever the more Sir Gareth beheld that lady, the more he loved her; and so he burned in love that he was past himself in his reason; and forth toward night they yede unto supper, and Sir Gareth might not eat, for his love was so hot that he wist not where he was.

All these looks espied Sir Gringamore, and then at-after supper he called his sister Dame Lionesse into a chamber, and said: Fair sister, I have well espied your countenance betwixt you and this knight, and I will, sister, that ye wit he is a full noble knight, and if ye can make him to abide here I will do him all the pleasure that I can, for an ye were better than ye are, ye were well bywaryd upon him. Fair brother, said Dame Lionesse, I understand well that the knight is good, and come he is of a noble house. Notwithstanding, I will assay him better, howbeit I am most beholden to him of any earthly man; for he hath had great labour for my love, and passed many a dangerous passage.

Right so Sir Gringamore went unto Sir Gareth, and said, Sir, make ye good cheer, for ye shall have none other cause, for this lady, my sister, is yours at all times, her worship saved, for wit ye well she loveth you as well as ye do her, and better if better may be. An I wist that, said Sir Gareth, there lived not a gladder man than I would be. Upon my worship, said Sir Gringamore, trust unto my promise; and as long as it liketh you ye shall sojourn with me, and this lady shall

be with us daily and nightly to make you all the cheer that she can. I will well, said Sir Gareth, for I have promised to be nigh this country this twelvemonth. And well I am sure King Arthur and other noble knights will find me where that I am within this twelvemonth. For I shall be sought and found, if that I be alive. And then the noble knight Sir Gareth went unto the Dame Lionesse, which he then much loved, and kissed her many times, and either made great joy of other. And there she promised him her love certainly, to love him and none other the days of her life. Then this lady, Dame Lionesse, by the assent of her brother, told Sir Gareth all the truth what she was, and how she was the same lady that he did battle for, and how she was lady of the Castle Perilous, and there she told him how she caused her brother to take away his dwarf, [\*2]for this cause, to know the certainty what was your name, and of what kin ye were come.

[\*2] Printed by Caxton as part of chap. xxii.

### **CHAPTER XXII. How at night came an armed knight, and fought with Sir Gareth, and he, sore hurt in the thigh, smote off the knight's head.**

AND then she let fetch to-fore him Linet, the damosel that had ridden with him many wildsome ways. Then was Sir Gareth more gladder than he was to-fore. And then they troth- plight each other to love, and never to fail whiles their life lasteth. And so they burnt both in love, that they were accorded to abate their lusts secretly. And there Dame Lionesse counselled Sir Gareth to sleep in none other place but in the hall. And there she promised him to come to his bed a little afore midnight.

This counsel was not so privily kept but it was understood; for they were but young both, and tender of age, and had not used none such crafts to-fore. Wherefore the damosel Linet was a little displeased, and she thought her sister Dame Lionesse was a little over-hasty, that she might not abide the time of her marriage; and for saving their worship, she thought to abate their hot lusts. And so she let ordain by her subtle crafts that they had not their intents neither with other, as in their delights, until they were married. And so it passed on. At-after supper was made clean avoidance, that every lord and lady should go unto his rest. But Sir Gareth said plainly he would go no farther than the hall, for in such places, he said, was convenient for an errant-knight to take his rest in; and so there were ordained great couches, and thereon feather beds, and there laid him down to sleep; and within a while came Dame Lionesse, wrapped in a mantle furred with ermine, and laid her down beside Sir Gareth. And therewithal he began to kiss her. And then he looked afore him, and there he apperceived and saw come an armed knight, with many lights about him; and this knight had a long gisarm in his hand, and made grim countenance to smite him. When Sir



Gareth saw him come in that wise, he leapt out of his bed, and gat in his hand his sword, and leapt straight toward that knight. And when the knight saw Sir Gareth come so fiercely upon him, he smote him with a foin through the thick of the thigh that the wound was a shaftmon broad and had cut a-two many veins and sinews. And therewithal Sir Gareth smote him upon the helm such a buffet that he fell grovelling; and then he leapt over him and unlaced his helm, and smote off his head from the body. And then he bled so fast that he might not stand, but so he laid him down upon his bed, and there he swooned and lay as he had been dead.

Then Dame Lionesse cried aloud, that her brother Sir Gringamore heard, and came down. And when he saw Sir Gareth so shamefully wounded he was sore displeased, and said: I am shamed that this noble knight is thus honoured. Sir, said Sir Gringamore, how may this be, that ye be here, and this noble knight wounded? Brother, she said, I can not tell you, for it was not done by me, nor by mine assent. For he is my lord and I am his, and he must be mine husband; therefore, my brother, I will that ye wit I shame me not to be with him, nor to do him all the pleasure that I can. Sister, said Sir Gringamore, and I will that ye wit it, and Sir Gareth both, that it was never done by me, nor by my assent that this unhappy deed was done. And there they staunched his bleeding as well as they might, and great sorrow made Sir Gringamore and Dame Lionesse.

And forthwithal came Dame Linet, and took up the head in the sight of them all, and anointed it with an ointment thereas it was smitten off; and in the same wise she did to the other part thereas the head stuck, and then she set it together, and it stuck as fast as ever it did. And the knight arose lightly up, and the damosel Linet put him in her chamber. All this saw Sir Gringamore and Dame Lionesse, and so did Sir Gareth; and well he espied that it was the damosel Linet, that rode with him through the perilous passages. Ah well, damosel, said Sir Gareth, I weened ye would not have done as ye have done. My lord Gareth, said Linet, all that I have done I will avow, and all that I have done shall be for your honour and worship, and to us all. And so within a while Sir Gareth was nigh whole, and waxed light and jocund, and sang, danced, and gamed; and he and Dame Lionesse were so hot in burning love that they made their covenant at the tenth night after, that she should come to his bed. And because he was wounded afore, he laid his armour and his sword nigh his bed's side.

**CHAPTER XXIII. How the said knight came again the next night and was beheaded again, and how at the feast of Pentecost all the knights that Sir Gareth**

had overcome came and yielded them to King Arthur.

RIGHT as she promised she came; and she was not so soon in his bed but she espied an armed knight coming toward the bed: therewithal she warned Sir Gareth, and lightly through the good help of Dame Lionesse he was armed; and they hurtled together with great ire and malice all about the hall; and there was great light as it had been the number of twenty torches both before and behind, so that Sir Gareth strained him, so that his old wound brast again a-bleeding; but he was hot and courageous and took no keep, but with his great force he struck down that knight, and voided his helm, and struck off his head. Then he hewed the head in an hundred pieces. And when he had done so he took up all those pieces, and threw them out at a window into the ditches of the castle; and by this done he was so faint that unnethes he might stand for bleeding. And by when he was almost unarmed he fell in a deadly swoon on the floor; and then Dame Lionesse cried so that Sir Gringamore heard; and when he came and found Sir Gareth in that plight he made great sorrow; and there he awaked Sir Gareth, and gave him a drink that relieved him wonderly well; but the sorrow that Dame Lionesse made there may no tongue tell, for she so fared with herself as she would have died.

Right so came this damosel Linet before them all, and she had fetched all the gobbets of the head that Sir Gareth had thrown out at a window, and there she anointed them as she had done to-fore, and set them together again. Well, damosel Linet, said Sir Gareth, I have not deserved all this despite that ye do unto me. Sir knight, she said, I have nothing done but I will avow, and all that I have done shall be to your worship, and to us all. And then was Sir Gareth staunched of his bleeding. But the leeches said that there was no man that bare the life should heal him throughout of his wound but if they healed him that caused that stroke by enchantment.

So leave we Sir Gareth there with Sir Gringamore and his sisters, and turn we unto King Arthur, that at the next feast of Pentecost held his feast; and there came the Green Knight with fifty knights, and yielded them all unto King Arthur. And so there came the Red Knight his brother, and yielded him to King Arthur, and three score knights with him. Also there came the Blue Knight, brother to them, with an hundred knights, and yielded them unto King Arthur; and the Green Knight's name was Pertolepe, and the Red Knight's name was Perimones, and the Blue Knight's name was Sir Persant of Inde. These three brethren told King Arthur how they were overcome by a knight that a damosel had with her, and called him Beaumains. Jesu, said the king, I marvel what knight he is, and of what lineage he is come. He was with me a twelvemonth, and poorly and shamefully he was fostered, and Sir Kay in scorn named him Beaumains. So right as the king stood so talking with these three brethren, there

came Sir Launcelot du Lake, and told the king that there was come a goodly lord with six hundred knights with him.

Then the king went out of Carlion, for there was the feast, and there came to him this lord, and saluted the king in a goodly manner. What will ye, said King Arthur, and what is your errand? Sir, he said, my name is the Red Knight of the Red Launds, but my name is Sir Ironside; and sir, wit ye well, here I am sent to you of a knight that is called Beaumains, for he won me in plain battle hand for hand, and so did never no knight but he, that ever had the better of me this thirty winter; the which commanded to yield me to you at your will. Ye are welcome, said the king, for ye have been long a great foe to me and my court, and now I trust to God I shall so entreat you that ye shall be my friend. Sir, both I and these five hundred knights shall always be at your summons to do you service as may lie in our powers. Jesu mercy, said King Arthur, I am much beholden unto that knight that hath put so his body in devoir to worship me and my court. And as to thee, Ironside, that art called the Red Knight of the Red Launds, thou art called a perilous knight; and if thou wilt hold of me I shall worship thee and make thee knight of the Table Round; but then thou must be no more a murderer. Sir, as to that, I have promised unto Sir Beaumains never more to use such customs, for all the shameful customs that I used I did at the request of a lady that I loved; and therefore I must go unto Sir Launcelot, and unto Sir Gawaine, and ask them forgiveness of the evil will I had unto them; for all that I put to death was all only for the love of Sir Launcelot and of Sir Gawaine. They be here now, said the king, afore thee, now may ye say to them what ye will. And then he kneeled down unto Sir Launcelot, and to Sir Gawaine, and prayed them of forgiveness of his enmity that ever he had against them.

#### **CHAPTER XXIV. How King Arthur pardoned them, and demanded of them where Sir Gareth was.**

THEN goodly they said all at once, God forgive you, and we do, and pray you that ye will tell us where we may find Sir Beaumains. Fair lords, said Sir Ironside, I cannot tell you, for it is full hard to find him; for such young knights as he is one, when they be in their adventures be never abiding in no place. But to say the worship that the Red Knight of the Red Launds, and Sir Persant and his brother said of Beaumains, it was marvel to hear. Well, my fair lords, said King Arthur, wit you well I shall do you honour for the love of Sir Beaumains, and as soon as ever I meet with him I shall make you all upon one day knights of the Table Round. And as to thee, Sir Persant of Inde, thou hast been ever called a full noble knight, and so have ever been thy three brethren called. But I marvel, said the king, that I hear not of the Black Knight your brother, he was a full

noble knight. Sir, said Pertolepe, the Green Knight, Sir Beaumains slew him in a recounter with his spear, his name was Sir Percard. That was great pity, said the king, and so said many knights. For these four brethren were full well known in the court of King Arthur for noble knights, for long time they had holden war against the knights of the Round Table. Then said Pertolepe, the Green Knight, to the king: At a passage of the water of Mortaise there encountered Sir Beaumains with two brethren that ever for the most part kept that passage, and they were two deadly knights, and there he slew the eldest brother in the water, and smote him upon the head such a buffet that he fell down in the water, and there he was drowned, and his name was Sir Gherard le Breusse; and after he slew the other brother upon the land, his name was Sir Arnold le Breusse.

**CHAPTER XXV. How the Queen of Orkney came to this feast of Pentecost, and Sir Gawaine and his brethren came to ask her blessing. [\*3]**

**[\*3] In Caxton's edition this chapter is misnumbered XXVI., setting the numeration wrong to the end of the book.**

So then the king and they went to meat, and were served in the best manner. And as they sat at the meat, there came in the Queen of Orkney, with ladies and knights a great number. And then Sir Gawaine, Sir Agravaine, and Gaheris arose, and went to her and saluted her upon their knees, and asked her blessing; for in fifteen year they had not seen her. Then she spake on high to her brother King Arthur: Where have ye done my young son Sir Gareth? He was here amongst you a twelvemonth, and ye made a kitchen knave of him, the which is shame to you all. Alas, where have ye done my dear son that was my joy and bliss? O dear mother, said Sir Gawaine, I knew him not. Nor I, said the king, that now me repenteth, but thanked be God he is proved a worshipful knight as any is now living of his years, and I shall never be glad till I may find him.

Ah, brother, said the Queen unto King Arthur, and unto Sir Gawaine, and to all her sons, ye did yourself great shame when ye amongst you kept my son in the kitchen and fed him like a poor hog. Fair sister, said King Arthur, ye shall right well wit I knew him not, nor no more did Sir Gawaine, nor his brethren; but sithen it is so, said the king, that he is thus gone from us all, we must shape a remedy to find him. Also, sister, meseemeth ye might have done me to wit of his coming, and then an I had not done well to him ye might have blamed me. For

when he came to this court he came leaning upon two men's shoulders, as though he might not have gone. And then he asked me three gifts; and one he asked the same day, that was that I would give him meat enough that twelvemonth; and the other two gifts he asked that day a twelvemonth, and that was that he might have the adventure of the damosel Linet, and the third was that Sir Launcelot should make him knight when he desired him. And so I granted him all his desire, and many in this court marvelled that he desired his sustenance for a twelvemonth. And thereby, we deemed, many of us, that he was not come of a noble house.

Sir, said the Queen of Orkney unto King Arthur her brother, wit ye well that I sent him unto you right well armed and horsed, and worshipfully beseen of his body, and gold and silver plenty to spend. It may be, said the King, but thereof saw we none, save that same day as he departed from us, knights told me that there came a dwarf hither suddenly, and brought him armour and a good horse full well and richly beseen; and thereat we all had marvel from whence that riches came, that we deemed all that he was come of men of worship. Brother, said the queen, all that ye say I believe, for ever sithen he was grown he was marvellously witted, and ever he was faithful and true of his promise. But I marvel, said she, that Sir Kay did mock him and scorn him, and gave him that name Beaumains; yet, Sir Kay, said the queen, named him more righteously than he weened; for I dare say an he be alive, he is as fair an handed man and well disposed as any is living. Sir, said Arthur, let this language be still, and by the grace of God he shall be found an he be within this seven realms, and let all this pass and be merry, for he is proved to be a man of worship, and that is my joy.

#### **CHAPTER XXVI. How King Arthur sent for the Lady Lionesse, and how she let cry a tourney at her castle, whereas came many knights.**

THEN said Sir Gawaine and his brethren unto Arthur, Sir, an ye will give us leave, we will go and seek our brother. Nay, said Sir Launcelot, that shall ye not need; and so said Sir Baudwin of Britain: for as by our advice the king shall send unto Dame Lionesse a messenger, and pray her that she will come to the court in all the haste that she may, and doubt ye not she will come; and then she may give you best counsel where ye shall find him. This is well said of you, said the king. So then goodly letters were made, and the messenger sent forth, that night and day he went till he came unto the Castle Perilous. And then the lady Dame Lionesse was sent for, thereas she was with Sir Gringamore her brother and Sir Gareth. And when she understood this message, she bade him ride on his way unto King Arthur, and she would come after in all goodly haste. Then when she came to Sir Gringamore and to Sir Gareth, she told them all how King Arthur had sent for her. That is because of me, said Sir Gareth. Now advise me, said

Dame Lionesse, what shall I say, and in what manner I shall rule me. My lady and my love, said Sir Gareth, I pray you in no wise be ye aknowen where I am; but well I wot my mother is there and all my brethren, and they will take upon them to seek me, I wot well that they do. But this, madam, I would ye said and advised the king when he questioned with you of me. Then may ye say, this is your advice that, an it like his good grace, ye will do make a cry against the feast of the Assumption of our Lady, that what knight there proveth him best he shall wield you and all your land. And if so be that he be a wedded man, that his wife shall have the degree, and a coronal of gold beset with stones of virtue to the value of a thousand pound, and a white gerfalcon.

So Dame Lionesse departed and came to King Arthur, where she was nobly received, and there she was sore questioned of the king and of the Queen of Orkney. And she answered, where Sir Gareth was she could not tell. But thus much she said unto Arthur: Sir, I will let cry a tournament that shall be done before my castle at the Assumption of our Lady, and the cry shall be this: that you, my lord Arthur, shall be there, and your knights, and I will purvey that my knights shall be against yours; and then I am sure ye shall hear of Sir Gareth. This is well advised, said King Arthur; and so she departed. And the king and she made great provision to that tournament.

When Dame Lionesse was come to the Isle of Avilion, that was the same isle thereas her brother Sir Gringamore dwelt, then she told them all how she had done, and what promise she had made to King Arthur. Alas, said Sir Gareth, I have been so wounded with unhappiness sithen I came into this castle that I shall not be able to do at that tournament like a knight; for I was never thoroughly whole since I was hurt. Be ye of good cheer, said the damosel Linet, for I undertake within these fifteen days to make ye whole, and as lusty as ever ye were. And then she laid an ointment and a salve to him as it pleased to her, that he was never so fresh nor so lusty. Then said the damosel Linet: Send you unto Sir Persant of Inde, and assummon him and his knights to be here with you as they have promised. Also, that ye send unto Sir Ironside, that is the Red Knight of the Red Launds, and charge him that he be ready with you with his whole sum of knights, and then shall ye be able to match with King Arthur and his knights. So this was done, and all knights were sent for unto the Castle Perilous; and then the Red Knight answered and said unto Dame Lionesse, and to Sir Gareth, Madam, and my lord Sir Gareth, ye shall understand that I have been at the court of King Arthur, and Sir Persant of Inde and his brethren, and there we have done our homage as ye commanded us. Also Sir Ironside said, I have taken upon me with Sir Persant of Inde and his brethren to hold part against my lord Sir Launcelot and the knights of that court. And this have I done for the love of my

lady Dame Lionesse, and you my lord Sir Gareth. Ye have well done, said Sir Gareth; but wit you well ye shall be full sore matched with the most noble knights of the world; therefore we must purvey us of good knights, where we may get them. That is well said, said Sir Persant, and worshipfully.

And so the cry was made in England, Wales, and Scotland, Ireland, Cornwall, and in all the Out Isles, and in Brittany and in many countries; that at the feast of our Lady the Assumption next coming, men should come to the Castle Perilous beside the Isle of Avilion; and there all the knights that there came should have the choice whether them list to be on the one party with the knights of the castle, or on the other party with King Arthur. And two months was to the day that the tournament should be. And so there came many good knights that were at their large, and held them for the most part against King Arthur and his knights of the Round Table and came in the side of them of the castle. For Sir Epinogrus was the first, and he was the king's son of Northumberland, and Sir Palamides the Saracen was another, and Sir Safere his brother, and Sir Segwarides his brother, but they were christened, and Sir Malegrine another, and Sir Brian de les Isles, a noble knight, and Sir Grummore Grummursum, a good knight of Scotland, and Sir Carados of the dolorous tower, a noble knight, and Sir Turquine his brother, and Sir Arnold and Sir Gauter, two brethren, good knights of Cornwall. There came Sir Tristram de Liones, and with him Sir Dinas, the Seneschal, and Sir Sadok; but this Sir Tristram was not at that time knight of the Table Round, but he was one of the best knights of the world. And so all these noble knights accompanied them with the lady of the castle, and with the Red Knight of the Red Launds; but as for Sir Gareth, he would not take upon him more but as other mean knights.

#### **CHAPTER XXVII. How King Arthur went to the tournament with his knights, and how the lady received him worshipfully, and how the knights encountered.**

AND then there came with King Arthur Sir Gawaine, Agravaine, Gaheris, his brethren. And then his nephews Sir Uwaine le Blanchemains, and Sir Aglovale, Sir Tor, Sir Percivale de Galis, and Sir Lamorak de Galis. Then came Sir Launcelot du Lake with his brethren, nephews, and cousins, as Sir Lionel, Sir Ector de Maris, Sir Bors de Ganis, and Sir Galihodin, Sir Galihud, and many more of Sir Launcelot's blood, and Sir Dinadan, Sir La Cote Male Taile, his brother, a good knight, and Sir Sagramore, a good knight; and all the most part of the Round Table. Also there came with King Arthur these knights, the King of Ireland, King Agwisanse, and the King of Scotland, King Carados and King Uriens of the land of Gore, and King Bagdemagus and his son Sir Meliaganus,

and Sir Galahault the noble prince. All these kings, princes, and earls, barons, and other noble knights, as Sir Brandiles, Sir Uwaine les Avoutres, and Sir Kay, Sir Bedivere, Sir Meliot de Logres, Sir Petipase of Winchelsea, Sir Godelake: all these came with King Arthur, and more that cannot be rehearsed.

Now leave we of these kings and knights, and let us speak of the great array that was made within the castle and about the castle for both parties. The Lady Dame Lionesse ordained great array upon her part for her noble knights, for all manner of lodging and victual that came by land and by water, that there lacked nothing for her party, nor for the other, but there was plenty to be had for gold and silver for King Arthur and his knights. And then there came the harbingers from King Arthur for to harbour him, and his kings, dukes, earls, barons, and knights. And then Sir Gareth prayed Dame Lionesse and the Red Knight of the Red Launds, and Sir Persant and his brother, and Sir Gringamore, that in no wise there should none of them tell not his name, and make no more of him than of the least knight that there was, For, he said, I will not be known of neither more nor less, neither at the beginning neither at the ending. Then Dame Lionesse said unto Sir Gareth: Sir, I will lend you a ring, but I would pray you as you love me heartily let me have it again when the tournament is done, for that ring increaseth my beauty much more than it is of himself. And the virtue of my ring is that, that is green it will turn to red, and that is red it will turn in likeness to green, and that is blue it will turn to likeness of white, and that is white it will turn in likeness to blue, and so it will do of all manner of colours. Also who that beareth my ring shall lose no blood, and for great love I will give you this ring. Gramercy, said Sir Gareth, mine own lady, for this ring is passing meet for me, for it will turn all manner of likeness that I am in, and that shall cause me that I shall not be known. Then Sir Gringamore gave Sir Gareth a bay courser that was a passing good horse; also he gave him good armour and sure, and a noble sword that sometime Sir Gringamore's father won upon an heathen tyrant. And so thus every knight made him ready to that tournament. And King Arthur was come two days to-fore the Assumption of our Lady. And there was all manner of royalty of all minstrelsy that might be found. Also there came Queen Guenever and the Queen of Orkney, Sir Gareth's mother.

And upon the Assumption Day, when mass and matins were done, there were heralds with trumpets commanded to blow to the field. And so there came out Sir Epinogrus, the king's son of Northumberland, from the castle, and there encountered with him Sir Sagamore le Desirous, and either of them brake their spears to their hands. And then came in Sir Palamides out of the castle, and there encountered with him Gawaine, and either of them smote other so hard that both the good knights and their horses fell to the earth. And then knights of either



party rescued their knights. And then came in Sir Safere and Sir Segwarides, brethren to Sir Palamides; and there encountered Sir Agravaine with Sir Safere and Sir Gaheris encountered with Sir Segwarides. So Sir Safere smote down Agravaine, Sir Gawaine's brother; and Sir Segwarides, Sir Safere's brother. And Sir Malegrine, a knight of the castle, encountered with Sir Uwaine le Blanchemains, and there Sir Uwaine gave Sir Malegrine a fall, that he had almost broke his neck.

### **CHAPTER XXVIII. How the knights bare them in the battle.**

THEN Sir Brian de les Isles and Grummore Grummursum, knights of the castle, encountered with Sir Aglovale, and Sir Tor smote down Sir Grummore Grummursum to the earth. Then came in Sir Carados of the dolorous tower, and Sir Turquine, knights of the castle; and there encountered with them Sir Percivale de Galis and Sir Lamorak de Galis, that were two brethren. And there encountered Sir Percivale with Sir Carados, and either brake their spears unto their hands, and then Sir Turquine with Sir Lamorak, and either of them smote down other's horse and all to the earth, and either parties rescued other, and horsed them again. And Sir Arnold and Sir Gauter, knights of the castle, encountered with Sir Brandiles and Sir Kay, and these four knights encountered mightily, and brake their spears to their hands. Then came in Sir Tristram, Sir Sadok, and Sir Dinas, knights of the castle, and there encountered Sir Tristram with Sir Bedivere, and there Sir Bedivere was smitten to the earth both horse and man. And Sir Sadok encountered with Sir Petipase, and there Sir Sadok was overthrown. And there Uwaine les Avoutres smote down Sir Dinas, the Seneschal. Then came in Sir Persant of Inde, a knight of the castle, and there encountered with him Sir Launcelot du Lake, and there he smote Sir Persant, horse and man, to the earth. Then came Sir Pertolepe from the castle, and there encountered with him Sir Lionel, and there Sir Pertolepe, the Green Knight, smote down Sir Lionel, brother to Sir Launcelot. All this was marked by noble heralds, who bare him best, and their names.

And then came into the field Sir Perimones, the Red Knight, Sir Persant's brother, that was a knight of the castle, and he encountered with Sir Ector de Maris, and either smote other so hard that both their horses and they fell to the earth. And then came in the Red Knight of the Red Launds, and Sir Gareth, from the castle, and there encountered with them Sir Bors de Ganis and Sir Bleoberis, and there the Red Knight and Sir Bors [either] smote other so hard that their spears brast, and their horses fell grovelling to the earth. Then Sir Bleoberis brake his spear upon Sir Gareth, but of that stroke Sir Bleoberis fell to the earth. When Sir Galihodin saw that he bade Sir Gareth keep him, and Sir Gareth smote

him to the earth. Then Sir Galihud gat a spear to avenge his brother, and in the same wise Sir Gareth served him, and Sir Dinadan and his brother, La Cote Male Taile, and Sir Sagamore le Desirous, and Sir Dodinas le Savage. All these he bare down with one spear.

When King Agwysance of Ireland saw Sir Gareth fare so, he marvelled what he might be that one time seemed green, and another time, at his again coming, he seemed blue. And thus at every course that he rode to and fro he changed his colour, so that there might neither king nor knight have ready cognisance of him. Then Sir Agwysance, the King of Ireland, encountered with Sir Gareth, and there Sir Gareth smote him from his horse, saddle and all. And then came King Carados of Scotland, and Sir Gareth smote him down horse and man. And in the same wise he served King Uriens of the land of Gore. And then came in Sir Bagdemagus, and Sir Gareth smote him down, horse and man, to the earth. And Bagdemagus' son, Meliganus, brake a spear upon Sir Gareth mightily and knightly. And then Sir Galahault, the noble prince, cried on high: Knight with the many colours, well hast thou jousted; now make thee ready that I may joust with thee. Sir Gareth heard him, and he gat a great spear, and so they encountered together, and there the prince brake his spear; but Sir Gareth smote him upon the left side of the helm that he reeled here and there, and he had fallen down had not his men recovered him.

So God me help, said King Arthur, that same knight with the many colours is a good knight. Wherefore the king called unto him Sir Launcelot, and prayed him to encounter with that knight. Sir, said Launcelot, I may well find in my heart for to forbear him as at this time, for he hath had travail enough this day; and when a good knight doth so well upon some day, it is no good knight's part to let him of his worship, and namely, when he seeth a knight hath done so great labour; for peradventure, said Sir Launcelot, his quarrel is here this day, and peradventure he is best beloved with this lady of all that be here; for I see well he paineth him and enforceth him to do great deeds, and therefore, said Sir Launcelot, as for me, this day he shall have the honour; though it lay in my power to put him from it I would not.

#### **CHAPTER XXIX. Yet of the said tournament.**

THEN when this was done there was drawing of swords, and then there began a sore tournament. And there did Sir Lamorak marvellous deeds of arms; and betwixt Sir Lamorak and Sir Ironside, that was the Red Knight of the Red Launds, there was strong battle; and betwixt Sir Palamides and Bleoberis there was a strong battle; and Sir Gawaine and Sir Tristram met, and there Sir Gawaine had the worse, for he pulled Sir Gawaine from his horse, and there he

was long upon foot, and defouled. Then came in Sir Launcelot, and he smote Sir Turquine, and he him; and then came Sir Carados his brother, and both at once they assailed him, and he as the most noblest knight of the world worshipfully fought with them both, that all men wondered of the noblesse of Sir Launcelot. And then came in Sir Gareth, and knew that it was Sir Launcelot that fought with the two perilous knights. And then Sir Gareth came with his good horse and hurtled them in-sunder, and no stroke would he smite to Sir Launcelot. That espied Sir Launcelot, and deemed it should be the good knight Sir Gareth: and then Sir Gareth rode here and there, and smote on the right hand and on the left hand, and all the folk might well espy where that he rode. And by fortune he met with his brother Sir Gawaine, and there he put Sir Gawaine to the worse, for he put off his helm, and so he served five or six knights of the Round Table, that all men said he put him in the most pain, and best he did his devoir. For when Sir Tristram beheld him how he first jousted and after fought so well with a sword, then he rode unto Sir Ironside and to Sir Persant of Inde, and asked them, by their faith, What manner a knight is yonder knight that seemeth in so many divers colours? Truly, meseemeth, said Tristram, that he putteth himself in great pain, for he never ceaseth. Wot ye not what he is? said Sir Ironside. No, said Sir Tristram. Then shall ye know that this is he that loveth the lady of the castle, and she him again; and this is he that won me when I besieged the lady of this castle, and this is he that won Sir Persant of Inde, and his three brethren. What is his name, said Sir Tristram, and of what blood is he come? He was called in the court of King Arthur, Beaumains, but his right name is Sir Gareth of Orkney, brother to Sir Gawaine. By my head, said Sir Tristram, he is a good knight, and a big man of arms, and if he be young he shall prove a full noble knight. He is but a child, they all said, and of Sir Launcelot he was made knight. Therefore he is mickle the better, said Tristram. And then Sir Tristram, Sir Ironside, Sir Persant, and his brother, rode together for to help Sir Gareth; and then there were given many strong strokes.

And then Sir Gareth rode out on the one side to amend his helm; and then said his dwarf: Take me your ring, that ye lose it not while that ye drink. And so when he had drunk he gat on his helm, and eagerly took his horse and rode into the field, and left his ring with his dwarf; and the dwarf was glad the ring was from him, for then he wist well he should be known. And then when Sir Gareth was in the field all folks saw him well and plainly that he was in yellow colours; and there he rased off helms and pulled down knights, that King Arthur had marvel what knight he was, for the king saw by his hair that it was the same knight.

### **CHAPTER XXX. How Sir Gareth was espied by the heralds, and how he escaped out of the field.**

BUT before he was in so many colours, and now he is but in one colour; that is yellow. Now go, said King Arthur unto divers heralds, and ride about him, and espy what manner knight he is, for I have spered of many knights this day that be upon his party, and all say they know him not. And so an herald rode nigh Gareth as he could; and there he saw written about his helm in gold, This helm is Sir Gareth of Orkney. Then the herald cried as he were wood, and many heralds with him:—This is Sir Gareth of Orkney in the yellow arms; wherby[\*4] all kings and knights of Arthur's beheld him and awaited; and then they pressed all to behold him, and ever the heralds cried: This is Sir Gareth of Orkney, King Lot's son. And when Sir Gareth espied that he was discovered, then he doubled his strokes, and smote down Sir Sagramore, and his brother Sir Gawaine. O brother, said Sir Gawaine, I weened ye would not have stricken me.

[\*4] So W. de Worde; Caxton "that by."

So when he heard him say so he thrang here and there, and so with great pain he gat out of the press, and there he met with his dwarf. O boy, said Sir Gareth, thou hast beguiled me foul this day that thou kept my ring; give it me anon again, that I may hide my body withal; and so he took it him. And then they all wist not where he was become; and Sir Gawaine had in manner espied where Sir Gareth rode, and then he rode after with all his might. That espied Sir Gareth, and rode lightly into the forest, that Sir Gawaine wist not where he was become. And when Sir Gareth wist that Sir Gawaine was passed, he asked the dwarf of best counsel. Sir, said the dwarf, meseemeth it were best, now that ye are escaped from spying, that ye send my lady Dame Lionesse her ring. It is well advised, said Sir Gareth; now have it here and bear it to her, and say that I recommend me unto her good grace, and say her I will come when I may, and I pray her to be true and faithful to me as I will be to her. Sir, said the dwarf, it shall be done as ye command: and so he rode his way, and did his errand unto the lady. Then she said, Where is my knight, Sir Gareth? Madam, said the dwarf, he bade me say that he would not be long from you. And so lightly the dwarf came again unto Sir Gareth, that would full fain have had a lodging, for he had need to be reposed. And then fell there a thunder and a rain, as heaven and earth should go together. And Sir Gareth was not a little weary, for of all that day he had but little rest, neither his horse nor he. So this Sir Gareth rode so long in that forest until the night came. And ever it lightened and thundered, as it had been wood. At the last by fortune he came to a castle, and there he heard the waits upon the walls.

**CHAPTER XXXI. How Sir Gareth came to a castle where he was well lodged, and he jousted with a knight and slew him.**

THEN Sir Gareth rode unto the barbican of the castle, and prayed the porter fair to let him into the castle. The porter answered ungoodly again, and said, Thou gettest no lodging here. Fair sir, say not so, for I am a knight of King Arthur's, and pray the lord or the lady of this castle to give me harbour for the love of King Arthur. Then the porter went unto the duchess, and told her how there was a knight of King Arthur's would have harbour. Let him in, said the duchess, for I will see that knight, and for King Arthur's sake he shall not be harbourless. Then she yode up into a tower over the gate, with great torchlight.

When Sir Gareth saw that torchlight he cried on high: Whether thou be lord or lady, giant or champion, I take no force so that I may have harbour this night; and if it so be that I must needs fight, spare me not to-morn when I have rested me, for both I and mine horse be weary. Sir knight, said the lady, thou speakest knightly and boldly; but wit thou well the lord of this castle loveth not King Arthur, nor none of his court, for my lord hath ever been against him; and therefore thou were better not to come within this castle; for an thou come in this night, thou must come in under such form, that wheresomever thou meet my lord, by stigh or by street, thou must yield thee to him as prisoner. Madam, said Sir Gareth, what is your lord, and what is his name? Sir, my lord's name is the Duke de la Rowse. Well madam, said Sir Gareth, I shall promise you in what place I meet your lord I shall yield me unto him and to his good grace; with that I understand he will do me no harm: and if I understand that he will, I will release myself an I can with my spear and my sword. Ye say well, said the duchess; and then she let the drawbridge down, and so he rode into the hall, and there he alighted, and his horse was led into a stable; and in the hall he unarmed him and said, Madam, I will not out of this hall this night; and when it is daylight, let see who will have ado with me, he shall find me ready. Then was he set unto supper, and had many good dishes. Then Sir Gareth list well to eat, and knightly he ate his meat, and eagerly; there was many a fair lady by him, and some said they never saw a goodlier man nor so well of eating. Then they made him passing good cheer, and shortly when he had supped his bed was made there; so he rested him all night.

And on the morn he heard mass, and brake his fast and took his leave at the duchess, and at them all; and thanked her goodly of her lodging, and of his good cheer; and then she asked him his name. Madam, he said, truly my name is Gareth of Orkney, and some men call me Beaumains. Then knew she well it was the same knight that fought for Dame Lionesse. So Sir Gareth departed and rode up into a mountain, and there met him a knight, his name was Sir Bendelaine,

and said to Sir Gareth: Thou shalt not pass this way, for either thou shalt joust with me, or else be my prisoner. Then will I joust, said Sir Gareth. And so they let their horses run, and there Sir Gareth smote him throughout the body; and Sir Bendelaine rode forth to his castle there beside, and there died. So Sir Gareth would have rested him, and he came riding to Bendelaine's castle. Then his knights and servants espied that it was he that had slain their lord. Then they armed twenty good men, and came out and assailed Sir Gareth; and so he had no spear, but his sword, and put his shield afore him; and there they brake their spears upon him, and they assailed him passingly sore. But ever Sir Gareth defended him as a knight.

### **CHAPTER XXXII. How Sir Gareth fought with a knight that held within his castle thirty ladies, and how he slew him.**

SO when they saw that they might not overcome him, they rode from him, and took their counsel to slay his horse; and so they came in upon Sir Gareth, and with spears they slew his horse, and then they assailed him hard. But when he was on foot, there was none that he fought but he gave him such a buffet that he did never recover. So he slew them by one and one till they were but four, and there they fled; and Sir Gareth took a good horse that was one of theirs, and rode his way.

Then he rode a great pace till that he came to a castle, and there he heard much mourning of ladies and gentlewomen. So there came by him a page. What noise is this, said Sir Gareth, that I hear within this castle? Sir knight, said the page, here be within this castle thirty ladies, and all they be widows; for here is a knight that waiteth daily upon this castle, and his name is the Brown Knight without Pity, and he is the periloust knight that now liveth; and therefore sir, said the page, I rede you flee. Nay, said Sir Gareth, I will not flee though thou be afeard of him. And then the page saw where came the Brown Knight: Lo, said the page, yonder he cometh. Let me deal with him, said Sir Gareth. And when either of other had a sight they let their horses run, and the Brown Knight brake his spear, and Sir Gareth smote him throughout the body, that he overthrew him to the ground stark dead. So Sir Gareth rode into the castle, and prayed the ladies that he might repose him. Alas, said the ladies, ye may not be lodged here. Make him good cheer, said the page, for this knight hath slain your enemy. Then they all made him good cheer as lay in their power. But wit ye well they made him good cheer, for they might none otherwise do, for they were but poor.

And so on the morn he went to mass, and there he saw the thirty ladies kneel, and lay grovelling upon divers tombs, making great dole and sorrow. Then Sir Gareth wist well that in the tombs lay their lords. Fair ladies, said Sir Gareth, ye

must at the next feast of Pentecost be at the court of King Arthur, and say that I, Sir Gareth, sent you thither. We shall do this, said the ladies. So he departed, and by fortune he came to a mountain, and there he found a goodly knight that bade him, Abide sir knight, and joust with me. What are ye? said Sir Gareth. My name is, said he, the Duke de la Rowse. Ah sir, ye are the same knight that I lodged once in your castle; and there I made promise unto your lady that I should yield me unto you. Ah, said the duke, art thou that proud knight that profferest to fight with my knights; therefore make thee ready, for I will have ado with you. So they let their horses run, and there Sir Gareth smote the duke down from his horse. But the duke lightly avoided his horse, and dressed his shield and drew his sword, and bade Sir Gareth alight and fight with him. So he did alight, and they did great battle together more than an hour, and either hurt other full sore. At the last Sir Gareth gat the duke to the earth, and would have slain him, and then he yield him to him. Then must ye go, said Sir Gareth, unto Sir Arthur my lord at the next feast, and say that I, Sir Gareth of Orkney, sent you unto him. It shall be done, said the duke, and I will do to you homage and fealty with an hundred knights with me; and all the days of my life to do you service where ye will command me.

**CHAPTER XXXIII. How Sir Gareth and Sir Gawaine fought each against other, and how they knew each other by the damosel Linet.**

SO the duke departed, and Sir Gareth stood there alone; and there he saw an armed knight coming toward him. Then Sir Gareth took the duke's shield, and mounted upon horseback, and so without biding they ran together as it had been the thunder. And there that knight hurt Sir Gareth under the side with his spear. And then they alighted and drew their swords, and gave great strokes that the blood trailed to the ground. And so they fought two hours.

At the last there came the damosel Linet, that some men called the damosel Savage, and she came riding upon an ambling mule; and there she cried all on high, Sir Gawaine, Sir Gawaine, leave thy fighting with thy brother Sir Gareth. And when he heard her say so he threw away his shield and his sword, and ran to Sir Gareth, and took him in his arms, and sithen kneeled down and asked him mercy. What are ye, said Sir Gareth, that right now were so strong and so mighty, and now so suddenly yield you to me? O Gareth, I am your brother Sir Gawaine, that for your sake have had great sorrow and labour. Then Sir Gareth unlaced his helm, and kneeled down to him, and asked him mercy. Then they rose both, and embraced either other in their arms, and wept a great while or they might speak, and either of them gave other the prize of the battle. And there were many kind words between them. Alas, my fair brother, said Sir Gawaine,

perdy I owe of right to worship you an ye were not my brother, for ye have worshipped King Arthur and all his court, for ye have sent him[\*5] more worshipful knights this twelvemonth than six the best of the Round Table have done, except Sir Launcelot.

[\*5] So W. de Worde; Caxton "me."

Then came the damosel Savage that was the Lady Linet, that rode with Sir Gareth so long, and there she did staunch Sir Gareth's wounds and Sir Gawaine's. Now what will ye do? said the damosel Savage; meseemeth that it were well done that Arthur had witting of you both, for your horses are so bruised that they may not bear. Now, fair damosel, said Sir Gawaine, I pray you ride unto my lord mine uncle, King Arthur, and tell him what adventure is to me betid here, and I suppose he will not tarry long. Then she took her mule, and lightly she came to King Arthur that was but two mile thence. And when she had told him tidings the king bade get him a palfrey. And when he was upon his back he bade the lords and ladies come after, who that would; and there was saddling and bridling of queens' horses and princes' horses, and well was him that soonest might be ready.

So when the king came thereas they were, he saw Sir Gawaine and Sir Gareth sit upon a little hill-side, and then the king avoided his horse. And when he came nigh Sir Gareth he would have spoken but he might not; and therewith he sank down in a swoon for gladness. And so they stert unto their uncle, and required him of his good grace to be of good comfort. Wit ye well the king made great joy, and many a piteous complaint he made to Sir Gareth, and ever he wept as he had been a child. With that came his mother, the Queen of Orkney, Dame Morgawse, and when she saw Sir Gareth readily in the visage she might not weep, but suddenly fell down in a swoon, and lay there a great while like as she had been dead. And then Sir Gareth recomforted his mother in such wise that she recovered and made good cheer. Then the king commanded that all manner of knights that were under his obeissance should make their lodging right there for the love of his nephews. And so it was done, and all manner of purveyance purveyed, that there lacked nothing that might be gotten of tame nor wild for gold or silver. And then by the means of the damosel Savage Sir Gawaine and Sir Gareth were healed of their wounds; and there they sojourned eight days.

Then said King Arthur unto the damosel Savage: I marvel that your sister, Dame Lionesse, cometh not here to me, and in especial that she cometh not to visit her knight, my nephew Sir Gareth, that hath had so much travail for her love. My lord, said the damosel Linet, ye must of your good grace hold her excused, for she knoweth not that my lord, Sir Gareth, is here. Go then for her, said King Arthur, that we may be appointed what is best to be done, according to



the pleasure of my nephew. Sir, said the damosel, that shall be done, and so she rode unto her sister. And as lightly as she might she made her ready; and she came on the morn with her brother Sir Gringamore, and with her forty knights. And so when she was come she had all the cheer that might be done, both of the king, and of many other kings and queens.

**CHAPTER XXXIV. How Sir Gareth acknowledged that they loved each other to King Arthur, and of the appointment of their wedding.**

AND among all these ladies she was named the fairest, and peerless. Then when Sir Gawaine saw her there was many a goodly look and goodly words, that all men of worship had joy to behold them. Then came King Arthur and many other kings, and Dame Guenever, and the Queen of Orkney. And there the king asked his nephew, Sir Gareth, whether he would have that lady as paramour, or to have her to his wife. My lord, wit you well that I love her above all ladies living. Now, fair lady, said King Arthur, what say ye? Most noble King, said Dame Lionesse, wit you well that my lord, Sir Gareth, is to me more liefer to have and wield as my husband, than any king or prince that is christened; and if I may not have him I promise you I will never have none. For, my lord Arthur, said Dame Lionesse, wit ye well he is my first love, and he shall be the last; and if ye will suffer him to have his will and free choice I dare say he will have me. That is truth, said Sir Gareth; an I have not you and wield not you as my wife, there shall never lady nor gentlewoman rejoice me. What, nephew, said the king, is the wind in that door? for wit ye well I would not for the stint of my crown to be causer to withdraw your hearts; and wit ye well ye cannot love so well but I shall rather increase it than distress it. And also ye shall have my love and my lordship in the uttermost wise that may lie in my power. And in the same wise said Sir Gareth's mother.

Then there was made a provision for the day of marriage; and by the king's advice it was provided that it should be at Michaelmas following, at Kink Kenadon by the seaside, for there is a plentiful country. And so it was cried in all the places through the realm. And then Sir Gareth sent his summons to all these knights and ladies that he had won in battle to-fore, that they should be at his day of marriage at Kink Kenadon by the sands. And then Dame Lionesse, and the damosel Linet with Sir Gringamore, rode to their castle; and a goodly and a rich ring she gave to Sir Gareth, and he gave her another. And King Arthur gave her a rich pair of beads[\*6] of gold; and so she departed; and King Arthur and his fellowship rode toward Kink Kenadon, and Sir Gareth brought his lady on the way, and so came to the king again and rode with him. Lord! the great cheer that Sir Launcelot made of Sir Gareth and he of him, for there was never no knight

that Sir Gareth loved so well as he did Sir Launcelot; and ever for the most part he would be in Sir Launcelot's company; for after Sir Gareth had espied Sir Gawaine's conditions, he withdrew himself from his brother, Sir Gawaine's, fellowship, for he was vengeable, and where he hated he would be avenged with murder, and that hated Sir Gareth.

[\*6] So W. de Worde; Caxton "bee."

### **CHAPTER XXXV. Of the Great Royalty, and what officers were made at the feast of the wedding, and of the jousts at the feast.**

SO it drew fast to Michaelmas; and thither came Dame Lionesse, the lady of the Castle Perilous, and her sister, Dame Linet, with Sir Gringamore, her brother, with them for he had the conduct of these ladies. And there they were lodged at the device of King Arthur. And upon Michaelmas Day the Bishop of Canterbury made the wedding betwixt Sir Gareth and the Lady Lionesse with great solemnity. And King Arthur made Gaheris to wed the Damosel Savage, that was Dame Linet; and King Arthur made Sir Agravaine to wed Dame Lionesse's niece, a fair lady, her name was Dame Laurel.

And so when this solemnization was done, then came in the Green Knight, Sir Pertolepe, with thirty knights, and there he did homage and fealty to Sir Gareth, and these knights to hold of him for evermore. Also Sir Pertolepe said: I pray you that at this feast I may be your chamberlain. With a good will, said Sir Gareth sith it liketh you to take so simple an office. Then came in the Red Knight, with three score knights with him, and did to Sir Gareth homage and fealty, and all those knights to hold of him for evermore. And then this Sir Perimones prayed Sir Gareth to grant him to be his chief butler at that high feast. I will well, said Sir Gareth, that ye have this office, and it were better. Then came in Sir Persant of Inde, with an hundred knights with him, and there he did homage and fealty, and all his knights should do him service, and hold their lands of him for ever; and there he prayed Sir Gareth to make him his sewer-chief at the feast. I will well, said Sir Gareth, that ye have it and it were better. Then came the Duke de la Rowse with an hundred knights with him, and there he did homage and fealty to Sir Gareth, and so to hold their lands of him for ever. And he required Sir Gareth that he might serve him of the wine that day of that feast. I will well, said Sir Gareth, and it were better. Then came in the Red Knight of the Red Launds, that was Sir Ironside, and he brought with him three hundred knights, and there he did homage and fealty, and all these knights to hold their lands of him for ever. And then he asked Sir Gareth to be his carver. I will well, said Sir Gareth, an it please you.

Then came into the court thirty ladies, and all they seemed widows, and

those thirty ladies brought with them many fair gentlewomen. And all they kneeled down at once unto King Arthur and unto Sir Gareth, and there all those ladies told the king how Sir Gareth delivered them from the dolorous tower, and slew the Brown Knight without Pity: And therefore we, and our heirs for evermore, will do homage unto Sir Gareth of Orkney. So then the kings and queens, princes and earls, barons and many bold knights, went unto meat; and well may ye wit there were all manner of meat plenteously, all manner revels and games, with all manner of minstrelsy that was used in those days. Also there was great jousts three days. But the king would not suffer Sir Gareth to joust, because of his new bride; for, as the French book saith, that Dame Lionesse desired of the king that none that were wedded should joust at that feast.

So the first day there jousted Sir Lamorak de Galis, for he overthrew thirty knights, and did passing marvellously deeds of arms; and then King Arthur made Sir Persant and his two brethren Knights of the Round Table to their lives' end, and gave them great lands. Also the second day there jousted Tristram best, and he overthrew forty knights, and did there marvellous deeds of arms. And there King Arthur made Ironside, that was the Red Knight of the Red Launds, a Knight of the Table Round to his life's end, and gave him great lands. The third day there jousted Sir Launcelot du Lake, and he overthrew fifty knights, and did many marvellous deeds of arms, that all men wondered on him. And there King Arthur made the Duke de la Rowse a Knight of the Round Table to his life's end, and gave him great lands to spend. But when these jousts were done, Sir Lamorak and Sir Tristram departed suddenly, and would not be known, for the which King Arthur and all the court were sore displeased. And so they held the court forty days with great solemnity. And this Sir Gareth was a noble knight, and a well-ruled, and fair-languaged.

Thus endeth this tale of Sir Gareth of Orkney that wedded Dame Lionesse of the Castle Perilous. And also Sir Gaheris wedded her sister, Dame Linet, that was called the Damosel Sabage. And Sir Agrabaine wedded Dame Laurel, a fair lady and great, and mighty lands with great riches gave with them King Arthur, that royally they might live till their lives' end.

Here followeth the viii. book, the which is the first book of Sir Tristram de Liones, and who was his father and his mother, and how he was born and fostered, and how he was made knight.

## BOOK VII

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### **CHAPTER I. How Sir Tristram de Liones was born, and how his mother died at his birth, wherefore she named him Tristram.**

IT was a king that hight Meliodas, and he was lord and king of the country of Liones, and this Meliodas was a likely knight as any was that time living. And by fortune he wedded King Mark's sister of Cornwall, and she was called Elizabeth, that was called both good and fair. And at that time King Arthur reigned, and he was whole king of England, Wales, and Scotland, and of many other realms: howbeit there were many kings that were lords of many countries, but all they held their lands of King Arthur; for in Wales were two kings, and in the north were many kings; and in Cornwall and in the west were two kings; also in Ireland were two or three kings, and all were under the obeissance of King Arthur. So was the King of France, and the King of Brittany, and all the lordships unto Rome.

So when this King Meliodas had been with his wife, within a while she waxed great with child, and she was a full meek lady, and well she loved her lord, and he her again, so there was great joy betwixt them. Then there was a lady in that country that had loved King Meliodas long, and by no mean she never could get his love; therefore she let ordain upon a day, as King Meliodas rode a-hunting, for he was a great chaser, and there by an enchantment she made him chase an hart by himself alone till that he came to an old castle, and there anon he was taken prisoner by the lady that him loved. When Elizabeth, King Meliodas' wife, missed her lord, and she was nigh out of her wit, and also as great with child as she was, she took a gentlewoman with her, and ran into the forest to seek her lord. And when she was far in the forest she might no farther, for she began to travail fast of her child. And she had many grimly throes; her gentlewoman helped her all that she might, and so by miracle of Our Lady of Heaven she was delivered with great pains. But she had taken such cold for the default of help that deep draughts of death took her, that needs she must die and depart out of this world; there was none other bote.

And when this Queen Elizabeth saw that there was none other bote, then she made great dole, and said unto her gentlewoman: When ye see my lord, King

Meliодas, recommend me unto him, and tell him what pains I endure here for his love, and how I must die here for his sake for default of good help; and let him wit that I am full sorry to depart out of this world from him, therefore pray him to be friend to my soul. Now let me see my little child, for whom I have had all this sorrow. And when she saw him she said thus: Ah, my little son, thou hast murdered thy mother, and therefore I suppose, thou that art a murderer so young, thou art full likely to be a manly man in thine age. And because I shall die of the birth of thee, I charge thee, gentlewoman, that thou pray my lord, King Meliодas, that when he is christened let call him Tristram, that is as much to say as a sorrowful birth. And therewith this queen gave up the ghost and died. Then the gentlewoman laid her under an umbre of a great tree, and then she lapped the child as well as she might for cold. Right so there came the barons, following after the queen, and when they saw that she was dead, and understood none other but the king was destroyed, [\*7]then certain of them would have slain the child, because they would have been lords of the country of Liones.

[\*7] Printed by Caxton as part of chap. ii.

## **CHAPTER II. How the stepmother of Sir Tristram had ordained poison for to have poisoned Sir Tristram.**

BUT then through the fair speech of the gentlewoman, and by the means that she made, the most part of the barons would not assent thereto. And then they let carry home the dead queen, and much dole was made for her.

Then this meanwhile Merlin delivered King Meliодas out of prison on the morn after his queen was dead. And so when the king was come home the most part of the barons made great joy. But the sorrow that the king made for his queen that might no tongue tell. So then the king let inter her richly, and after he let christen his child as his wife had commanded afore her death. And then he let call him Tristram, the sorrowful born child. Then the King Meliодas endured seven years without a wife, and all this time Tristram was nourished well. Then it befell that King Meliодas wedded King Howell's daughter of Brittany, and anon she had children of King Meliодas: then was she heavy and wroth that her children should not rejoice the country of Liones, wherefore this queen ordained for to poison young Tristram. So she let poison be put in a piece of silver in the chamber whereas Tristram and her children were together, unto that intent that when Tristram were thirsty he should drink that drink. And so it fell upon a day, the queen's son, as he was in that chamber, espied the piece with poison, and he weened it had been good drink, and because the child was thirsty he took the piece with poison and drank freely; and therewithal suddenly the child brast and was dead.

When the queen of Meliodas wist of the death of her son, wit ye well that she was heavy. But yet the king understood nothing of her treason. Notwithstanding the queen would not leave this, but eft she let ordain more poison, and put it in a piece. And by fortune King Meliodas, her husband, found the piece with wine where was the poison, and he that was much thirsty took the piece for to drink thereout. And as he would have drunken thereof the queen espied him, and then she ran unto him, and pulled the piece from him suddenly. The king marvelled why she did so, and remembered him how her son was suddenly slain with poison. And then he took her by the hand, and said: Thou false traitress, thou shalt tell me what manner of drink this is, or else I shall slay thee. And therewith he pulled out his sword, and sware a great oath that he should slay her but if she told him truth. Ah! mercy, my lord, said she, and I shall tell you all. And then she told him why she would have slain Tristram, because her children should rejoice his land. Well, said King Meliodas, and therefore shall ye have the law. And so she was condemned by the assent of the barons to be burnt; and then was there made a great fire, and right as she was at the fire to take her execution, young Tristram kneeled afore King Meliodas, and besought him to give him a boon. I will well, said the king again. Then said young Tristram, Give me the life of thy queen, my stepmother. That is unrightfully asked, said King Meliodas, for thou ought of right to hate her, for she would have slain thee with that poison an she might have had her will; and for thy sake most is my cause that she should die.

Sir, said Tristram, as for that, I beseech you of your mercy that you will forgive it her, and as for my part, God forgive it her, and I do; and so much it liked your highness to grant me my boon, for God's love I require you hold your promise. Sithen it is so, said the king, I will that ye have her life. Then, said the king, I give her to you, and go ye to the fire and take her, and do with her what ye will. So Sir Tristram went to the fire, and by the commandment of the king delivered her from the death. But after that King Meliodas would never have ado with her, as at bed and board. But by the good means of young Tristram he made the king and her accorded. But then the king would not suffer young Tristram to abide no longer in his court.

### **CHAPTER III. How Sir Tristram was sent into France, and had one to govern him named Gouvernail, and how he learned to harp, hawk, and hunt.**

AND then he let ordain a gentleman that was well learned and taught, his name was Gouvernail; and then he sent young Tristram with Gouvernail into France to learn the language, and nurture, and deeds of arms. And there was

Tristram more than seven years. And then when he well could speak the language, and had learned all that he might learn in that country, then he came home to his father, King Meliodas, again. And so Tristram learned to be an harper passing all other, that there was none such called in no country, and so on harping and on instruments of music he applied him in his youth for to learn.

And after, as he grew in might and strength, he laboured ever in hunting and in hawking, so that never gentleman more, that ever we heard read of. And as the book saith, he began good measures of blowing of beasts of venery, and beasts of chase, and all manner of vermin, and all these terms we have yet of hawking and hunting. And therefore the book of venery, of hawking, and hunting, is called the book of Sir Tristram. Wherefore, as meseemeth, all gentlemen that bear old arms ought of right to honour Sir Tristram for the goodly terms that gentlemen have and use, and shall to the day of doom, that thereby in a manner all men of worship may dissever a gentleman from a yeoman, and from a yeoman a villain. For he that gentle is will draw him unto gentle tatches, and to follow the customs of noble gentlemen.

Thus Sir Tristram endured in Cornwall until he was big and strong, of the age of eighteen years. And then the King Meliodas had great joy of Sir Tristram, and so had the queen, his wife. For ever after in her life, because Sir Tristram saved her from the fire, she did never hate him more after, but loved him ever after, and gave Tristram many great gifts; for every estate loved him, where that he went.

#### **CHAPTER IV. How Sir Marhaus came out of Ireland for to ask truage of Cornwall, or else he would fight therefore.**

THEN it befell that King Anguish of Ireland sent unto King Mark of Cornwall for his truage, that Cornwall had paid many winters. And all that time King Mark was behind of the truage for seven years. And King Mark and his barons gave unto the messenger of Ireland these words and answer, that they would none pay; and bade the messenger go unto his King Anguish, and tell him we will pay him no truage, but tell your lord, an he will always have truage of us of Cornwall, bid him send a trusty knight of his land, that will fight for his right, and we shall find another for to defend our right. With this answer the messengers departed into Ireland. And when King Anguish understood the answer of the messengers he was wonderly wroth. And then he called unto him Sir Marhaus, the good knight, that was nobly proved, and a Knight of the Table Round. And this Marhaus was brother unto the queen of Ireland. Then the king said thus: Fair brother, Sir Marhaus, I pray you go into Cornwall for my sake, and do battle for our truage that of right we ought to have; and whatsoever ye

spend ye shall have sufficiently, more than ye shall need. Sir, said Marhaus, wit ye well that I shall not be loath to do battle in the right of you and your land with the best knight of the Table Round; for I know them, for the most part, what be their deeds; and for to advance my deeds and to increase my worship I will right gladly go unto this journey for our right.

So in all haste there was made purveyance for Sir Marhaus, and he had all things that to him needed; and so he departed out of Ireland, and arrived up in Cornwall even fast by the Castle of Tintagil. And when King Mark understood that he was there arrived to fight for Ireland, then made King Mark great sorrow when he understood that the good and noble knight Sir Marhaus was come. For they knew no knight that durst have ado with him. For at that time Sir Marhaus was called one of the famousest and renowned knights of the world. And thus Sir Marhaus abode in the sea, and every day he sent unto King Mark for to pay the truage that was behind of seven year, other else to find a knight to fight with him for the truage. This manner of message Sir Marhaus sent daily unto King Mark.

Then they of Cornwall let make cries in every place, that what knight would fight for to save the truage of Cornwall, he should be rewarded so that he should fare the better, term of his life. Then some of the barons said to King Mark, and counselled him to send to the court of King Arthur for to seek Sir Launcelot du Lake, that was that time named for the marvelloust knight of all the world. Then there were some other barons that counselled the king not to do so, and said that it was labour in vain, because Sir Marhaus was a knight of the Round Table, therefore any of them will be loath to have ado with other, but if it were any knight at his own request would fight disguised and unknown. So the king and all his barons assented that it was no bote to seek any knight of the Round Table. This mean while came the language and the noise unto King Meliodas, how that Sir Marhaus abode battle fast by Tintagil, and how King Mark could find no manner knight to fight for him. When young Tristram heard of this he was wroth, and sore ashamed that there durst no knight in Cornwall have ado with Sir Marhaus of Ireland.

#### **CHAPTER V. How Tristram enterprized the battle to fight for the truage of Cornwall, and how he was made knight.**

THEREWITHAL Tristram went unto his father, King Meliodas, and asked him counsel what was best to do for to recover Cornwall from truage. For, as meseemeth, said Sir Tristram, it were shame that Sir Marhaus, the queen's brother of Ireland, should go away unless that he were foughten withal. As for that, said King Meliodas, wit you well, son Tristram, that Sir Marhaus is called



one of the best knights of the world, and Knight of the Table Round; and therefore I know no knight in this country that is able to match with him. Alas, said Sir Tristram, that I am not made knight; and if Sir Marhaus should thus depart into Ireland, God let me never have worship: an I were made knight I should match him. And sir, said Tristram, I pray you give me leave to ride to King Mark; and, so ye be not displeased, of King Mark will I be made knight. I will well, said King Meliodas, that ye be ruled as your courage will rule you. Then Sir Tristram thanked his father much. And then he made him ready to ride into Cornwall.

In the meanwhile there came a messenger with letters of love from King Faramon of France's daughter unto Sir Tristram, that were full piteous letters, and in them were written many complaints of love; but Sir Tristram had no joy of her letters nor regard unto her. Also she sent him a little brachet that was passing fair. But when the king's daughter understood that Sir Tristram would not love her, as the book saith, she died for sorrow. And then the same squire that brought the letter and the brachet came again unto Sir Tristram, as after ye shall hear in the tale.

So this young Sir Tristram rode unto his eme, King Mark of Cornwall. And when he came there he heard say that there would no knight fight with Sir Marhaus. Then yede Sir Tristram unto his eme and said: Sir, if ye will give me the order of knighthood, I will do battle with Sir Marhaus. What are ye, said the king, and from whence be ye come? Sir, said Tristram, I come from King Meliodas that wedded your sister, and a gentleman wit ye well I am. King Mark beheld Sir Tristram and saw that he was but a young man of age, but he was passingly well made and big. Fair sir, said the king, what is your name, and where were ye born? Sir, said he again, my name is Tristram, and in the country of Lionnes was I born. Ye say well, said the king; and if ye will do this battle I shall make you knight. Therefore I come to you, said Sir Tristram, and for none other cause. But then King Mark made him knight. And therewithal, anon as he had made him knight, he sent a messenger unto Sir Marhaus with letters that said that he had found a young knight ready for to take the battle to the uttermost. It may well be, said Sir Marhaus; but tell King Mark I will not fight with no knight but he be of blood royal, that is to say, other king's son, other queen's son, born of a prince or princess.

When King Mark understood that, he sent for Sir Tristram de Lionnes and told him what was the answer of Sir Marhaus. Then said Sir Tristram: Sithen that he saith so, let him wit that I am come of father side and mother side of as noble blood as he is: for, sir, now shall ye know that I am King Meliodas' son, born of your own sister, Dame Elizabeth, that died in the forest in the birth of me. O

Jesu, said King Mark, ye are welcome fair nephew to me. Then in all the haste the king let horse Sir Tristram, and armed him in the best manner that might be had or gotten for gold or silver. And then King Mark sent unto Sir Marhaus, and did him to wit that a better born man than he was himself should fight with him, and his name is Sir Tristram de Liones, gotten of King Meliodas, and born of King Mark's sister. Then was Sir Marhaus glad and blithe that he should fight with such a gentleman. And so by the assent of King Mark and of Sir Marhaus they let ordain that they should fight within an island nigh Sir Marhaus' ships; and so was Sir Tristram put into a vessel both his horse and he, and all that to him longed both for his body and for his horse. Sir Tristram lacked nothing. And when King Mark and his barons of Cornwall beheld how young Sir Tristram departed with such a carriage to fight for the right of Cornwall, there was neither man nor woman of worship but they wept to see and understand so young a knight to jeopardy himself for their right.

#### **CHAPTER VI. How Sir Tristram arrived into the Island for to furnish the battle with Sir Marhaus.**

SO to shorten this tale, when Sir Tristram was arrived within the island he looked to the farther side, and there he saw at an anchor six ships nigh to the land; and under the shadow of the ships upon the land, there hove the noble knight, Sir Marhaus of Ireland. Then Sir Tristram commanded his servant Gouvernail to bring his horse to the land, and dress his harness at all manner of rights. And then when he had so done he mounted upon his horse; and when he was in his saddle well apparelled, and his shield dressed upon his shoulder, Tristram asked Gouvernail, Where is this knight that I shall have ado withal? Sir, said Gouvernail, see ye him not? I weened ye had seen him; yonder he hoveth under the umbre of his ships on horseback, with his spear in his hand and his shield upon his shoulder. That is truth, said the noble knight, Sir Tristram, now I see him well enough.

Then he commanded his servant Gouvernail to go to his vessel again: And commend me unto mine eme King Mark, and pray him, if that I be slain in this battle, for to inter my body as him seemed best; and as for me, let him wit that I will never yield me for cowardice; and if I be slain and flee not, then they have lost no truage for me; and if so be that I flee or yield me as recreant, bid mine eme never bury me in Christian burials. And upon thy life, said Sir Tristram to Gouvernail, come thou not nigh this island till that thou see me overcome or slain, or else that I win yonder knight. So either departed from other sore weeping.

## **CHAPTER VII. How Sir Tristram fought against Sir Marhaus and achieved his battle, and how Sir Marhaus fled to his ship.**

AND then Sir Marhaus avised Sir Tristram, and said thus: Young knight, Sir Tristram, what dost thou here? me sore repenteth of thy courage, for wit thou well I have been assayed, and the best knights of this land have been assayed of my hand; and also I have matched with the best knights of the world, and therefore by my counsel return again unto thy vessel. And fair knight, and well-proved knight, said Sir Tristram, thou shalt well wit I may not forsake thee in this quarrel, for I am for thy sake made knight. And thou shalt well wit that I am a king's son born, and gotten upon a queen; and such promise I have made at my uncle's request and mine own seeking, that I shall fight with thee unto the uttermost, and deliver Cornwall from the old truage. And also wit thou well, Sir Marhaus, that this is the greatest cause that thou couragest me to have ado with thee, for thou art called one of the most renowned knights of the world, and because of that noise and fame that thou hast thou givest me courage to have ado with thee, for never yet was I proved with good knight; and sithen I took the order of knighthood this day, I am well pleased that I may have ado with so good a knight as thou art. And now wit thou well, Sir Marhaus, that I cast me to get worship on thy body; and if that I be not proved, I trust to God that I shall be worshipfully proved upon thy body, and to deliver the country of Cornwall for ever from all manner of truage from Ireland for ever.

When Sir Marhaus had heard him say what he would, he said then thus again: Fair knight, sithen it is so that thou castest to win worship of me, I let thee wit worship may thou none lose by me if thou mayest stand me three strokes; for I let thee wit for my noble deeds, proved and seen, King Arthur made me Knight of the Table Round.

Then they began to feutre their spears, and they met so fiercely together that they smote either other down, both horse and all. But Sir Marhaus smote Sir Tristram a great wound in the side with his spear, and then they avoided their horses, and pulled out their swords, and threw their shields afore them. And then they lashed together as men that were wild and courageous. And when they had stricken so together long, then they left their strokes, and foined at their breaths and visors; and when they saw that that might not prevail them, then they hurtled together like rams to bear either other down. Thus they fought still more than half a day, and either were wounded passing sore, that the blood ran down freshly from them upon the ground. By then Sir Tristram waxed more fresher than Sir Marhaus, and better winded and bigger; and with a mighty stroke he smote Sir Marhaus upon the helm such a buffet that it went through his helm, and through the coif of steel, and through the brain-pan, and the sword stuck so

fast in the helm and in his brain-pan that Sir Tristram pulled thrice at his sword or ever he might pull it out from his head; and there Marhaus fell down on his knees, the edge of Tristram's sword left in his brain-pan. And suddenly Sir Marhaus rose grovelling, and threw his sword and his shield from him, and so ran to his ships and fled his way, and Sir Tristram had ever his shield and his sword.

And when Sir Tristram saw Sir Marhaus withdraw him, he said: Ah! Sir Knight of the Round Table, why withdrawest thou thee? thou dost thyself and thy kin great shame, for I am but a young knight, or now I was never proved, and rather than I should withdraw me from thee, I had rather be hewn in an hundred pieces. Sir Marhaus answered no word but yede his way sore groaning. Well, Sir Knight, said Sir Tristram, I promise thee thy sword and thy shield shall be mine; and thy shield shall I wear in all places where I ride on mine adventures, and in the sight of King Arthur and all the Round Table.

### **CHAPTER VIII. How Sir Marhaus after that he was arrived in Ireland died of the stroke that Sir Tristram had given him, and how Tristram was hurt.**

ANON Sir Marhaus and his fellowship departed into Ireland. And as soon as he came to the king, his brother, he let search his wounds. And when his head was searched a piece of Sir Tristram's sword was found therein, and might never be had out of his head for no surgeons, and so he died of Sir Tristram's sword; and that piece of the sword the queen, his sister, kept it for ever with her, for she thought to be revenged an she might.

Now turn we again unto Sir Tristram, that was sore wounded, and full sore bled that he might not within a little while, when he had taken cold, unnethe stir him of his limbs. And then he set him down softly upon a little hill, and bled fast. Then anon came Gouvernail, his man, with his vessel; and the king and his barons came with procession against him. And when he was come unto the land, King Mark took him in his arms, and the king and Sir Dinas, the seneschal, led Sir Tristram into the castle of Tintagil. And then was he searched in the best manner, and laid in his bed. And when King Mark saw his wounds he wept heartily, and so did all his lords. So God me help, said King Mark, I would not for all my lands that my nephew died. So Sir Tristram lay there a month and more, and ever he was like to die of that stroke that Sir Marhaus smote him first with the spear. For, as the French book saith, the spear's head was envenomed, that Sir Tristram might not be whole. Then was King Mark and all his barons passing heavy, for they deemed none other but that Sir Tristram should not recover. Then the king let send after all manner of leeches and surgeons, both

unto men and women, and there was none that would behote him the life. Then came there a lady that was a right wise lady, and she said plainly unto King Mark, and to Sir Tristram, and to all his barons, that he should never be whole but if Sir Tristram went in the same country that the venom came from, and in that country should he be holpen or else never. Thus said the lady unto the king.

When King Mark understood that, he let purvey for Sir Tristram a fair vessel, well victualled, and therein was put Sir Tristram, and Gouvernail with him, and Sir Tristram took his harp with him, and so he was put into the sea to sail into Ireland; and so by good fortune he arrived up in Ireland, even fast by a castle where the king and the queen was; and at his arrival he sat and harped in his bed a merry lay, such one heard they never none in Ireland before that time.

And when it was told the king and the queen of such a knight that was such an harper, anon the king sent for him, and let search his wounds, and then asked him his name. Then he answered, I am of the country of Liones, and my name is Tramtrist, that thus was wounded in a battle as I fought for a lady's right. So God me help, said King Anguish, ye shall have all the help in this land that ye may have here; but I let you wit, in Cornwall I had a great loss as ever had king, for there I lost the best knight of the world; his name was Marhaus, a full noble knight, and Knight of the Table Round; and there he told Sir Tristram wherefore Sir Marhaus was slain. Sir Tristram made semblant as he had been sorry, and better knew he how it was than the king.

#### **CHAPTER IX. How Sir Tristram was put to the keeping of La Beale Isoud first for to be healed of his wound.**

THEN the king for great favour made Tramtrist to be put in his daughter's ward and keeping, because she was a noble surgeon. And when she had searched him she found in the bottom of his wound that therein was poison, and so she healed him within a while; and therefore Tramtrist cast great love to La Beale Isoud, for she was at that time the fairest maid and lady of the world. And there Tramtrist learned her to harp, and she began to have a great fantasy unto him. And at that time Sir Palamides, the Saracen, was in that country, and well cherished with the king and the queen. And every day Sir Palamides drew unto La Beale Isoud and proffered her many gifts, for he loved her passingly well. All that espied Tramtrist, and full well knew he Sir Palamides for a noble knight and a mighty man. And wit you well Sir Tramtrist had great despite at Sir Palamides, for La Beale Isoud told Tramtrist that Palamides was in will to be christened for her sake. Thus was there great envy betwixt Tramtrist and Sir Palamides.

Then it befell that King Anguish let cry a great jousts and a great tournament for a lady that was called the Lady of the Launds, and she was nigh cousin unto

the king. And what man won her, three days after he should wed her and have all her lands. This cry was made in England, Wales, Scotland, and also in France and in Brittany. It befell upon a day La Beale Isoud came unto Sir Tramtrist, and told him of this tournament. He answered and said: Fair lady, I am but a feeble knight, and but late I had been dead had not your good ladyship been. Now, fair lady, what would ye I should do in this matter? well ye wot, my lady, that I may not joust. Ah, Tramtrist, said La Beale Isoud, why will ye not have ado at that tournament? well I wot Sir Palamides shall be there, and to do what he may; and therefore Tramtrist, I pray you for to be there, for else Sir Palamides is like to win the degree. Madam, said Tramtrist, as for that, it may be so, for he is a proved knight, and I am but a young knight and late made; and the first battle that I did it mishapped me to be sore wounded as ye see. But an I wist ye would be my better lady, at that tournament I will be, so that ye will keep my counsel and let no creature have knowledge that I shall joust but yourself, and such as ye will to keep your counsel, my poor person shall I jeopard there for your sake, that, peradventure, Sir Palamides shall know when that I come. Thereto, said La Beale Isoud, do your best, and as I can, said La Beale Isoud, I shall purvey horse and armour for you at my device. As ye will so be it, said Sir Tramtrist, I will be at your commandment.

So at the day of jousts there came Sir Palamides with a black shield, and he overthrew many knights, that all the people had marvel of him. For he put to the worse Sir Gawaine, Gaheris, Agravaine, Bagdemagus, Kay, Dodinas le Savage, Sagramore le Desirous, Gumret le Petit, and Griflet le Fise de Dieu. All these the first day Sir Palamides struck down to the earth. And then all manner of knights were adread of Sir Palamides, and many called him the Knight with the Black Shield. So that day Sir Palamides had great worship.

Then came King Anguish unto Tramtrist, and asked him why he would not joust. Sir, he said, I was but late hurt, and as yet I dare not adventure me. Then came there the same squire that was sent from the king's daughter of France unto Sir Tristram. And when he had espied Sir Tristram he fell flat to his feet. All that espied La Beale Isoud, what courtesy the squire made unto Sir Tristram. And therewithal suddenly Sir Tristram ran unto his squire, whose name was Hebes le Renoumes, and prayed him heartily in no wise to tell his name. Sir, said Hebes, I will not discover your name but if ye command me.

#### **CHAPTER X. How Sir Tristram won the degree at a tournament in Ireland, and there made Palamides to bear no more harness in a year.**

THEN Sir Tristram asked him what he did in those countries. Sir, he said, I came hither with Sir Gawaine for to be made knight, and if it please you, of your

hands that I may be made knight. Await upon me as to-morn secretly, and in the field I shall make you a knight.

Then had La Beale Isoud great suspicion unto Tramtrist, that he was some man of worship proved, and therewith she comforted herself, and cast more love unto him than she had done to-fore. And so on the morn Sir Palamides made him ready to come into the field as he did the first day. And there he smote down the King with the Hundred Knights, and the King of Scots. Then had La Beale Isoud ordained and well arrayed Sir Tristram in white horse and harness. And right so she let put him out at a privy postern, and so he came into the field as it had been a bright angel. And anon Sir Palamides espied him, and therewith he feutred a spear unto Sir Tramtrist, and he again unto him. And there Sir Tristram smote down Sir Palamides unto the earth. And then there was a great noise of people: some said Sir Palamides had a fall, some said the Knight with the Black Shield had a fall. And wit you well La Beale Isoud was passing glad. And then Sir Gawaine and his fellows nine had marvel what knight it might be that had smitten down Sir Palamides. Then would there none joust with Tramtrist, but all that there were forsook him, most and least. Then Sir Tristram made Hebes a knight, and caused him to put himself forth, and did right well that day. So after Sir Hebes held him with Sir Tristram.

And when Sir Palamides had received this fall, wit ye well that he was sore ashamed, and as privily as he might he withdrew him out of the field. All that espied Sir Tristram, and lightly he rode after Sir Palamides and overtook him, and bade him turn, for better he would assay him or ever he departed. Then Sir Palamides turned him, and either lashed at other with their swords. But at the first stroke Sir Tristram smote down Palamides, and gave him such a stroke upon the head that he fell to the earth. So then Tristram bade yield him, and do his commandment, or else he would slay him. When Sir Palamides beheld his countenance, he dread his buffets so, that he granted all his askings. Well said, said Sir Tristram, this shall be your charge. First, upon pain of your life that ye forsake my lady La Beale Isoud, and in no manner wise that ye draw not to her. Also this twelvemonth and a day that ye bear none armour nor none harness of war. Now promise me this, or here shalt thou die. Alas, said Palamides, for ever am I ashamed. Then he sware as Sir Tristram had commanded him. Then for despite and anger Sir Palamides cut off his harness, and threw them away.

And so Sir Tristram turned again to the castle where was La Beale Isoud; and by the way he met with a damosel that asked after Sir Launcelot, that won the Dolorous Guard worshipfully; and this damosel asked Sir Tristram what he was. For it was told her that it was he that smote down Sir Palamides, by whom the ten knights of King Arthur's were smitten down. Then the damosel prayed Sir

Tristram to tell her what he was, and whether that he were Sir Launcelot du Lake, for she deemed that there was no knight in the world might do such deeds of arms but if it were Launcelot. Fair damosel, said Sir Tristram, wit ye well that I am not Sir Launcelot, for I was never of such prowess, but in God is all that he may make me as good a knight as the good knight Sir Launcelot. Now, gentle knight, said she, put up thy visor; and when she beheld his visage she thought she saw never a better man's visage, nor a better faring knight. And then when the damosel knew certainly that he was not Sir Launcelot, then she took her leave, and departed from him. And then Sir Tristram rode privily unto the postern, where kept him La Beale Isoud, and there she made him good cheer, and thanked God of his good speed. So anon, within a while the king and the queen understood that it was Tramtrist that smote down Sir Palamides; then was he much made of, more than he was before.

#### **CHAPTER XI. How the queen espied that Sir Tristram had slain her brother Sir Marhaus by his sword, and in what jeopardy he was.**

THUS was Sir Tramtrist long there well cherished with the king and the queen, and namely with La Beale Isoud. So upon a day the queen and La Beale Isoud made a bain for Sir Tramtrist. And when he was in his bain the queen and Isoud, her daughter, roamed up and down in the chamber; and therewhiles Gouvernail and Hebes attended upon Tramtrist, and the queen beheld his sword thereas it lay upon his bed. And then by unhap the queen drew out his sword and beheld it a long while, and both they thought it a passing fair sword; but within a foot and an half of the point there was a great piece thereof out-broken of the edge. And when the queen espied that gap in the sword, she remembered her of a piece of a sword that was found in the brain-pan of Sir Marhaus, the good knight that was her brother. Alas then, said she unto her daughter, La Beale Isoud, this is the same traitor knight that slew my brother, thine eme. When Isoud heard her say so she was passing sore abashed, for passing well she loved Tramtrist, and full well she knew the cruelty of her mother the queen.

Anon therewithal the queen went unto her own chamber, and sought her coffer, and there she took out the piece or the sword that was pulled out of Sir Marhaus' head after that he was dead. And then she ran with that piece of iron to the sword that lay upon the bed. And when she put that piece of steel and iron unto the sword, it was as meet as it might be when it was new broken. And then the queen gripped that sword in her hand fiercely, and with all her might she ran straight upon Tramtrist where he sat in his bain, and there she had rived him through had not Sir Hebes gotten her in his arms, and pulled the sword from her, and else she had thrust him through.



Then when she was let of her evil will she ran to the King Anguish, her husband, and said on her knees: O my lord, here have ye in your house that traitor knight that slew my brother and your servant, that noble knight, Sir Marhaus. Who is that, said King Anguish, and where is he? Sir, she said, it is Sir Tramtrist, the same knight that my daughter healed. Alas, said the king, therefore am I right heavy, for he is a full noble knight as ever I saw in field. But I charge you, said the king to the queen, that ye have not ado with that knight, but let me deal with him.

Then the king went into the chamber unto Sir Tramtrist, and then was he gone unto his chamber, and the king found him all ready armed to mount upon his horse. When the king saw him all ready armed to go unto horseback, the king said: Nay, Tramtrist, it will not avail to compare thee against me; but thus much I shall do for my worship and for thy love; in so much as thou art within my court it were no worship for me to slay thee: therefore upon this condition I will give thee leave for to depart from this court in safety, so thou wilt tell me who was thy father, and what is thy name, and if thou slew Sir Marhaus, my brother.

## **CHAPTER XII. How Sir Tristram departed from the king and La Beale Isoud out of Ireland for to come into Cornwall.**

SIR, said Tristram, now I shall tell you all the truth: my father's name is Sir Meliodas, King of Liones, and my mother hight Elizabeth, that was sister unto King Mark of Cornwall; and my mother died of me in the forest, and because thereof she commanded, or she died, that when I were christened they should christen me Tristram; and because I would not be known in this country I turned my name and let me call Tramtrist; and for the truage of Cornwall I fought for my eme's sake, and for the right of Cornwall that ye had possessed many years. And wit ye well, said Tristram unto the king, I did the battle for the love of mine uncle, King Mark, and for the love of the country of Cornwall, and for to increase mine honour; for that same day that I fought with Sir Marhaus I was made knight, and never or then did I battle with no knight, and from me he went alive, and left his shield and his sword behind.

So God me help, said the king, I may not say but ye did as a knight should, and it was your part to do for your quarrel, and to increase your worship as a knight should; howbeit I may not maintain you in this country with my worship, unless that I should displease my barons, and my wife and her kin. Sir, said Tristram, I thank you of your good lordship that I have had with you here, and the great goodness my lady, your daughter, hath shewed me, and therefore, said Sir Tristram, it may so happen that ye shall win more by my life than by my death, for in the parts of England it may happen I may do you service at some

season, that ye shall be glad that ever ye shewed me your good lordship. With more I promise you as I am true knight, that in all places I shall be my lady your daughter's servant and knight in right and in wrong, and I shall never fail her, to do as much as a knight may do. Also I beseech your good grace that I may take my leave at my lady, your daughter, and at all the barons and knights. I will well, said the king.

Then Sir Tristram went unto La Beale Isoud and took his leave of her. And then he told her all, what he was, and how he had changed his name because he would not be known, and how a lady told him that he should never be whole till he came into this country where the poison was made, wherethrough I was near my death had not your ladyship been. O gentle knight, said La Beale Isoud, full woe am I of thy departing, for I saw never man that I owed so good will to. And therewithal she wept heartily. Madam, said Sir Tristram, ye shall understand that my name is Sir Tristram de Liones, gotten of King Meliodas, and born of his queen. And I promise you faithfully that I shall be all the days of my life your knight. Gramercy, said La Beale Isoud, and I promise you there-against that I shall not be married this seven years but by your assent; and to whom that ye will I shall be married to him will I have, and he will have me if ye will consent.

And then Sir Tristram gave her a ring, and she gave him another; and therewith he departed from her, leaving her making great dole and lamentation; and he straight went unto the court among all the barons, and there he took his leave at most and least, and openly he said among them all: Fair lords, now it is so that I must depart: if there be any man here that I have offended unto, or that any man be with me grieved, let complain him here afore me or that ever I depart, and I shall amend it unto my power. And if there be any that will proffer me wrong, or say of me wrong or shame behind my back, say it now or never, and here is my body to make it good, body against body. And all they stood still, there was not one that would say one word; yet were there some knights that were of the queen's blood, and of Sir Marhaus' blood, but they would not meddle with him.

### **CHAPTER XIII. How Sir Tristram and King Mark hurted each other for the love of a knight's wife.**

SO Sir Tristram departed, and took the sea, and with good wind he arrived up at Tintagil in Cornwall; and when King Mark was whole in his prosperity there came tidings that Sir Tristram was arrived, and whole of his wounds: thereof was King Mark passing glad, and so were all the barons; and when he saw his time he rode unto his father, King Meliodas, and there he had all the cheer that the king and the queen could make him. And then largely King

Meliодas and his queen departed of their lands and goods to Sir Tristram.

Then by the license of King Meliодas, his father, he returned again unto the court of King Mark, and there he lived in great joy long time, until at the last there befell a jealousy and an unkindness betwixt King Mark and Sir Tristram, for they loved both one lady. And she was an earl's wife that hight Sir Segwarides. And this lady loved Sir Tristram passingly well. And he loved her again, for she was a passing fair lady, and that espied Sir Tristram well. Then King Mark understood that and was jealous, for King Mark loved her passingly well.

So it fell upon a day this lady sent a dwarf unto Sir Tristram, and bade him, as he loved her, that he would be with her the night next following. Also she charged you that ye come not to her but if ye be well armed, for her lover was called a good knight. Sir Tristram answered to the dwarf: Recommend me unto my lady, and tell her I will not fail but I will be with her the term that she hath set me. And with this answer the dwarf departed. And King Mark espied that the dwarf was with Sir Tristram upon message from Segwarides' wife; then King Mark sent for the dwarf, and when he was come he made the dwarf by force to tell him all, why and wherefore that he came on message from Sir Tristram. Now, said King Mark, go where thou wilt, and upon pain of death that thou say no word that thou spakest with me; so the dwarf departed from the king.

And that same night that the steven was set betwixt Segwarides' wife and Sir Tristram, King Mark armed him, and made him ready, and took two knights of his counsel with him; and so he rode afore for to abide by the way for to wait upon Sir Tristram. And as Sir Tristram came riding upon his way with his spear in his hand, King Mark came hurtling upon him with his two knights suddenly. And all three smote him with their spears, and King Mark hurt Sir Tristram on the breast right sore. And then Sir Tristram feutred his spear, and smote his uncle, King Mark, so sore, that he rashed him to the earth, and bruised him that he lay still in a swoon, and long it was or ever he might wield himself. And then he ran to the one knight, and eft to the other, and smote them to the cold earth, that they lay still. And therewithal Sir Tristram rode forth sore wounded to the lady, and found her abiding him at a postern.

#### **CHAPTER XIV. How Sir Tristram lay with the lady, and how her husband fought with Sir Tristram.**

AND there she welcomed him fair, and either halsed other in arms, and so she let put up his horse in the best wise, and then she unarmed him. And so they supped lightly, and went to bed with great joy and pleasaunce; and so in his raging he took no keep of his green wound that King Mark had given him. And

so Sir Tristram be-bled both the over sheet and the nether, and pillows, and head sheet. And within a while there came one afore, that warned her that her lord was near-hand within a bow-draught. So she made Sir Tristram to arise, and so he armed him, and took his horse, and so departed. By then was come Segwarides, her lord, and when he found her bed troubled and broken, and went near and beheld it by candle light, then he saw that there had lain a wounded knight. Ah, false traitress, then he said, why hast thou betrayed me? And therewithal he swang out a sword, and said: But if thou tell me who hath been here, here thou shalt die. Ah, my lord, mercy, said the lady, and held up her hands, saying: Slay me not, and I shall tell you all who hath been here. Tell anon, said Segwarides, to me all the truth. Anon for dread she said: Here was Sir Tristram with me, and by the way as he came to me ward, he was sore wounded. Ah, false traitress, said Segwarides, where is he become? Sir, she said, he is armed, and departed on horseback, not yet hence half a mile. Ye say well, said Segwarides.

Then he armed him lightly, and gat his horse, and rode after Sir Tristram that rode straightway unto Tintagil. And within a while he overtook Sir Tristram, and then he bade him, Turn, false traitor knight. And Sir Tristram anon turned him against him. And therewithal Segwarides smote Sir Tristram with a spear that it all to-brast; and then he swang out his sword and smote fast at Sir Tristram. Sir knight, said Sir Tristram, I counsel you that ye smite no more, howbeit for the wrongs that I have done you I will forbear you as long as I may. Nay, said Segwarides, that shall not be, for either thou shalt die or I.

Then Sir Tristram drew out his sword, and hurtled his horse unto him fiercely, and through the waist of the body he smote Sir Segwarides that he fell to the earth in a swoon. And so Sir Tristram departed and left him there. And so he rode unto Tintagil and took his lodging secretly, for he would not be known that he was hurt. Also Sir Segwarides' men rode after their master, whom they found lying in the field sore wounded, and brought him home on his shield, and there he lay long or that he were whole, but at the last he recovered. Also King Mark would not be aknownd of that Sir Tristram and he had met that night. And as for Sir Tristram, he knew not that King Mark had met with him. And so the king askance came to Sir Tristram, to comfort him as he lay sick in his bed. But as long as King Mark lived he loved never Sir Tristram after that; though there was fair speech, love was there none. And thus it passed many weeks and days, and all was forgiven and forgotten; for Sir Segwarides durst not have ado with Sir Tristram, because of his noble prowess, and also because he was nephew unto King Mark; therefore he let it overslip: for he that hath a privy hurt is loath to have a shame outward.

## **CHAPTER XV. How Sir Bleoberis demanded the fairest lady in King Mark's court, whom he took away, and how he was fought with.**

THEN it befell upon a day that the good knight Bleoberis de Ganis, brother to Blamore de Ganis, and nigh cousin unto the good knight Sir Launcelot du Lake, this Bleoberis came unto the court of King Mark, and there he asked of King Mark a boon, to give him what gift that he would ask in his court. When the king heard him ask so, he marvelled of his asking, but because he was a knight of the Round Table, and of a great renown, King Mark granted him his whole asking. Then, said Sir Bleoberis, I will have the fairest lady in your court that me list to choose. I may not say nay, said King Mark; now choose at your adventure. And so Sir Bleoberis did choose Sir Segwarides' wife, and took her by the hand, and so went his way with her; and so he took his horse and gart set her behind his squire, and rode upon his way.

When Sir Segwarides heard tell that his lady was gone with a knight of King Arthur's court, then he armed him and rode after that knight for to rescue his lady. So when Bleoberis was gone with this lady, King Mark and all the court was wroth that she was away. Then were there certain ladies that knew that there were great love between Sir Tristram and her, and also that lady loved Sir Tristram above all other knights. Then there was one lady that rebuked Sir Tristram in the horriblest wise, and called him coward knight, that he would for shame of his knighthood see a lady so shamefully be taken away from his uncle's court. But she meant that either of them had loved other with entire heart. But Sir Tristram answered her thus: Fair lady, it is not my part to have ado in such matters while her lord and husband is present here; and if it had been that her lord had not been here in this court, then for the worship of this court peradventure I would have been her champion, and if so be Sir Segwarides speed not well, it may happen that I will speak with that good knight or ever he pass from this country.

Then within a while came one of Sir Segwarides' squires, and told in the court that Sir Segwarides was beaten sore and wounded to the point of death; as he would have rescued his lady Sir Bleoberis overthrew him and sore hath wounded him. Then was King Mark heavy thereof, and all the court. When Sir Tristram heard of this he was ashamed and sore grieved; and then was he soon armed and on horseback, and Gouvernail, his servant, bare his shield and spear. And so as Sir Tristram rode fast he met with Sir Andred his cousin, that by the commandment of King Mark was sent to bring forth, an ever it lay in his power, two knights of Arthur's court, that rode by the country to seek their adventures. When Sir Tristram saw Sir Andred he asked him what tidings. So God me help,

said Sir Andred, there was never worse with me, for here by the commandment of King Mark I was sent to fetch two knights of King Arthur's court, and that one beat me and wounded me, and set nought by my message. Fair cousin, said Sir Tristram, ride on your way, and if I may meet them it may happen I shall revenge you. So Sir Andred rode into Cornwall, and Sir Tristram rode after the two knights, the which one hight Sagamore le Desirous, and the other hight Dodinas le Savage.

### **CHAPTER XVI. How Sir Tristram fought with two knights of the Round Table.**

THEN within a while Sir Tristram saw them afore him, two likely knights. Sir, said Gouvernail unto his master, Sir, I would counsel you not to have ado with them, for they be two proved knights of Arthur's court. As for that, said Sir Tristram, have ye no doubt but I will have ado with them to increase my worship, for it is many day sithen I did any deeds of arms. Do as ye list, said Gouvernail. And therewithal anon Sir Tristram asked them from whence they came, and whither they would, and what they did in those marches. Sir Sagamore looked upon Sir Tristram, and had scorn of his words, and asked him again, Fair knight, be ye a knight of Cornwall? Whereby ask ye it? said Sir Tristram. For it is seldom seen, said Sir Sagamore, that ye Cornish knights be valiant men of arms; for within these two hours there met us one of your Cornish knights, and great words he spake, and anon with little might he was laid to the earth. And, as I trow, said Sir Sagamore, ye shall have the same handsel that he had. Fair lords, said Sir Tristram, it may so happen that I may better withstand than he did, and whether ye will or nill I will have ado with you, because he was my cousin that ye beat. And therefore here do your best, and wit ye well but if ye quit you the better here upon this ground, one knight of Cornwall shall beat you both.

When Sir Dodinas le Savage heard him say so he gat a spear in his hand, and said, Sir knight, keep well thyself: And then they departed and came together as it had been thunder. And Sir Dodinas' spear brast in-sunder, but Sir Tristram smote him with a more might, that he smote him clean over the horse-croup, that nigh he had broken his neck. When Sir Sagamore saw his fellow have such a fall he marvelled what knight he might be. And he dressed his spear with all his might, and Sir Tristram against him, and they came together as the thunder, and there Sir Tristram smote Sir Sagamore a strong buffet, that he bare his horse and him to the earth, and in the falling he brake his thigh.

When this was done Sir Tristram asked them: Fair knights, will ye any more? Be there no bigger knights in the court of King Arthur? it is to you shame to say

of us knights of Cornwall dishonour, for it may happen a Cornish knight may match you. That is truth, said Sir Sagramore, that have we well proved; but I require thee, said Sir Sagramore, tell us your right name, by the faith and troth that ye owe to the high order of knighthood. Ye charge me with a great thing, said Sir Tristram, and sithen ye list to wit it, ye shall know and understand that my name is Sir Tristram de Liones, King Meliodas' son, and nephew unto King Mark. Then were they two knights fain that they had met with Tristram, and so they prayed him to abide in their fellowship. Nay, said Sir Tristram, for I must have ado with one of your fellows, his name is Sir Bleoberis de Ganis. God speed you well, said Sir Sagramore and Dodinas. Sir Tristram departed and rode onward on his way. And then was he ware before him in a valley where rode Sir Bleoberis, with Sir Segwarides' lady, that rode behind his squire upon a palfrey.

### **CHAPTER XVII. How Sir Tristram fought with Sir Bleoberis for a lady, and how the lady was put to choice to whom she would go.**

THEN Sir Tristram rode more than a pace until that he had overtaken him. Then spake Sir Tristram: Abide, he said, Knight of Arthur's court, bring again that lady, or deliver her to me. I will do neither, said Bleoberis, for I dread no Cornish knight so sore that me list to deliver her. Why, said Sir Tristram, may not a Cornish knight do as well as another knight? this same day two knights of your court within this three mile met with me, and or ever we departed they found a Cornish knight good enough for them both. What were their names? said Bleoberis. They told me, said Sir Tristram, that the one of them hight Sir Sagramore le Desirous, and the other hight Dodinas le Savage. Ah, said Sir Bleoberis, have ye met with them? so God me help, they were two good knights and men of great worship, and if ye have beat them both ye must needs be a good knight; but if it so be ye have beat them both, yet shall ye not fear me, but ye shall beat me or ever ye have this lady. Then defend you, said Sir Tristram. So they departed and came together like thunder, and either bare other down, horse and all, to the earth.

Then they avoided their horses, and lashed together eagerly with swords, and mightily, now tracing and traversing on the right hand and on the left hand more than two hours. And sometime they rushed together with such a might that they lay both grovelling on the ground. Then Sir Bleoberis de Ganis stert aback, and said thus: Now, gentle good knight, a while hold your hands, and let us speak together. Say what ye will, said Tristram, and I will answer you. Sir, said Bleoberis, I would wit of whence ye be, and of whom ye be come, and what is your name? So God me help, said Sir Tristram, I fear not to tell you my name. Wit ye well I am King Meliodas' son, and my mother is King Mark's sister, and

my name is Sir Tristram de Liones, and King Mark is mine uncle. Truly, said Bleoberis, I am right glad of you, for ye are he that slew Marhaus the knight, hand for hand in an island, for the truage of Cornwall; also ye overcame Sir Palamides the good knight, at a tournament in an island, where ye beat Sir Gawaine and his nine fellows. So God me help, said Sir Tristram, wit ye well that I am the same knight; now I have told you my name, tell me yours with good will. Wit ye well that my name is Sir Bleoberis de Ganis, and my brother hight Sir Blamore de Ganis, that is called a good knight, and we be sister's children unto my lord Sir Launcelot du Lake, that we call one of the best knights of the world. That is truth, said Sir Tristram, Sir Launcelot is called peerless of courtesy and of knighthood; and for his sake, said Sir Tristram, I will not with my good will fight no more with you, for the great love I have to Sir Launcelot du Lake. In good faith, said Bleoberis, as for me I will be loath to fight with you; but sithen ye follow me here to have this lady, I shall proffer you kindness, courtesy, and gentleness right here upon this ground. This lady shall be betwixt us both, and to whom that she will go, let him have her in peace. I will well, said Tristram, for, as I deem, she will leave you and come to me. Ye shall prove it anon, said Bleoberis.

### **CHAPTER XVIII. How the lady forsook Sir Tristram and abode with Sir Bleoberis, and how she desired to go to her husband.**

So when she was set betwixt them both she said these words unto Sir Tristram: Wit ye well, Sir Tristram de Liones, that but late thou wast the man in the world that I most loved and trusted, and I weened thou hadst loved me again above all ladies; but when thou sawest this knight lead me away thou madest no cheer to rescue me, but suffered my lord Segwarides ride after me; but until that time I weened thou haddest loved me, and therefore now I will leave thee, and never love thee more. And therewithal she went unto Sir Bleoberis.

When Sir Tristram saw her do so he was wonderly wroth with that lady, and ashamed to come to the court. Sir Tristram, said Sir Bleoberis, ye are in the default, for I hear by this lady's words she before this day trusted you above all earthly knights, and, as she saith, ye have deceived her, therefore wit ye well, there may no man hold that will away; and rather than ye should be heartily displeased with me I would ye had her, an she would abide with you. Nay, said the lady, so God me help I will never go with him; for he that I loved most I weened he had loved me. And therefore, Sir Tristram, she said, ride as thou came, for though thou haddest overcome this knight, as ye was likely, with thee never would I have gone. And I shall pray this knight so fair of his knighthood, that or ever he pass this country, that he will lead me to the abbey where my lord



Sir Segwarides lieth. So God me help, said Bleoberis, I let you wit, good knight Sir Tristram, because King Mark gave me the choice of a gift in this court, and so this lady liked me best—notwithstanding, she is wedded and hath a lord, and I have fulfilled my quest, she shall be sent unto her husband again, and in especial most for your sake, Sir Tristram; and if she would go with you I would ye had her. I thank you, said Sir Tristram, but for her love I shall beware what manner a lady I shall love or trust; for had her lord, Sir Segwarides, been away from the court, I should have been the first that should have followed you; but sithen that ye have refused me, as I am true knight I shall her know passingly well that I shall love or trust. And so they took their leave one from the other and departed.

And so Sir Tristram rode unto Tintagil, and Sir Bleoberis rode unto the abbey where Sir Segwarides lay sore wounded, and there he delivered his lady, and departed as a noble knight; and when Sir Segwarides saw his lady, he was greatly comforted; and then she told him that Sir Tristram had done great battle with Sir Bleoberis, and caused him to bring her again. These words pleased Sir Segwarides right well, that Sir Tristram would do so much; and so that lady told all the battle unto King Mark betwixt Sir Tristram and Sir Bleoberis.

#### **CHAPTER XIX. How King Mark sent Sir Tristram for La Beale Isoud toward Ireland, and how by fortune he arrived into England.**

THEN when this was done King Mark cast always in his heart how he might destroy Sir Tristram. And then he imagined in himself to send Sir Tristram into Ireland for La Beale Isoud. For Sir Tristram had so praised her beauty and her goodness that King Mark said that he would wed her, whereupon he prayed Sir Tristram to take his way into Ireland for him on message. And all this was done to the intent to slay Sir Tristram. Notwithstanding, Sir Tristram would not refuse the message for no danger nor peril that might fall, for the pleasure of his uncle, but to go he made him ready in the most goodliest wise that might be devised. For Sir Tristram took with him the most goodliest knights that he might find in the court; and they were arrayed, after the guise that was then used, in the goodliest manner. So Sir Tristram departed and took the sea with all his fellowship. And anon, as he was in the broad sea a tempest took him and his fellowship, and drove them back into the coast of England; and there they arrived fast by Camelot, and full fain they were to take the land.

And when they were landed Sir Tristram set up his pavilion upon the land of Camelot, and there he let hang his shield upon the pavilion. And that same day came two knights of King Arthur's, that one was Sir Ector de Maris, and Sir Morganor. And they touched the shield, and bade him come out of the pavilion for to joust, an he would joust. Ye shall be answered, said Sir Tristram, an ye

will tarry a little while. So he made him ready, and first he smote down Sir Ector de Maris, and after he smote down Sir Morganor, all with one spear, and sore bruised them. And when they lay upon the earth they asked Sir Tristram what he was, and of what country he was knight. Fair lords, said Sir Tristram, wit ye well that I am of Cornwall. Alas, said Sir Ector, now am I ashamed that ever any Cornish knight should overcome me. And then for despite Sir Ector put off his armour from him, and went on foot, and would not ride.

## **CHAPTER XX. How King Anguish of Ireland was summoned to come to King Arthur's court for treason.**

THEN it fell that Sir Bleoberis and Sir Blamore de Ganis, that were brethren, they had summoned the King Anguish of Ireland for to come to Arthur's court upon pain of forfeiture of King Arthur's good grace. And if the King of Ireland came not in, at the day assigned and set, the king should lose his lands. So it happened that at the day assigned, King Arthur neither Sir Launcelot might not be there for to give the judgment, for King Arthur was with Sir Launcelot at the Castle Joyous Garde. And so King Arthur assigned King Carados and the King of Scots to be there that day as judges. So when the kings were at Camelot King Anguish of Ireland was come to know his accusers. Then was there Sir Blamore de Ganis, and appealed the King of Ireland of treason, that he had slain a cousin of his in his court in Ireland by treason. The king was sore abashed of his accusation, for-why he was come at the summons of King Arthur, and or he came at Camelot he wist not wherefore he was sent after. And when the king heard Sir Blamore say his will, he understood well there was none other remedy but for to answer him knightly; for the custom was such in those days, that an any man were appealed of any treason or murder he should fight body for body, or else to find another knight for him. And all manner of murders in those days were called treason.

So when King Anguish understood his accusing he was passing heavy, for he knew Sir Blamore de Ganis that he was a noble knight, and of noble knights come. Then the King of Ireland was simply purveyed of his answer; therefore the judges gave him respite by the third day to give his answer. So the king departed unto his lodging. The meanwhile there came a lady by Sir Tristram's pavilion making great dole. What aileth you, said Sir Tristram, that ye make such dole? Ah, fair knight, said the lady, I am ashamed unless that some good knight help me; for a great lady of worship sent by me a fair child and a rich, unto Sir Launcelot du Lake, and hereby there met with me a knight, and threw me down from my palfrey, and took away the child from me. Well, my lady, said Sir Tristram, and for my lord Sir Launcelot's sake I shall get you that child

again, or else I shall be beaten for it. And so Sir Tristram took his horse, and asked the lady which way the knight rode; and then she told him. And he rode after him, and within a while he overtook that knight. And then Sir Tristram bade him turn and give again the child.

### **CHAPTER XXI. How Sir Tristram rescued a child from a knight, and how Gouvernail told him of King Anguish.**

THE knight turned his horse and made him ready to fight. And then Sir Tristram smote him with a sword such a buffet that he tumbled to the earth. And then he yielded him unto Sir Tristram. Then come thy way, said Sir Tristram, and bring the child to the lady again. So he took his horse meekly and rode with Sir Tristram; and then by the way Sir Tristram asked him his name. Then he said, My name is Breuse Saunce Pite. So when he had delivered that child to the lady, he said: Sir, as in this the child is well remedied. Then Sir Tristram let him go again that sore repented him after, for he was a great foe unto many good knights of King Arthur's court.

Then when Sir Tristram was in his pavilion Gouvernail, his man, came and told him how that King Anguish of Ireland was come thither, and he was put in great distress; and there Gouvernail told Sir Tristram how King Anguish was summoned and appealed of murder. So God me help, said Sir Tristram, these be the best tidings that ever came to me this seven years, for now shall the King of Ireland have need of my help; for I daresay there is no knight in this country that is not of Arthur's court dare do battle with Sir Blamore de Ganis; and for to win the love of the King of Ireland I will take the battle upon me; and therefore Gouvernail bring me, I charge thee, to the king.

Then Gouvernail went unto King Anguish of Ireland, and saluted him fair. The king welcomed him and asked him what he would. Sir, said Gouvernail, here is a knight near hand that desireth to speak with you: he bade me say he would do you service. What knight is he? said the king. Sir, said he, it is Sir Tristram de Liones, that for your good grace that ye showed him in your lands will reward you in this country. Come on, fellow, said the king, with me anon and show me unto Sir Tristram. So the king took a little hackney and but few fellowship with him, until he came unto Sir Tristram's pavilion. And when Sir Tristram saw the king he ran unto him and would have holden his stirrup. But the king leapt from his horse lightly, and either halsed other in their arms. My gracious lord, said Sir Tristram, gramercy of your great goodnesses showed unto me in your marches and lands: and at that time I promised you to do you service an ever it lay in my power. And, gentle knight, said the king unto Sir Tristram, now have I great need of you, never had I so great need of no knight's help. How

so, my good lord? said Sir Tristram. I shall tell you, said the king: I am summoned and appealed from my country for the death of a knight that was kin unto the good knight Sir Launcelot; wherefore Sir Blamore de Ganis, brother to Sir Bleoberis hath appealed me to fight with him, outhere to find a knight in my stead. And well I wot, said the king, these that are come of King Ban's blood, as Sir Launcelot and these other, are passing good knights, and hard men for to win in battle as any that I know now living. Sir, said Sir Tristram, for the good lordship ye showed me in Ireland, and for my lady your daughter's sake, La Beale Isoud, I will take the battle for you upon this condition that ye shall grant me two things: that one is that ye shall swear to me that ye are in the right, that ye were never consenting to the knight's death; Sir, then said Sir Tristram, when that I have done this battle, if God give me grace that I speed, that ye shall give me a reward, what thing reasonable that I will ask of you. So God me help, said the king, ye shall have whatsoever ye will ask. It is well said, said Sir Tristram.

### **CHAPTER XXII. How Sir Tristram fought for Sir Anguish and overcame his adversary, and how his adversary would never yield him.**

NOW make your answer that your champion is ready, for I shall die in your quarrel rather than to be recreant. I have no doubt of you, said the king, that, an ye should have ado with Sir Launcelot du Lake— Sir, said Sir Tristram, as for Sir Launcelot, he is called the noblest knight of the world, and wit ye well that the knights of his blood are noble men, and dread shame; and as for Bleoberis, brother unto Sir Blamore, I have done battle with him, therefore upon my head it is no shame to call him a good knight. It is noised, said the king, that Blamore is the hardier knight. Sir, as for that let him be, he shall never be refused, an as he were the best knight that now beareth shield or spear.

So King Anguish departed unto King Carados and the kings that were that time as judges, and told them that he had found his champion ready. Then by the commandment of the kings Sir Blamore de Ganis and Sir Tristram were sent for to hear the charge. And when they were come before the judges there were many kings and knights beheld Sir Tristram, and much speech they had of him because that he slew Sir Marhaus, the good knight, and because he for-jousted Sir Palamides the good knight. So when they had taken their charge they withdrew them to make them ready to do battle.

Then said Sir Bleoberis unto his brother, Sir Blamore: Fair dear brother, remember of what kin we be come of, and what a man is Sir Launcelot du Lake, neither farther nor nearer but brother's children, and there was never none of our kin that ever was shamed in battle; and rather suffer death, brother, than to be shamed. Brother, said Blamore, have ye no doubt of me, for I shall never shame

none of my blood; howbeit I am sure that yonder knight is called a passing good knight as of his time one of the world, yet shall I never yield me, nor say the loath word: well may he happen to smite me down with his great might of chivalry, but rather shall he slay me than I shall yield me as recreant. God speed you well, said Sir Bleoberis, for ye shall find him the mightiest knight that ever ye had ado withal, for I know him, for I have had ado with him. God me speed, said Sir Blamore de Ganis; and therewith he took his horse at the one end of the lists, and Sir Tristram at the other end of the lists, and so they feutred their spears and came together as it had been thunder; and there Sir Tristram through great might smote down Sir Blamore and his horse to the earth. Then anon Sir Blamore avoided his horse and pulled out his sword and threw his shield afore him, and bade Sir Tristram alight: For though an horse hath failed me, I trust to God the earth will not fail me. And then Sir Tristram alighted, and dressed him unto battle; and there they lashed together strongly as racing and tracing, foining and dashing, many sad strokes, that the kings and knights had great wonder that they might stand; for ever they fought like wood men, so that there was never knights seen fight more fiercely than they did; for Sir Blamore was so hasty that he would have no rest, that all men wondered that they had breath to stand on their feet; and all the place was bloody that they fought in. And at the last, Sir Tristram smote Sir Blamore such a buffet upon the helm that he there fell down upon his side, and Sir Tristram stood and beheld him.

### **CHAPTER XXIII. How Sir Blamore desired Tristram to slay him, and how Sir Tristram spared him, and how they took appointment.**

THEN when Sir Blamore might speak, he said thus: Sir Tristram de Lionnes, I require thee, as thou art a noble knight, and the best knight that ever I found, that thou wilt slay me out, for I would not live to be made lord of all the earth, for I have liefer die with worship than live with shame; and needs, Sir Tristram, thou must slay me, or else thou shalt never win the field, for I will never say the loath word. And therefore if thou dare slay me, slay me, I require thee. When Sir Tristram heard him say so knightly, he wist not what to do with him; he remembering him of both parties, of what blood he was come, and for Sir Launcelot's sake he would be loath to slay him; and in the other party in no wise he might not choose, but that he must make him to say the loath word, or else to slay him.

Then Sir Tristram stert aback, and went to the kings that were judges, and there he kneeled down to-fore them, and besought them for their worships, and for King Arthur's and Sir Launcelot's sake, that they would take this matter in their hands. For, my fair lords, said Sir Tristram, it were shame and pity that this

noble knight that yonder lieth should be slain; for ye hear well, shamed will he not be, and I pray to God that he never be slain nor shamed for me. And as for the king for whom I fight for, I shall require him, as I am his true champion and true knight in this field, that he will have mercy upon this good knight. So God me help, said King Anguish, I will for your sake; Sir Tristram, be ruled as ye will have me, for I know you for my true knight; and therefore I will heartily pray the kings that be here as judges to take it in their hands. And the kings that were judges called Sir Bleoberis to them, and asked him his advice. My lords, said Bleoberis, though my brother be beaten, and hath the worse through might of arms, I dare say, though Sir Tristram hath beaten his body he hath not beaten his heart, and I thank God he is not shamed this day; and rather than he should be shamed I require you, said Bleoberis, let Sir Tristram slay him out. It shall not be so, said the kings, for his part adversary, both the king and the champion, have pity of Sir Blamore's knighthood. My lords, said Bleoberis, I will right well as ye will.

Then the kings called the King of Ireland, and found him goodly and treatable. And then, by all their advices, Sir Tristram and Sir Bleoberis took up Sir Blamore, and the two brethren were accorded with King Anguish, and kissed and made friends for ever. And then Sir Blamore and Sir Tristram kissed together, and there they made their oaths that they would never none of them two brethren fight with Sir Tristram, and Sir Tristram made the same oath. And for that gentle battle all the blood of Sir Launcelot loved Sir Tristram for ever.

Then King Anguish and Sir Tristram took their leave, and sailed into Ireland with great noblesse and joy. So when they were in Ireland the king let make it known throughout all the land how and in what manner Sir Tristram had done for him. Then the queen and all that there were made the most of him that they might. But the joy that La Beale Isoud made of Sir Tristram there might no tongue tell, for of all men earthly she loved him most.

#### **CHAPTER XXIV. How Sir Tristram demanded La Beale Isoud for King Mark, and how Sir Tristram and Isoud drank the love drink.**

THEN upon a day King Anguish asked Sir Tristram why he asked not his boon, for whatsoever he had promised him he should have it without fail. Sir, said Sir Tristram, now is it time; this is all that I will desire, that ye will give me La Beale Isoud, your daughter, not for myself, but for mine uncle, King Mark, that shall have her to wife, for so have I promised him. Alas, said the king, I had liefer than all the land that I have ye would wed her yourself. Sir, an I did then I were shamed for ever in this world, and false of my promise. Therefore, said Sir I Tristram, I pray you hold your promise that ye promised me; for this is my

desire, that ye will give me La Beale Isoud to go with me into Cornwall for to be wedded to King Mark, mine uncle. As for that, said King Anguish, ye shall have her with you to do with her what it please you; that is for to say if that ye list to wed her yourself, that is me liefest, and if ye will give her unto King Mark, your uncle, that is in your choice. So, to make short conclusion, La Beale Isoud was made ready to go with Sir Tristram, and Dame Bragwaine went with her for her chief gentlewoman, with many other.

Then the queen, Isoud's mother, gave to her and Dame Bragwaine, her daughter's gentlewoman, and unto Gouvernail, a drink, and charged them that what day King Mark should wed, that same day they should give him that drink, so that King Mark should drink to La Beale Isoud, and then, said the queen, I undertake either shall love other the days of their life. So this drink was given unto Dame Bragwaine, and unto Gouvernail. And then anon Sir Tristram took the sea, and La Beale Isoud; and when they were in their cabin, it happed so that they were thirsty, and they saw a little flasket of gold stand by them, and it seemed by the colour and the taste that it was noble wine. Then Sir Tristram took the flasket in his hand, and said, Madam Isoud, here is the best drink that ever ye drank, that Dame Bragwaine, your maiden, and Gouvernail, my servant, have kept for themselves. Then they laughed and made good cheer, and either drank to other freely, and they thought never drink that ever they drank to other was so sweet nor so good. But by that their drink was in their bodies, they loved either other so well that never their love departed for weal neither for woe. And thus it happed the love first betwixt Sir Tristram and La Beale Isoud, the which love never departed the days of their life.

So then they sailed till by fortune they came nigh a castle that hight Pluere, and thereby arrived for to repose them, weening to them to have had good harbourage. But anon as Sir Tristram was within the castle they were taken prisoners; for the custom of the castle was such; who that rode by that castle and brought any lady, he must needs fight with the lord, that hight Breunor. And if it were so that Breunor won the field, then should the knight stranger and his lady be put to death, what that ever they were; and if it were so that the strange knight won the field of Sir Breunor, then should he die and his lady both. This custom was used many winters, for it was called the Castle Pluere, that is to say the Weeping Castle.

#### **CHAPTER XXV. How Sir Tristram and Isoud were in prison, and how he fought for her beauty, and smote of another lady's head.**

THUS as Sir Tristram and La Beale Isoud were in prison, it happed a knight and a lady came unto them where they were, to cheer them. I have marvel, said

Tristram unto the knight and the lady, what is the cause the lord of this castle holdeth us in prison: it was never the custom of no place of worship that ever I came in, when a knight and a lady asked harbour, and they to receive them, and after to destroy them that be his guests. Sir, said the knight, this is the old custom of this castle, that when a knight cometh here he must needs fight with our lord, and he that is weaker must lose his head. And when that is done, if his lady that he bringeth be fouler than our lord's wife, she must lose her head: and if she be fairer proved than is our lady, then shall the lady of this castle lose her head. So God me help, said Sir Tristram, this is a foul custom and a shameful. But one advantage have I, said Sir Tristram, I have a lady is fair enough, fairer saw I never in all my life-days, and I doubt not for lack of beauty she shall not lose her head; and rather than I should lose my head I will fight for it on a fair field. Wherefore, sir knight, I pray you tell your lord that I will be ready as to-morn with my lady, and myself to do battle, if it be so I may have my horse and mine armour. Sir, said that knight, I undertake that your desire shall be sped right well. And then he said: Take your rest, and look that ye be up betimes and make you ready and your lady, for ye shall want no thing that you behoveth. And therewith he departed, and on the morn betimes that same knight came to Sir Tristram, and fetched him out and his lady, and brought him horse and armour that was his own, and bade him make him ready to the field, for all the estates and commons of that lordship were there ready to behold that battle and judgment.

Then came Sir Breunor, the lord of that castle, with his lady in his hand, muffled, and asked Sir Tristram where was his lady: For an thy lady be fairer than mine, with thy sword smite off my lady's head; and if my lady be fairer than thine, with my sword I must strike off her head. And if I may win thee, yet shall thy lady be mine, and thou shalt lose thy head. Sir, said Tristram, this is a foul custom and horrible; and rather than my lady should lose her head, yet had I liefer lose my head. Nay, nay, said Sir Breunor, the ladies shall be first showed together, and the one shall have her judgment. Nay, I will not so, said Sir Tristram, for here is none that will give righteous judgment. But I doubt not, said Sir Tristram, my lady is fairer than thine, and that will I prove and make good with my hand. And whosomever he be that will say the contrary I will prove it on his head. And therewith Sir Tristram showed La Beale Isoud, and turned her thrice about with his naked sword in his hand. And when Sir Breunor saw that, he did the same wise turn his lady. But when Sir Breunor beheld La Beale Isoud, him thought he saw never a fairer lady, and then he dread his lady's head should be off. And so all the people that were there present gave judgment that La Beale Isoud was the fairer lady and the better made. How now, said Sir Tristram, meseemeth it were pity that my lady should lose her head, but because thou and



she of long time have used this wicked custom, and by you both have many good knights and ladies been destroyed, for that cause it were no loss to destroy you both. So God me help, said Sir Breunor, for to say the sooth, thy lady is fairer than mine, and that me sore repenteth. And so I hear the people privily say, for of all women I saw none so fair; and therefore, an thou wilt slay my lady, I doubt not but I shall slay thee and have thy lady. Thou shalt win her, said Sir Tristram, as dear as ever knight won lady. And because of thine own judgment, as thou wouldst have done to my lady if that she had been fouler, and because of the evil custom, give me thy lady, said Sir Tristram. And therewithal Sir Tristram strode unto him and took his lady from him, and with an awk stroke he smote off her head clean. Well, knight, said Sir Breunor, now hast thou done me a despite; [\*8]now take thine horse: sithen I am ladyless I will win thy lady an I may.

[\*8] Printed by Caxton as part of chap. xxvi.

### **CHAPTER XXVI. How Sir Tristram fought with Sir Breunor, and at the last smote off his head.**

THEN they took their horses and came together as it had been the thunder; and Sir Tristram smote Sir Breunor clean from his horse, and lightly he rose up; and as Sir Tristram came again by him he thrust his horse throughout both the shoulders, that his horse hurled here and there and fell dead to the ground. And ever Sir Breunor ran after to have slain Sir Tristram, but Sir Tristram was light and nimble, and voided his horse lightly. And or ever Sir Tristram might dress his shield and his sword the other gave him three or four sad strokes. Then they rushed together like two boars, tracing and traversing mightily and wisely as two noble knights. For this Sir Breunor was a proved knight, and had been or then the death of many good knights, that it was pity that he had so long endured.

Thus they fought, hurling here and there nigh two hours, and either were wounded sore. Then at the last Sir Breunor rashed upon Sir Tristram and took him in his arms, for he trusted much in his strength. Then was Sir Tristram called the strongest and the highest knight of the world; for he was called bigger than Sir Launcelot, but Sir Launcelot was better breathed. So anon Sir Tristram thrust Sir Breunor down grovelling, and then he unlaced his helm and struck off his head. And then all they that longed to the castle came to him, and did him homage and fealty, praying him that he would abide there still a little while to fordo that foul custom. Sir Tristram granted thereto. The meanwhile one of the knights of the castle rode unto Sir Galahad, the haut prince, the which was Sir Breunor's son, which was a noble knight, and told him what misadventure his father had and his mother.

## **CHAPTER XXVII. How Sir Galahad fought with Sir Tristram, and how Sir Tristram yielded him and promised to fellowship with Launcelot.**

THEN came Sir Galahad, and the King with the Hundred Knights with him; and this Sir Galahad proffered to fight with Sir Tristram hand for hand. And so they made them ready to go unto battle on horseback with great courage. Then Sir Galahad and Sir Tristram met together so hard that either bare other down, horse and all, to the earth. And then they avoided their horses as noble knights, and dressed their shields, and drew their swords with ire and rancour, and they lashed together many sad strokes, and one while striking, another while foining, tracing and traversing as noble knights; thus they fought long, near half a day, and either were sore wounded. At the last Sir Tristram waxed light and big, and doubled his strokes, and drove Sir Galahad aback on the one side and on the other, so that he was like to have been slain.

With that came the King with the Hundred Knights, and all that fellowship went fiercely upon Sir Tristram. When Sir Tristram saw them coming upon him, then he wist well he might not endure. Then as a wise knight of war, he said to Sir Galahad, the haut prince: Sir, ye show to me no knighthood, for to suffer all your men to have ado with me all at once; and as meseemeth ye be a noble knight of your hands it is great shame to you. So God me help, said Sir Galahad, there is none other way but thou must yield thee to me, other else to die, said Sir Galahad to Sir Tristram. I will rather yield me to you than die for that is more for the might of your men than of your hands. And therewithal Sir Tristram took his own sword by the point, and put the pommel in the hand of Sir Galahad.

Therewithal came the King with the Hundred Knights, and hard began to assail Sir Tristram. Let be, said Sir Galahad, be ye not so hardy to touch him, for I have given this knight his life. That is your shame, said the King with the Hundred Knights; hath he not slain your father and your mother? As for that, said Sir Galahad, I may not wite him greatly, for my father had him in prison, and enforced him to do battle with him; and my father had such a custom that was a shameful custom, that what knight came there to ask harbour his lady must needs die but if she were fairer than my mother; and if my father overcame that knight he must needs die. This was a shameful custom and usage, a knight for his harbour-asking to have such harbourage. And for this custom I would never draw about him. So God me help, said the King, this was a shameful custom. Truly, said Sir Galahad, so seemed me; and meseemed it had been great pity that this knight should have been slain, for I dare say he is the noblest man that beareth life, but if it were Sir Launcelot du Lake. Now, fair knight, said Sir Galahad, I require thee tell me thy name, and of whence thou art, and whither thou wilt. Sir, he said, my name is Sir Tristram de Lioness, and from King Mark

of Cornwall I was sent on message unto King Anguish of Ireland, for to fetch his daughter to be his wife, and here she is ready to go with me into Cornwall, and her name is La Beale Isoud. And, Sir Tristram, said Sir Galahad, the haut prince, well be ye found in these marches, and so ye will promise me to go unto Sir Launcelot du Lake, and accompany with him, ye shall go where ye will, and your fair lady with you; and I shall promise you never in all my days shall such customs be used in this castle as have been used. Sir, said Sir Tristram, now I let you wit, so God me help, I weened ye had been Sir Launcelot du Lake when I saw you first, and therefore I dread you the more; and sir, I promise you, said Sir Tristram, as soon as I may I will see Sir Launcelot and in fellowship me with him; for of all the knights of the world I most desire his fellowship.

### **CHAPTER XXVIII. How Sir Launcelot met with Sir Carados bearing away Sir Gawaine, and of the rescue of Sir Gawaine.**

AND then Sir Tristram took his leave when he saw his time, and took the sea. And in the meanwhile word came unto Sir Launcelot and to Sir Tristram that Sir Carados, the mighty king, that was made like a giant, fought with Sir Gawaine, and gave him such strokes that he swooned in his saddle, and after that he took him by the collar and pulled him out of his saddle, and fast bound him to the saddle-bow, and so rode his way with him toward his castle. And as he rode, by fortune Sir Launcelot met with Sir Carados, and anon he knew Sir Gawaine that lay bound after him. Ah, said Sir Launcelot unto Sir Gawaine, how stands it with you? Never so hard, said Sir Gawaine, unless that ye help me, for so God me help, without ye rescue me I know no knight that may, but outhere you or Sir Tristram. Wherefore Sir Launcelot was heavy of Sir Gawaine's words. And then Sir Launcelot bade Sir Carados: Lay down that knight and fight with me. Thou art but a fool, said Sir Carados, for I will serve you in the same wise. As for that, said Sir Launcelot, spare me not, for I warn thee I will not spare thee. And then he bound Sir Gawaine hand and foot, and so threw him to the ground. And then he gat his spear of his squire, and departed from Sir Launcelot to fetch his course. And so either met with other, and brake their spears to their hands; and then they pulled out swords, and hurtled together on horseback more than an hour. And at the last Sir Launcelot smote Sir Carados such a buffet upon the helm that it pierced his brain-pan. So then Sir Launcelot took Sir Carados by the collar and pulled him under his horse's feet, and then he alighted and pulled off his helm and struck off his head. And then Sir Launcelot unbound Sir Gawaine. So this same tale was told to Sir Galahad and to Sir Tristram:—here may ye hear the nobleness that followeth Sir Launcelot. Alas, said Sir Tristram, an I had not this message in hand with this fair lady, truly I would never stint or I had found

Sir Launcelot. Then Sir Tristram and La Beale Isoud went to the sea and came into Cornwall, and there all the barons met them.

**CHAPTER XXIX. Of the wedding of King Mark to La Beale Isoud, and of Bragwaine her maid, and of Palamides.**

AND anon they were richly wedded with great noblesse. But ever, as the French book saith, Sir Tristram and La Beale Isoud loved ever together. Then was there great jousts and great tourneying, and many lords and ladies were at that feast, and Sir Tristram was most praised of all other. Thus dured the feast long, and after the feast was done, within a little while after, by the assent of two ladies that were with Queen Isoud, they ordained for hate and envy for to destroy Dame Bragwaine, that was maiden and lady unto La Beale Isoud; and she was sent into the forest for to fetch herbs, and there she was met, and bound feet and hand to a tree, and so she was bounden three days. And by fortune, Sir Palamides found Dame Bragwaine, and there he delivered her from the death, and brought her to a nunnery there beside, for to be recovered. When Isoud the queen missed her maiden, wit ye well she was right heavy as ever was any queen, for of all earthly women she loved her best: the cause was for she came with her out of her country. And so upon a day Queen Isoud walked into the forest to put away her thoughts, and there she went herself unto a well and made great moan. And suddenly there came Palamides to her, and had heard all her complaint, and said: Madam Isoud, an ye will grant me my boon, I shall bring to you Dame Bragwaine safe and sound. And the queen was so glad of his proffer that suddenly unadvised she granted all his asking. Well, Madam, said Palamides, I trust to your promise, and if ye will abide here half an hour I shall bring her to you. I shall abide you, said La Beale Isoud. And Sir Palamides rode forth his way to that nunnery, and lightly he came again with Dame Bragwaine; but by her good will she would not have come again, because for love of the queen she stood in adventure of her life. Notwithstanding, half against her will, she went with Sir Palamides unto the queen. And when the queen saw her she was passing glad. Now, Madam, said Palamides, remember upon your promise, for I have fulfilled my promise. Sir Palamides, said the queen, I wot not what is your desire, but I will that ye wit, howbeit I promised you largely, I thought none evil, nor I warn you none evil will I do. Madam, said Sir Palamides, as at this time, ye shall not know my desire, but before my lord your husband there shall ye know that I will have my desire that ye have promised me. And therewith the queen departed, and rode home to the king, and Sir Palamides rode after her. And when Sir Palamides came before the king, he said: Sir King, I require you as ye be a righteous king, that ye will judge me the right. Tell me your cause,

said the king, and ye shall have right.

**CHAPTER XXX. How Palamides demanded Queen Isoud, and how Lambegus rode after to rescue her, and of the escape of Isoud.**

SIR, said Palamides, I promised your Queen Isoud to bring again Dame Bragwaine that she had lost, upon this covenant, that she should grant me a boon that I would ask, and without grudging, outhere advisement, she granted me. What say ye, my lady? said the king. It is as he saith, so God me help, said the queen; to say thee sooth I promised him his asking for love and joy that I had to see her. Well, Madam, said the king, and if ye were hasty to grant him what boon he would ask, I will well that ye perform your promise. Then, said Palamides, I will that ye wit that I will have your queen to lead her and govern her whereas me list. Therewith the king stood still, and bethought him of Sir Tristram, and deemed that he would rescue her. And then hastily the king answered: Take her with the adventures that shall fall of it, for as I suppose thou wilt not enjoy her no while. As for that, said Palamides, I dare right well abide the adventure. And so, to make short tale, Sir Palamides took her by the hand and said: Madam, grudge not to go with me, for I desire nothing but your own promise. As for that, said the queen, I fear not greatly to go with thee, howbeit thou hast me at advantage upon my promise, for I doubt not I shall be worshipfully rescued from thee. As for that, said Sir Palamides, be it as it be may. So Queen Isoud was set behind Palamides, and rode his way.

Anon the king sent after Sir Tristram, but in no wise he could be found, for he was in the forest a-hunting; for that was always his custom, but if he used arms, to chase and to hunt in the forests. Alas, said the king, now I am shamed for ever, that by mine own assent my lady and my queen shall be devoured. Then came forth a knight, his name was Lambegus, and he was a knight of Sir Tristram. My lord, said this knight, sith ye have trust in my lord, Sir Tristram, wit ye well for his sake I will ride after your queen and rescue her, or else I shall be beaten. Gramercy, said the king, as I live, Sir Lambegus, I shall deserve it. And then Sir Lambegus armed him, and rode after as fast as he might. And then within a while he overtook Sir Palamides. And then Sir Palamides left the queen. What art thou, said Palamides, art thou Tristram? Nay, he said, I am his servant, and my name is Sir Lambegus. That me repenteth, said Palamides. I had liefer thou hadst been Sir Tristram. I believe you well, said Lambegus, but when thou meetest with Sir Tristram thou shalt have thy hands full. And then they hurtled together and all to-brast their spears, and then they pulled out their swords, and hewed on helms and hauberks. At the last Sir Palamides gave Sir Lambegus such a wound that he fell down like a dead knight to the earth.

Then he looked after La Beale Isoud, and then she was gone he nist where. Wit ye well Sir Palamides was never so heavy. So the queen ran into the forest, and there she found a well, and therein she had thought to have drowned herself. And as good fortune would, there came a knight to her that had a castle thereby, his name was Sir Adtherp. And when he found the queen in that mischief he rescued her, and brought her to his castle. And when he wist what she was he armed him, and took his horse, and said he would be avenged upon Palamides; and so he rode on till he met with him, and there Sir Palamides wounded him sore, and by force he made him to tell him the cause why he did battle with him, and how he had led the queen unto his castle. Now bring me there, said Palamides, or thou shalt die of my hands. Sir, said Sir Adtherp, I am so wounded I may not follow, but ride you this way and it shall bring you into my castle, and there within is the queen. Then Sir Palamides rode still till he came to the castle. And at a window La Beale Isoud saw Sir Palamides; then she made the gates to be shut strongly. And when he saw he might not come within the castle, he put off his bridle and his saddle, and put his horse to pasture, and set himself down at the gate like a man that was out of his wit that recked not of himself.

**CHAPTER XXXI. How Sir Tristram rode after Palamides, and how he found him and fought with him, and by the means of Isoud the battle ceased.**

NOW turn we unto Sir Tristram, that when he was come home and wist La Beale Isoud was gone with Sir Palamides, wit ye well he was wroth out of measure. Alas, said Sir Tristram, I am this day shamed. Then he cried to Gouvernail his man: Haste thee that I were armed and on horseback, for well I wot Lambegus hath no might nor strength to withstand Sir Palamides: alas that I have not been in his stead! So anon as he was armed and horsed Sir Tristram and Gouvernail rode after into the forest, and within a while he found his knight Lambegus almost wounded to the death; and Sir Tristram bare him to a forester, and charged him to keep him well. And then he rode forth, and there he found Sir Adtherp sore wounded, and he told him how the queen would have drowned herself had he not been, and how for her sake and love he had taken upon him to do battle with Sir Palamides. Where is my lady? said Sir Tristram. Sir, said the knight, she is sure enough within my castle, an she can hold her within it. Gramercy, said Sir Tristram, of thy great goodness. And so he rode till he came nigh to that castle; and then Sir Tristram saw where Sir Palamides sat at the gate sleeping, and his horse pastured fast afore him. Now go thou, Gouvernail, said Sir Tristram, and bid him awake, and make him ready. So Gouvernail rode unto him and said: Sir Palamides, arise, and take to thee thine harness. But he was in

such a study he heard not what Gouvernail said. So Gouvernail came again and told Sir Tristram he slept, or else he was mad. Go thou again, said Sir Tristram, and bid him arise, and tell him that I am here, his mortal foe. So Gouvernail rode again and put upon him the butt of his spear, and said: Sir Palamides, make thee ready, for wit ye well Sir Tristram hoveth yonder, and sendeth thee word he is thy mortal foe. And therewithal Sir Palamides arose stilly, without words, and gat his horse, and saddled him and bridled him, and lightly he leapt upon, and gat his spear in his hand, and either feutred their spears and hurtled fast together; and there Tristram smote down Sir Palamides over his horse's tail. Then lightly Sir Palamides put his shield afore him and drew his sword. And there began strong battle on both parts, for both they fought for the love of one lady, and ever she lay on the walls and beheld them how they fought out of measure, and either were wounded passing sore, but Palamides was much sorer wounded. Thus they fought tracing and traversing more than two hours, that well-nigh for dole and sorrow La Beale Isoud swooned. Alas, she said, that one I loved and yet do, and the other I love not, yet it were great pity that I should see Sir Palamides slain; for well I know by that time the end be done Sir Palamides is but a dead knight: because he is not christened I would be loath that he should die a Saracen. And therewithal she came down and besought Sir Tristram to fight no more. Ah, madam, said he, what mean you, will ye have me shamed? Well ye know I will be ruled by you. I will not your dishonour, said La Beale Isoud, but I would that ye would for my sake spare this unhappy Saracen Palamides. Madam, said Sir Tristram, I will leave fighting at this time for your sake. Then she said to Sir Palamides: This shall be your charge, that thou shalt go out of this country while I am therein. I will obey your commandment, said Sir Palamides, the which is sore against my will. Then take thy way, said La Beale Isoud, unto the court of King Arthur, and there recommend me unto Queen Guenever, and tell her that I send her word that there be within this land but four lovers, that is, Sir Launcelot du Lake and Queen Guenever, and Sir Tristram de Lioness and Queen Isoud.

### **CHAPTER XXXII. How Sir Tristram brought Queen Isoud home, and of the debate of King Mark and Sir Tristram.**

AND so Sir Palamides departed with great heaviness. And Sir Tristram took the queen and brought her again to King Mark, and then was there made great joy of her home-coming. Who was cherished but Sir Tristram! Then Sir Tristram let fetch Sir Lambegus, his knight, from the forester's house, and it was long or he was whole, but at the last he was well recovered. Thus they lived with joy and play a long while. But ever Sir Andred, that was nigh cousin to Sir Tristram, lay in a watch to wait betwixt Sir Tristram and La Beale Isoud, for to take them and

slander them. So upon a day Sir Tristram talked with La Beale Isoud in a window, and that espied Sir Andred, and told it to the King. Then King Mark took a sword in his hand and came to Sir Tristram, and called him false traitor, and would have stricken him. But Sir Tristram was nigh him, and ran under his sword, and took it out of his hand. And then the King cried: Where are my knights and my men? I charge you slay this traitor. But at that time there was not one would move for his words. When Sir Tristram saw that there was not one would be against him, he shook the sword to the king, and made countenance as though he would have stricken him. And then King Mark fled, and Sir Tristram followed him, and smote upon him five or six strokes flatling on the neck, that he made him to fall upon the nose. And then Sir Tristram yede his way and armed him, and took his horse and his man, and so he rode into that forest.

And there upon a day Sir Tristram met with two brethren that were knights with King Mark, and there he struck off the head of the one, and wounded the other to the death; and he made him to bear his brother's head in his helm unto the king, and thirty more there he wounded. And when that knight came before the king to say his message, he there died afore the king and the queen. Then King Mark called his council unto him, and asked advice of his barons what was best to do with Sir Tristram. Sir, said the barons, in especial Sir Dinas, the Seneschal, Sir, we will give you counsel for to send for Sir Tristram, for we will that ye wit many men will hold with Sir Tristram an he were hard bestead. And sir, said Sir Dinas, ye shall understand that Sir Tristram is called peerless and makeless of any Christian knight, and of his might and hardiness we knew none so good a knight, but if it be Sir Launcelot du Lake. And if he depart from your court and go to King Arthur's court, wit ye well he will get him such friends there that he will not set by your malice. And therefore, sir, I counsel you to take him to your grace. I will well, said the king, that he be sent for, that we may be friends. Then the barons sent for Sir Tristram under a safe conduct. And so when Sir Tristram came to the king he was welcome, and no rehearsal was made, and there was game and play. And then the king and the queen went a-hunting, and Sir Tristram.

### **CHAPTER XXXIII. How Sir Lamorak jousted with thirty knights, and Sir Tristram at the request of King Mark smote his horse down.**

THE king and the queen made their pavilions and their tents in that forest beside a river, and there was daily hunting and jousting, for there were ever thirty knights ready to joust unto all them that came in at that time. And there by fortune came Sir Lamorak de Galis and Sir Driant; and there Sir Driant jousted right well, but at the last he had a fall. Then Sir Lamorak proffered to joust. And



when he began he fared so with the thirty knights that there was not one of them but that he gave him a fall, and some of them were sore hurt. I marvel, said King Mark, what knight he is that doth such deeds of arms. Sir, said Sir Tristram, I know him well for a noble knight as few now be living, and his name is Sir Lamorak de Galis. It were great shame, said the king, that he should go thus away, unless that some of you meet with him better. Sir, said Sir Tristram, meseemeth it were no worship for a noble man to have ado with him: and for because at this time he hath done over much for any mean knight living, therefore, as meseemeth, it were great shame and villainy to tempt him any more at this time, insomuch as he and his horse are weary both; for the deeds of arms that he hath done this day, an they be well considered, it were enough for Sir Launcelot du Lake. As for that, said King Mark, I require you, as ye love me and my lady the queen, La Beale Isoud, take your arms and joust with Sir Lamorak de Galis. Sir, said Sir Tristram, ye bid me do a thing that is against knighthood, and well I can deem that I shall give him a fall, for it is no mastery, for my horse and I be fresh both, and so is not his horse and he; and wit ye well that he will take it for great unkindness, for ever one good knight is loath to take another at disadvantage; but because I will not displease you, as ye require me so will I do, and obey your commandment.

And so Sir Tristram armed him and took his horse, and put him forth, and there Sir Lamorak met him mightily, and what with the might of his own spear, and of Sir Tristram's spear, Sir Lamorak's horse fell to the earth, and he sitting in the saddle. Then anon as lightly as he might he avoided the saddle and his horse, and put his shield afore him and drew his sword. And then he bade Sir Tristram: Alight, thou knight, an thou durst. Nay, said Sir Tristram, I will no more have ado with thee, for I have done to thee over much unto my dishonour and to thy worship. As for that, said Sir Lamorak, I can thee no thank; since thou hast forjousted me on horseback I require thee and I beseech thee, an thou be Sir Tristram, fight with me on foot. I will not so, said Sir Tristram; and wit ye well my name is Sir Tristram de Liones, and well I know ye be Sir Lamorak de Galis, and this that I have done to you was against my will, but I was required thereto; but to say that I will do at your request as at this time, I will have no more ado with you, for me shameth of that I have done. As for the shame, said Sir Lamorak, on thy part or on mine, bear thou it an thou wilt, for though a mare's son hath failed me, now a queen's son shall not fail thee; and therefore, an thou be such a knight as men call thee, I require thee, alight, and fight with me. Sir Lamorak, said Sir Tristram, I understand your heart is great, and cause why ye have, to say thee sooth; for it would grieve me an any knight should keep him fresh and then to strike down a weary knight, for that knight nor horse was never

formed that alway might stand or endure. And therefore, said Sir Tristram, I will not have ado with you, for me forthinketh of that I have done. As for that, said Sir Lamorak, I shall quit you, an ever I see my time.

**CHAPTER XXXIV. How Sir Lamorak sent an horn to King Mark in despite of Sir Tristram, and how Sir Tristram was driven into a chapel.**

So he departed from him with Sir Driant, and by the way they met with a knight that was sent from Morgan le Fay unto King Arthur; and this knight had a fair horn harnessed with gold, and the horn had such a virtue that there might no lady nor gentlewoman drink of that horn but if she were true to her husband, and if she were false she should spill all the drink, and if she were true to her lord she might drink peaceable. And because of the Queen Guenever, and in the despite of Sir Launcelot, this horn was sent unto King Arthur; and by force Sir Lamorak made that knight to tell all the cause why he bare that horn. Now shalt thou bear this horn, said Lamorak, unto King Mark, or else choose thou to die for it; for I tell thee plainly, in despite and reproof of Sir Tristram thou shalt bear that horn unto King Mark, his uncle, and say thou to him that I sent it him for to assay his lady, and if she be true to him he shall prove her. So the knight went his way unto King Mark, and brought him that rich horn, and said that Sir Lamorak sent it him, and thereto he told him the virtue of that horn. Then the king made Queen Isoud to drink thereof, and an hundred ladies, and there were but four ladies of all those that drank clean. Alas, said King Mark, this is a great despite, and sware a great oath that she should be burnt and the other ladies.

Then the barons gathered them together, and said plainly they would not have those ladies burnt for an horn made by sorcery, that came from as false a sorceress and witch as then was living. For that horn did never good, but caused strife and debate, and always in her days she had been an enemy to all true lovers. So there were many knights made their avow, an ever they met with Morgan le Fay, that they would show her short courtesy. Also Sir Tristram was passing wroth that Sir Lamorak sent that horn unto King Mark, for well he knew that it was done in the despite of him. And therefore he thought to quite Sir Lamorak.

Then Sir Tristram used daily and nightly to go to Queen Isoud when he might, and ever Sir Andred his cousin watched him night and day for to take him with La Beale Isoud. And so upon a night Sir Andred espied the hour and the time when Sir Tristram went to his lady. Then Sir Andred gat unto him twelve knights, and at midnight he set upon Sir Tristram secretly and suddenly and there Sir Tristram was taken naked abed with La Beale Isoud, and then was he bound hand and foot, and so was he kept until day. And then by the assent of King

Mark, and of Sir Andred, and of some of the barons, Sir Tristram was led unto a chapel that stood upon the sea rocks, there for to take his judgment: and so he was led bounden with forty knights. And when Sir Tristram saw that there was none other boot but needs that he must die, then said he: Fair lords, remember what I have done for the country of Cornwall, and in what jeopardy I have been in for the weal of you all; for when I fought for the truage of Cornwall with Sir Marhaus, the good knight, I was promised for to be better rewarded, when ye all refused to take the battle; therefore, as ye be good gentle knights, see me not thus shamefully to die, for it is shame to all knighthood thus to see me die; for I dare say, said Sir Tristram, that I never met with no knight but I was as good as he, or better. Fie upon thee, said Sir Andred, false traitor that thou art, with thine avaunting; for all thy boast thou shalt die this day. O Andred, Andred, said Sir Tristram, thou shouldst be my kinsman, and now thou art to me full unfriendly, but an there were no more but thou and I, thou wouldst not put me to death. No! said Sir Andred, and therewith he drew his sword, and would have slain him.

When Sir Tristram saw him make such countenance he looked upon both his hands that were fast bounden unto two knights, and suddenly he pulled them both to him, and unwrast his hands, and then he leapt unto his cousin, Sir Andred, and wrested his sword out of his hands; then he smote Sir Andred that he fell to the earth, and so Sir Tristram fought till that he had killed ten knights. So then Sir Tristram gat the chapel and kept it mightily. Then the cry was great, and the people drew fast unto Sir Andred, mo than an hundred. When Sir Tristram saw the people draw unto him, he remembered he was naked, and sperd fast the chapel door, and brake the bars of a window, and so he leapt out and fell upon the crags in the sea. And so at that time Sir Andred nor none of his fellows might get to him, at that time.

#### **CHAPTER XXXV. How Sir Tristram was holpen by his men, and of Queen Isoud which was put in a lazar-cote, and how Tristram was hurt.**

SO when they were departed, Gouvernail, and Sir Lambegus, and Sir Sentraile de Lushon, that were Sir Tristram's men, sought their master. When they heard he was escaped then they were passing glad; and on the rocks they found him, and with towels they pulled him up. And then Sir Tristram asked them where was La Beale Isoud, for he weened she had been had away of Andred's people. Sir, said Gouvernail, she is put in a lazar-cote. Alas, said Sir Tristram, this is a full ungoodly place for such a fair lady, and if I may she shall not be long there. And so he took his men and went thereas was La Beale Isoud, and fetched her away, and brought her into a forest to a fair manor, and Sir Tristram there abode with her. So the good knight bade his men go from him:

For at this time I may not help you. So they departed all save Gouvernail. And so upon a day Sir Tristram yede into the forest for to disport him, and then it happened that there he fell sleep; and there came a man that Sir Tristram aforehand had slain his brother, and when this man had found him he shot him through the shoulder with an arrow, and Sir Tristram leapt up and killed that man. And in the meantime it was told King Mark how Sir Tristram and La Beale Isoud were in that same manor, and as soon as ever he might thither he came with many knights to slay Sir Tristram. And when he came there he found him gone; and there he took La Beale Isoud home with him, and kept her strait that by no means never she might wit nor send unto Tristram, nor he unto her. And then when Sir Tristram came toward the old manor he found the track of many horses, and thereby he wist his lady was gone. And then Sir Tristram took great sorrow, and endured with great pain long time, for the arrow that he was hurt withal was envenomed.

Then by the mean of La Beale Isoud she told a lady that was cousin unto Dame Bragwaine, and she came to Sir Tristram, and told him that he might not be whole by no means. For thy lady, La Beale Isoud, may not help thee, therefore she biddeth you haste into Brittany to King Howel, and there ye shall find his daughter, Isoud la Blanche Mains, and she shall help thee. Then Sir Tristram and Gouvernail gat them shipping, and so sailed into Brittany. And when King Howel wist that it was Sir Tristram he was full glad of him. Sir, he said, I am come into this country to have help of your daughter, for it is told me that there is none other may heal me but she; and so within a while she healed him.

#### **CHAPTER XXXVI. How Sir Tristram served in war King Howel of Brittany, and slew his adversary in the field.**

THERE was an earl that hight Grip, and this earl made great war upon the king, and put the king to the worse, and besieged him. And on a time Sir Kehydus, that was son to King Howel, as he issued out he was sore wounded, nigh to the death. Then Gouvernail went to the king and said: Sir, I counsel you to desire my lord, Sir Tristram, as in your need to help you. I will do by your counsel, said the king. And so he yede unto Sir Tristram, and prayed him in his wars to help him: For my son, Sir Kehydus, may not go into the field. Sir, said Sir Tristram, I will go to the field and do what I may. Then Sir Tristram issued out of the town with such fellowship as he might make, and did such deeds that all Brittany spake of him. And then, at the last, by great might and force, he slew the Earl Grip with his own hands, and more than an hundred knights he slew that day. And then Sir Tristram was received worshipfully with procession. Then

King Howel embraced him in his arms, and said: Sir Tristram, all my kingdom I will resign to thee. God defend, said Sir Tristram, for I am beholden unto you for your daughter's sake to do for you.

Then by the great means of King Howel and Kehydus his son, by great proffers, there grew great love betwixt Isoud and Sir Tristram, for that lady was both good and fair, and a woman of noble blood and fame. And for because Sir Tristram had such cheer and riches, and all other pleasaunce that he had, almost he had forsaken La Beale Isoud. And so upon a time Sir Tristram agreed to wed Isoud la Blanche Mains. And at the last they were wedded, and solemnly held their marriage. And so when they were abed both Sir Tristram remembered him of his old lady La Beale Isoud. And then he took such a thought suddenly that he was all dismayed, and other cheer made he none but with clipping and kissing; as for other fleshly lusts Sir Tristram never thought nor had ado with her: such mention maketh the French book; also it maketh mention that the lady weened there had been no pleasure but kissing and clipping. And in the meantime there was a knight in Brittany, his name was Suppinabiles, and he came over the sea into England, and then he came into the court of King Arthur, and there he met with Sir Launcelot du Lake, and told him of the marriage of Sir Tristram. Then said Sir Launcelot: Fie upon him, untrue knight to his lady, that so noble a knight as Sir Tristram is should be found to his first lady false, La Beale Isoud, Queen of Cornwall; but say ye him this, said Sir Launcelot, that of all knights in the world I loved him most, and had most joy of him, and all was for his noble deeds; and let him wit the love between him and me is done for ever, and that I give him warning from this day forth as his mortal enemy.

#### **CHAPTER XXXVII. How Sir Suppinabiles told Sir Tristram how he was defamed in the court of King Arthur, and of Sir Lamorak.**

THEN departed Sir Suppinabiles unto Brittany again, and there he found Sir Tristram, and told him that he had been in King Arthur's court. Then said Sir Tristram: Heard ye anything of me? So God me help, said Sir Suppinabiles, there I heard Sir Launcelot speak of you great shame, and that ye be a false knight to your lady and he bade me do you to wit that he will be your mortal enemy in every place where he may meet you. That me repenteth, said Tristram, for of all knights I loved to be in his fellowship. So Sir Tristram made great moan and was ashamed that noble knights should defame him for the sake of his lady. And in this meanwhile La Beale Isoud made a letter unto Queen Guenever, complaining her of the untruth of Sir Tristram, and how he had wedded the king's daughter of Brittany. Queen Guenever sent her another letter, and bade her be of good cheer, for she should have joy after sorrow, for Sir Tristram was so

noble a knight called, that by crafts of sorcery ladies would make such noble men to wed them. But in the end, Queen Guenever said, it shall be thus, that he shall hate her, and love you better than ever he did to-fore.

So leave we Sir Tristram in Brittany, and speak we of Sir Lamorak de Galis, that as he sailed his ship fell on a rock and perished all, save Sir Lamorak and his squire; and there he swam mightily, and fishers of the Isle of Servage took him up, and his squire was drowned, and the shipmen had great labour to save Sir Lamorak's life, for all the comfort that they could do.

And the lord of that isle, hight Sir Nabon le Noire, a great mighty giant. And this Sir Nabon hated all the knights of King Arthur's, and in no wise he would do them favour. And these fishers told Sir Lamorak all the guise of Sir Nabon; how there came never knight of King Arthur's but he destroyed him. And at the last battle that he did was slain Sir Nanowne le Petite, the which he put to a shameful death in despite of King Arthur, for he was drawn limb-meal. That forthinketh me, said Sir Lamorak, for that knight's death, for he was my cousin; and if I were at mine ease as well as ever I was, I would revenge his death. Peace, said the fishers, and make here no words, for or ever ye depart from hence Sir Nabon must know that ye have been here, or else we should die for your sake. So that I be whole, said Lamorak, of my disease that I have taken in the sea, I will that ye tell him that I am a knight of King Arthur's, for I was never afeard to reneye my lord.

#### **CHAPTER XXXVIII. How Sir Tristram and his wife arrived in Wales, and how he met there with Sir Lamorak.**

NOW turn we unto Sir Tristram, that upon a day he took a little barget, and his wife Isoud la Blanche Mains, with Sir Kehydus her brother, to play them in the coasts. And when they were from the land, there was a wind drove them in to the coast of Wales upon this Isle of Servage, whereas was Sir Lamorak, and there the barget all to-rove; and there Dame Isoud was hurt; and as well as they might they gat into the forest, and there by a well he saw Segwarides and a damosel. And then either saluted other. Sir, said Segwarides, I know you for Sir Tristram de Lionnes, the man in the world that I have most cause to hate, because ye departed the love between me and my wife; but as for that, said Sir Segwarides, I will never hate a noble knight for a light lady; and therefore, I pray you, be my friend, and I will be yours unto my power; for wit ye well ye are hard bestead in this valley, and we shall have enough to do either of us to succour other. And then Sir Segwarides brought Sir Tristram to a lady thereby that was born in Cornwall, and she told him all the perils of that valley, and how there came never knight there but he were taken prisoner or slain. Wit you well, fair

lady, said Sir Tristram, that I slew Sir Marhaus and delivered Cornwall from the truage of Ireland, and I am he that delivered the King of Ireland from Sir Blamore de Ganis, and I am he that beat Sir Palamides; and wit ye well I am Sir Tristram de Liones, that by the grace of God shall deliver this woful Isle of Servage. So Sir Tristram was well eased.

Then one told him there was a knight of King Arthur's that was wrecked on the rocks. What is his name? said Sir Tristram. We wot not, said the fishers, but he keepeth it no counsel but that he is a knight of King Arthur's, and by the mighty lord of this isle he setteth nought. I pray you, said Sir Tristram, an ye may, bring him hither that I may see him, and if he be any of the knights of Arthur's I shall know him. Then the lady prayed the fishers to bring him to her place. So on the morrow they brought him thither in a fisher's raiment; and as soon as Sir Tristram saw him he smiled upon him and knew him well, but he knew not Sir Tristram. Fair sir, said Sir Tristram, meseemeth by your cheer ye have been diseased but late, and also methinketh I should know you heretofore. I will well, said Sir Lamorak, that ye have seen me and met with me. Fair sir, said Sir Tristram, tell me your name. Upon a covenant I will tell you, said Sir Lamorak, that is, that ye will tell me whether ye be lord of this island or no, that is called Nabon le Noire. Forsooth, said Sir Tristram, I am not he, nor I hold not of him; I am his foe as well as ye be, and so shall I be found or I depart out of this isle. Well, said Sir Lamorak, since ye have said so largely unto me, my name is Sir Lamorak de Galis, son unto King Pellinore. Forsooth, I trow well, said Sir Tristram, for an ye said other I know the contrary. What are ye, said Sir Lamorak, that knoweth me? I am Sir Tristram de Liones. Ah, sir, remember ye not of the fall ye did give me once, and after ye refused me to fight on foot. That was not for fear I had of you, said Sir Tristram, but me shamed at that time to have more ado with you, for meseemed ye had enough; but, Sir Lamorak, for my kindness many ladies ye put to a reproof when ye sent the horn from Morgan le Fay to King Mark, whereas ye did this in despite of me. Well, said he, an it were to do again, so would I do, for I had liefer strife and debate fell in King Mark's court rather than Arthur's court, for the honour of both courts be not alike. As to that, said Sir Tristram, I know well; but that that was done it was for despite of me, but all your malice, I thank God, hurt not greatly. Therefore, said Sir Tristram, ye shall leave all your malice, and so will I, and let us assay how we may win worship between you and me upon this giant Sir Nabon le Noire that is lord of this island, to destroy him. Sir, said Sir Lamorak, now I understand your knighthood, it may not be false that all men say, for of your bounty, noblesse, and worship, of all knights ye are peerless, and for your courtesy and gentleness I showed you ungentleness, and that now me repenteth.

### **CHAPTER XXXIX. How Sir Tristram fought with Sir Nabon, and overcame him, and made Sir Segwarides lord of the isle.**

IN the meantime there came word that Sir Nabon had made a cry that all the people of that isle should be at his castle the fifth day after. And the same day the son of Nabon should be made knight, and all the knights of that valley and thereabout should be there to joust, and all those of the realm of Logris should be there to joust with them of North Wales: and thither came five hundred knights, and they of the country brought thither Sir Lamorak, and Sir Tristram, and Sir Kehydus, and Sir Segwarides, for they durst none otherwise do; and then Sir Nabon lent Sir Lamorak horse and armour at Sir Lamorak's desire, and Sir Lamorak jousted and did such deeds of arms that Nabon and all the people said there was never knight that ever they saw do such deeds of arms; for, as the French book saith, he for-jousted all that were there, for the most part of five hundred knights, that none abode him in his saddle.

Then Sir Nabon proffered to play with him his play: For I saw never no knight do so much upon a day. I will well, said Sir Lamorak, play as I may, but I am weary and sore bruised. And there either gat a spear, but Nabon would not encounter with Sir Lamorak, but smote his horse in the forehead, and so slew him; and then Sir Lamorak yede on foot, and turned his shield and drew his sword, and there began strong battle on foot. But Sir Lamorak was so sore bruised and short breathed, that he traced and traversed somewhat aback. Fair fellow, said Sir Nabon, hold thy hand and I shall show thee more courtesy than ever I showed knight, because I have seen this day thy noble knighthood, and therefore stand thou by, and I will wit whether any of thy fellows will have ado with me. Then when Sir Tristram heard that, he stepped forth and said: Nabon, lend me horse and sure armour, and I will have ado with thee. Well, fellow, said Sir Nabon, go thou to yonder pavilion, and arm thee of the best thou findest there, and I shall play a marvellous play with thee. Then said Sir Tristram: Look ye play well, or else peradventure I shall learn you a new play. That is well said, fellow, said Sir Nabon. So when Sir Tristram was armed as him liked best, and well shielded and sworded, he dressed to him on foot; for well he knew that Sir Nabon would not abide a stroke with a spear, therefore he would slay all knights' horses. Now, fair fellow, Sir Nabon, let us play. So then they fought long on foot, tracing and traversing, smiting and foining long without any rest. At the last Sir Nabon prayed him to tell him his name. Sir Nabon, I tell thee my name is Sir Tristram de Lionnes, a knight of Cornwall under King Mark. Thou art welcome, said Sir Nabon, for of all knights I have most desired to fight with thee or with Sir Launcelot.



So then they went eagerly together, and Sir Tristram slew Sir Nabon, and so forthwith he leapt to his son, and struck off his head; and then all the country said they would hold of Sir Tristram. Nay, said Sir Tristram, I will not so; here is a worshipful knight, Sir Lamorak de Galis, that for me he shall be lord of this country, for he hath done here great deeds of arms. Nay, said Sir Lamorak, I will not be lord of this country, for I have not deserved it as well as ye, therefore give ye it where ye will, for I will none have. Well, said Sir Tristram, since ye nor I will not have it, let us give it to him that hath not so well deserved it. Do as ye list, said Segwarides, for the gift is yours, for I will none have an I had deserved it. So was it given to Segwarides, whereof he thanked them; and so was he lord, and worshipfully he did govern it. And then Sir Segwarides delivered all prisoners, and set good governance in that valley; and so he returned into Cornwall, and told King Mark and La Beale Isoud how Sir Tristram had advanced him to the Isle of Servage, and there he proclaimed in all Cornwall of all the adventures of these two knights, so was it openly known. But full woe was La Beale Isoud when she heard tell that Sir Tristram was wedded to Isoud la Blanche Mains.

## CHAPTER XL

### **How Sir Lamorak departed from Sir Tristram, and how he met with Sir Frol, and after with Sir Launcelot.**

SO turn we unto Sir Lamorak, that rode toward Arthur's court, and Sir Tristram's wife and Kehydus took a vessel and sailed into Brittany, unto King Howel, where he was welcome. And when he heard of these adventures they marvelled of his noble deeds. Now turn we unto Sir Lamorak, that when he was departed from Sir Tristram he rode out of the forest, till he came to an hermitage. When the hermit saw him, he asked him from whence he came. Sir, said Sir Lamorak, I come from this valley. Sir, said the hermit: thereof I marvel. For this twenty winter I saw never no knight pass this country but he was either slain or villainously wounded, or pass as a poor prisoner. Those ill customs, said Sir Lamorak, are fordone, for Sir Tristram slew your lord, Sir Nabon, and his son. Then was the hermit glad, and all his brethren, for he said there was never such a tyrant among Christian men. And therefore, said the hermit, this valley and franchise we will hold of Sir Tristram.

So on the morrow Sir Lamorak departed; and as he rode he saw four knights fight against one, and that one knight defended him well, but at the last the four knights had him down. And then Sir Lamorak went betwixt them, and asked them why they would slay that one knight, and said it was shame, four against one. Thou shalt well wit, said the four knights, that he is false. That is your tale, said Sir Lamorak, and when I hear him also speak, I will say as ye say. Then said Lamorak: Ah, knight, can ye not excuse you, but that ye are a false knight. Sir, said he, yet can I excuse me both with my word and with my hands, that I will make good upon one of the best of them, my body to his body. Then spake they all at once: We will not jeopardy our bodies as for thee. But wit thou well, they said, an King Arthur were here himself, it should not lie in his power to save his life. That is too much said, said Sir Lamorak, but many speak behind a man more than they will say to his face; and because of your words ye shall understand that I am one of the simplest of King Arthur's court; in the worship of my lord now do your best, and in despite of you I shall rescue him. And then they lashed all at once to Sir Lamorak, but anon at two strokes Sir Lamorak had

slain two of them, and then the other two fled. So then Sir Lamorak turned again to that knight, and asked him his name. Sir, he said, my name is Sir Frol of the Out Isles. Then he rode with Sir Lamorak and bare him company.

And as they rode by the way they saw a seemly knight riding against them, and all in white. Ah, said Frol, yonder knight jousted late with me and smote me down, therefore I will joust with him. Ye shall not do so, said Sir Lamorak, by my counsel, an ye will tell me your quarrel, whether ye jousted at his request, or he at yours. Nay, said Sir Frol, I jousted with him at my request. Sir, said Lamorak, then will I counsel you deal no more with him, for meseemeth by his countenance he should be a noble knight, and no japer; for methinketh he should be of the Table Round. Therefore I will not spare, said Sir Frol. And then he cried and said: Sir knight, make thee ready to joust. That needeth not, said the White Knight, for I have no lust to joust with thee; but yet they feutred their spears, and the White Knight overthrew Sir Frol, and then he rode his way a soft pace. Then Sir Lamorak rode after him, and prayed him to tell him his name: For meseemeth ye should be of the fellowship of the Round Table. Upon a covenant, said he, I will tell you my name, so that ye will not discover my name, and also that ye will tell me yours. Then, said he, my name is Sir Lamorak de Galis. And my name is Sir Launcelot du Lake. Then they put up their swords, and kissed heartily together, and either made great joy of other. Sir, said Sir Lamorak, an it please you I will do you service. God defend, said Launcelot, that any of so noble a blood as ye be should do me service. Then he said: More, I am in a quest that I must do myself alone. Now God speed you, said Sir Lamorak, and so they departed. Then Sir Lamorak came to Sir Frol and horsed him again. What knight is that? said Sir Frol. Sir, he said, it is not for you to know, nor it is no point of my charge. Ye are the more uncourteous, said Sir Frol, and therefore I will depart from you. Ye may do as ye list, said Sir Lamorak, and yet by my company ye have saved the fairest flower of your garland; so they departed.

#### **CHAPTER XLI. How Sir Lamorak slew Sir Frol, and of the courteous fighting with Sir Belliance his brother.**

THEN within two or three days Sir Lamorak found a knight at a well sleeping, and his lady sat with him and waked. Right so came Sir Gawaine and took the knight's lady, and set her up behind his squire. So Sir Lamorak rode after Sir Gawaine, and said: Sir Gawaine, turn again. And then said Sir Gawaine: What will ye do with me? for I am nephew unto King Arthur. Sir, said he, for that cause I will spare you, else that lady should abide with me, or else ye should joust with me. Then Sir Gawaine turned him and ran to him that ought the lady, with his spear, but the knight with pure might smote down Sir Gawaine, and

took his lady with him. All this Sir Lamorak saw, and said to himself: But I revenge my fellow he will say of me dishonour in King Arthur's court. Then Sir Lamorak returned and proffered that knight to joust. Sir, said he, I am ready. And there they came together with all their might, and there Sir Lamorak smote the knight through both sides that he fell to the earth dead.

Then that lady rode to that knight's brother that hight Belliance le Orgulus, that dwelt fast thereby, and then she told him how his brother was slain. Alas, said he, I will be revenged. And so he horsed him, and armed him, and within a while he overtook Sir Lamorak, and bade him: Turn and leave that lady, for thou and I must play a new play; for thou hast slain my brother Sir Frol, that was a better knight than ever wert thou. It might well be, said Sir Lamorak, but this day in the field I was found the better. So they rode together, and unhorsed other, and turned their shields, and drew their swords, and fought mightily as noble knights proved, by the space of two hours. So then Sir Belliance prayed him to tell him his name. Sir, said he, my name is Sir Lamorak de Galis. Ah, said Sir Belliance, thou art the man in the world that I most hate, for I slew my sons for thy sake, where I saved thy life, and now thou hast slain my brother Sir Frol. Alas, how should I be accorded with thee; therefore defend thee, for thou shalt die, there is none other remedy. Alas, said Sir Lamorak, full well me ought to know you, for ye are the man that most have done for me. And therewithal Sir Lamorak kneeled down, and besought him of grace. Arise, said Sir Belliance, or else thereas thou kneelest I shall slay thee. That shall not need, said Sir Lamorak, for I will yield me unto you, not for fear of you, nor for your strength, but your goodness maketh me full loath to have ado with you; wherefore I require you for God's sake, and for the honour of knighthood, forgive me all that I have offended unto you. Alas, said Belliance, leave thy kneeling, or else I shall slay thee without mercy.

Then they yede again unto battle, and either wounded other, that all the ground was bloody thereas they fought. And at the last Belliance withdrew him aback and set him down softly upon a little hill, for he was so faint for bleeding that he might not stand. Then Sir Lamorak threw his shield upon his back, and asked him what cheer. Well, said Sir Belliance. Ah, Sir, yet shall I show you favour in your mal-ease. Ah, Knight Sir Belliance, said Sir Lamorak, thou art a fool, for an I had had thee at such advantage as thou hast done me, I should slay thee; but thy gentleness is so good and so large, that I must needs forgive thee mine evil will. And then Sir Lamorak kneeled down, and unlaced first his umberere, and then his own, and then either kissed other with weeping tears. Then Sir Lamorak led Sir Belliance to an abbey fast by, and there Sir Lamorak would not depart from Belliance till he was whole. And then they sware together

that none of them should never fight against other. So Sir Lamorak departed and went to the court of King Arthur.

Here leave we of Sir Lamorak and of Sir Tristram. And here beginneth the history of La Cote Male Taile.

## BOOK IX

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### **CHAPTER I. How a young man came into the court of King Arthur, and how Sir Kay called him in scorn La Cote Male Taile.**

AT the court of King Arthur there came a young man and bigly made, and he was richly beseen: and he desired to be made knight of the king, but his overgarment sat overthwartly, howbeit it was rich cloth of gold. What is your name? said King Arthur. Sir, said he, my name is Breunor le Noire, and within short space ye shall know that I am of good kin. It may well be, said Sir Kay, the Seneschal, but in mockage ye shall be called La Cote Male Taile, that is as much to say, the evil-shapen coat. It is a great thing that thou askest, said the king; and for what cause wearest thou that rich coat? tell me, for I can well think for some cause it is. Sir, he answered, I had a father, a noble knight, and as he rode a-hunting, upon a day it happed him to lay him down to sleep; and there came a knight that had been long his enemy, and when he saw he was fast asleep he all to-hew him; and this same coat had my father on the same time; and that maketh this coat to sit so evil upon me, for the strokes be on it as I found it, and never shall be amended for me. Thus to have my father's death in remembrance I wear this coat till I be revenged; and because ye are called the most noblest king of the world I come to you that ye should make me knight. Sir, said Sir Lamorak and Sir Gaheris, it were well done to make him knight; for him beseemeth well of person and of countenance, that he shall prove a good man, and a good knight, and a mighty; for, Sir, an ye be remembered, even such one was Sir Launcelot du Lake when he came first into this court, and full few of us knew from whence he came; and now is he proved the man of most worship in the world; and all your court and all your Round Table is by Sir Launcelot worshipped and amended more than by any knight now living. That is truth, said the king, and tomorrow at your request I shall make him knight.

So on the morrow there was an hart found, and thither rode King Arthur with a company of his knights to slay the hart. And this young man that Sir Kay named La Cote Male Taile was there left behind with Queen Guenever; and by sudden adventure there was an horrible lion kept in a strong tower of stone, and it happened that he at that time brake loose, and came hurling afore the queen

and her knights. And when the queen saw the lion she cried and fled, and prayed her knights to rescue her. And there was none of them all but twelve that abode, and all the other fled. Then said La Cote Male Taile: Now I see well that all coward knights be not dead; and therewithal he drew his sword and dressed him afore the lion. And that lion gaped wide and came upon him ramping to have slain him. And he then smote him in the midst of the head such a mighty stroke that it clave his head in sunder, and dashed to the earth. Then was it told the queen how the young man that Sir Kay named by scorn La Cote Male Taile had slain the lion. With that the king came home. And when the queen told him of that adventure, he was well pleased, and said: Upon pain of mine head he shall prove a noble man and a faithful knight, and true of his promise: then the king forthwithal made him knight. Now Sir, said this young knight, I require you and all the knights of your court, that ye call me by none other name but La Cote Male Taile: in so much as Sir Kay hath so named me so will I be called. I assent me well thereto, said the king.

## **CHAPTER II. How a damosel came into the court and desired a knight to take on him an enquest, which La Cote Male Taile emprised.**

THEN that same day there came a damosel into the court, and she brought with her a great black shield, with a white hand in the midst holding a sword. Other picture was there none in that shield. When King Arthur saw her he asked her from whence she came and what she would. Sir, she said, I have ridden long and many a day with this shield many ways, and for this cause I am come to your court: there was a good knight that ought this shield, and this knight had undertaken a great deed of arms to enchieve it; and so it misfortuned him another strong knight met with him by sudden adventure, and there they fought long, and either wounded other passing sore; and they were so weary that they left that battle even hand. So this knight that ought this shield saw none other way but he must die; and then he commanded me to bear this shield to the court of King Arthur, he requiring and praying some good knight to take this shield, and that he would fulfil the quest that he was in. Now what say ye to this quest? said King Arthur; is there any of you here that will take upon him to wield this shield? Then was there not one that would speak one word. Then Sir Kay took the shield in his hands. Sir knight, said the damosel, what is your name? Wit ye well, said he, my name is Sir Kay, the Seneschal, that wide-where is known. Sir, said that damosel, lay down that shield, for wit ye well it falleth not for you, for he must be a better knight than ye that shall wield this shield. Damosel, said Sir Kay, wit ye well I took this shield in my hands by your leave for to behold it, not to that intent; but go wheresomever thou wilt, for I will not go with you.

Then the damosel stood still a great while and beheld many of those knights. Then spake the knight, La Cote Male Taile: Fair damosel, I will take the shield and that adventure upon me, so I wist I should know whitherward my journey might be; for because I was this day made knight I would take this adventure upon me. What is your name, fair young man? said the damosel. My name is, said he, La Cote Male Taile. Well mayest thou be called so, said the damosel, the knight with the evil-shapen coat; but an thou be so hardy to take upon thee to bear that shield and to follow me, wit thou well thy skin shall be as well hewn as thy coat. As for that, said La Cote Male Taile, when I am so hewn I will ask you no salve to heal me withal. And forthwithal there came into the court two squires and brought him great horses, and his armour, and his spears, and anon he was armed and took his leave. I would not by my will, said the king, that ye took upon you that hard adventure. Sir, said he, this adventure is mine, and the first that ever I took upon me, and that will I follow whatsoever come of me. Then that damosel departed, and La Cote Male Taile fast followed after. And within a while he overtook the damosel, and anon she missaid him in the foulest manner.

### **CHAPTER III. How La Cote Male Taile overthrew Sir Dagonet the king's fool, and of the rebuke that he had of the damosel.**

THEN Sir Kay ordained Sir Dagonet, King Arthur's fool, to follow after La Cote Male Taile; and there Sir Kay ordained that Sir Dagonet was horsed and armed, and bade him follow La Cote Male Taile and proffer him to joust, and so he did; and when he saw La Cote Male Taile, he cried and bade him make him ready to joust. So Sir La Cote Male Taile smote Sir Dagonet over his horse's croup. Then the damosel mocked La Cote Male Taile, and said: Fie for shame! now art thou shamed in Arthur's court, when they send a fool to have ado with thee, and specially at thy first jousts; thus she rode long, and chid. And within a while there came Sir Bleoberis, the good knight, and there he jousted with La Cote Male Taile, and there Sir Bleoberis smote him so sore, that horse and all fell to the earth. Then La Cote Male Taile arose up lightly, and dressed his shield, and drew his sword, and would have done battle to the utterance, for he was wood wroth. Not so, said Sir Bleoberis de Ganis, as at this time I will not fight upon foot. Then the damosel Maledisant rebuked him in the foulest manner, and bade him: Turn again, coward. Ah, damosel, he said, I pray you of mercy to missay me no more, my grief is enough though ye give me no more; I call myself never the worse knight when a mare's son faileth me, and also I count me never the worse knight for a fall of Sir Bleoberis.

So thus he rode with her two days; and by fortune there came Sir Palomides and encountered with him, and he in the same wise served him as did Bleoberis



to-forehand. What dost thou here in my fellowship? said the damosel Maledisant, thou canst not sit no knight, nor withstand him one buffet, but if it were Sir Dagonet. Ah, fair damosel, I am not the worse to take a fall of Sir Palomides, and yet great disworship have I none, for neither Bleoberis nor yet Palomides would not fight with me on foot. As for that, said the damosel, wit thou well they have disdain and scorn to light off their horses to fight with such a lewd knight as thou art. So in the meanwhile there came Sir Mordred, Sir Gawaine's brother, and so he fell in the fellowship with the damosel Maledisant. And then they came afore the Castle Orgulous, and there was such a custom that there might no knight come by that castle but either he must joust or be prisoner, or at the least to lose his horse and his harness. And there came out two knights against them, and Sir Mordred jousted with the foremost, and that knight of the castle smote Sir Mordred down off his horse. And then La Cote Male Taile jousted with that other, and either of them smote other down, horse and all, to the earth. And when they avoided their horses, then either of them took other's horses. And then La Cote Male Taile rode unto that knight that smote down Sir Mordred, and jousted with him. And there Sir La Cote Male Taile hurt and wounded him passing sore, and put him from his horse as he had been dead. So he turned unto him that met him afore, and he took the flight towards the castle, and Sir La Cote Male Taile rode after him into the Castle Orgulous, and there La Cote Male Taile slew him.

#### **CHAPTER IV. How La Cote Male Taile fought against an hundred knights, and how he escaped by the mean of a lady.**

AND anon there came an hundred knights about him and assailed him; and when he saw his horse should be slain he alighted and voided his horse, and put the bridle under his feet, and so put him out of the gate. And when he had so done he hurled in among them, and dressed his back unto a lady's chamber-wall, thinking himself that he had liefer die there with worship than to abide the rebukes of the damosel Maledisant. And in the meantime as he stood and fought, that lady whose was the chamber went out slyly at her postern, and without the gates she found La Cote Male Taile's horse, and lightly she gat him by the bridle, and tied him to the postern. And then she went unto her chamber slyly again for to behold how that one knight fought against an hundred knights. And when she had beheld him long she went to a window behind his back, and said: Thou knight, thou fightest wonderly well, but for all that at the last thou must needs die, but, an thou canst through thy mighty prowess, win unto yonder postern, for there have I fastened thy horse to abide thee: but wit thou well thou must think on thy worship, and think not to die, for thou mayst not win unto that postern

without thou do nobly and mightily. When La Cote Male Taile heard her say so he gripped his sword in his hands, and put his shield fair afore him, and through the thickest press he thrulled through them. And when he came to the postern he found there ready four knights, and at two the first strokes he slew two of the knights, and the other fled; and so he won his horse and rode from them. And all as it was it was rehearsed in King Arthur's court, how he slew twelve knights within the Castle Orgulous; and so he rode on his way.

And in the meanwhile the damosel said to Sir Mordred: I ween my foolish knight be either slain or taken prisoner: then were they ware where he came riding. And when he was come unto them he told all how he had sped and escaped in despite of them all: And some of the best of them will tell no tales. Thou liest falsely, said the damosel, that dare I make good, but as a fool and a dastard to all knighthood they have let thee pass. That may ye prove, said La Cote Male Taile. With that she sent a courier of hers, that rode alway with her, for to know the truth of this deed; and so he rode thither lightly, and asked how and in what manner that La Cote Male Taile was escaped out of the castle. Then all the knights cursed him, and said that he was a fiend and no man: For he hath slain here twelve of our best knights, and we weened unto this day that it had been too much for Sir Launcelot du Lake or for Sir Tristram de Lioness. And in despite of us all he is departed from us and maugre our heads.

With this answer the courier departed and came to Maledisant his lady, and told her all how Sir La Cote Male Taile had sped at the Castle Orgulous. Then she smote down her head, and said little. By my head, said Sir Mordred to the damosel, ye are greatly to blame so to rebuke him, for I warn you plainly he is a good knight, and I doubt not but he shall prove a noble knight; but as yet he may not yet sit sure on horseback, for he that shall be a good horseman it must come of usage and exercise. But when he cometh to the strokes of his sword he is then noble and mighty, and that saw Sir Bleoberis and Sir Palomides, for wit ye well they are wily men of arms, and anon they know when they see a young knight by his riding, how they are sure to give him a fall from his horse or a great buffet. But for the most part they will not light on foot with young knights, for they are wight and strongly armed. For in likewise Sir Launcelot du Lake, when he was first made knight, he was often put to the worse upon horseback, but ever upon foot he recovered his renown, and slew and defoiled many knights of the Round Table. And therefore the rebukes that Sir Launcelot did unto many knights causeth them that be men of prowess to beware; for often I have seen the old proved knights rebuked and slain by them that were but young beginners. Thus they rode sure talking by the way together.

**CHAPTER V. How Sir Launcelot came to the court and heard of La Cote Male Taile, and how he followed after him, and how La Cote Male Taile was**

prisoner.

HERE leave we off a while of this tale, and speak we of Sir Launcelot du Lake,[\*9] that when he was come to the court of King Arthur, then heard he tell of the young knight La Cote Male Taile, how he slew the lion, and how he took upon him the adventure of the black shield, the which was named at that time the hardiest adventure of the world. So God me save, said Sir Launcelot unto many of his fellows, it was shame to all the noble knights to suffer such a young knight to take such adventure upon him for his destruction; for I will that ye wit, said Sir Launcelot, that that damosel Maledisant hath borne that shield many a day for to seek the most proved knights, and that was she that Breuse Saunce Pite took that shield from her, and after Tristram de Liones rescued that shield from him and gave it to the damosel again, a little afore that time that Sir Tristram fought with my nephew Sir Blamore de Ganis, for a quarrel that was betwixt the King of Ireland and him. Then many knights were sorry that Sir La Cote Male Taile was gone forth to that adventure. Truly, said Sir Launcelot, I cast me to ride after him. And within seven days Sir Launcelot overtook La Cote Male Taile, and then he saluted him and the damosel Maledisant. And when Sir Mordred saw Sir Launcelot, then he left their fellowship; and so Sir Launcelot rode with them all a day, and ever that damosel rebuked La Cote Male Taile; and then Sir Launcelot answered for him, then she left off, and rebuked Sir Launcelot.

[\*9] Printed by Caxton as part of chap. iv.

So this meantime Sir Tristram sent by a damosel a letter unto Sir Launcelot, excusing him of the wedding of Isoud la Blanche Mains; and said in the letter, as he was a true knight he had never ado fleshly with Isoud la Blanche Mains; and passing courteously and gently Sir Tristram wrote unto Sir Launcelot, ever beseeching him to be his good friend and unto La Beale Isoud of Cornwall, and that Sir Launcelot would excuse him if that ever he saw her. And within short time by the grace of God, said Sir Tristram, that he would speak with La Beale Isoud, and with him right hastily. Then Sir Launcelot departed from the damosel and from Sir La Cote Male Taile, for to oversee that letter, and to write another letter unto Sir Tristram de Liones.

And in the meanwhile La Cote Male Taile rode with the damosel until they came to a castle that hight Pendragon; and there were six knights stood afore him, and one of them proffered to joust with La Cote Male Taile. And there La Cote Male Taile smote him over his horse's croup. And then the five knights set

upon him all at once with their spears, and there they smote La Cote Male Taile down, horse and man. And then they alighted suddenly, and set their hands upon him all at once, and took him prisoner, and so led him unto the castle and kept him as prisoner.

And on the morn Sir Launcelot arose, and delivered the damosel with letters unto Sir Tristram, and then he took his way after La Cote Male Taile; and by the way upon a bridge there was a knight proffered Sir Launcelot to joust, and Sir Launcelot smote him down, and then they fought upon foot a noble battle together, and a mighty; and at the last Sir Launcelot smote him down grovelling upon his hands and his knees. And then that knight yielded him, and Sir Launcelot received him fair. Sir, said the knight, I require thee tell me your name, for much my heart giveth unto you. Nay, said Sir Launcelot, as at this time I will not tell you my name, unless then that ye tell me your name. Certainly, said the knight, my name is Sir Nerovens, that was made knight of my lord Sir Launcelot du Lake. Ah, Nerovens de Lile, said Sir Launcelot, I am right glad that ye are proved a good knight, for now wit ye well my name is Sir Launcelot du Lake. Alas, said Sir Nerovens de Lile, what have I done! And therewithal flatling he fell to his feet, and would have kissed them, but Sir Launcelot would not let him; and then either made great joy of other. And then Sir Nerovens told Sir Launcelot that he should not go by the Castle of Pendragon: For there is a lord, a mighty knight, and many knights with him, and this night I heard say that they took a knight prisoner yesterday that rode with a damosel, and they say he is a Knight of the Round Table.

#### **CHAPTER VI. How Sir Launcelot fought with six knights, and after with Sir Brian, and how he delivered the prisoners.**

AH, said Sir Launcelot, that knight is my fellow, and him shall I rescue or else I shall lose my life therefore. And therewithal he rode fast till he came before the Castle of Pendragon; and anon therewithal there came six knights, and all made them ready to set upon Sir Launcelot at once; then Sir Launcelot feutred his spear, and smote the foremost that he brake his back in-sunder, and three of them hit and three failed. And then Sir Launcelot passed through them, and lightly he turned in again, and smote another knight through the breast and throughout the back more than an ell, and therewithal his spear brake. So then all the remnant of the four knights drew their swords and lashed at Sir Launcelot. And at every stroke Sir Launcelot bestowed so his strokes that at four strokes sundry they avoided their saddles, passing sore wounded; and forthwithal he rode hurling into that castle.

And anon the lord of the castle, that was that time cleped Sir Brian de les

Isles, the which was a noble man and a great enemy unto King Arthur, within a while he was armed and upon horseback. And then they feutred their spears and hurled together so strongly that both their horses rashed to the earth. And then they avoided their saddles, and dressed their shields, and drew their swords, and flang together as wood men, and there were many strokes given in a while. At the last Sir Launcelot gave to Sir Brian such a buffet that he kneeled upon his knees, and then Sir Launcelot rashed upon him, and with great force he pulled off his helm; and when Sir Brian saw that he should be slain he yielded him, and put him in his mercy and in his grace. Then Sir Launcelot made him to deliver all his prisoners that he had within his castle, and therein Sir Launcelot found of Arthur's knights thirty, and forty ladies, and so he delivered them; and then he rode his way. And anon as La Cote Male Taile was delivered he gat his horse, and his harness, and his damosel Maledisant.

The meanwhile Sir Nerovens, that Sir Launcelot had foughten withal afore at the bridge, he sent a damosel after Sir Launcelot to wit how he sped at the Castle of Pendragon. And then they within the castle marvelled what knight he was, when Sir Brian and his knights delivered all those prisoners. Have ye no marvel, said the damosel, for the best knight in this world was here, and did this journey, and wit ye well, she said, it was Sir Launcelot. Then was Sir Brian full glad, and so was his lady, and all his knights, that such a man should win them. And when the damosel and La Cote Male Taile understood that it was Sir Launcelot du Lake that had ridden with them in fellowship, and that she remembered her how she had rebuked him and called him coward, then was she passing heavy.

#### **CHAPTER VII. How Sir Launcelot met with the damosel named Male disant, and named her the Damosel Bienpensant.**

SO then they took their horses and rode forth a pace after Sir Launcelot. And within two mile they overtook him, and saluted him, and thanked him, and the damosel cried Sir Launcelot mercy of her evil deed and saying: For now I know the flower of all knighthood is departed even between Sir Tristram and you. For God knoweth, said the damosel, that I have sought you my lord, Sir Launcelot, and Sir Tristram long, and now I thank God I have met with you; and once at Camelot I met with Sir Tristram, and there he rescued this black shield with the white hand holding a naked sword that Sir Breuse Saunce Pite had taken from me. Now, fair damosel, said Sir Launcelot, who told you my name? Sir, said she, there came a damosel from a knight that ye fought withal at the bridge, and she told me your name was Sir Launcelot du Lake. Blame have she then, said Sir Launcelot, but her lord, Sir Nerovens, hath told her. But, damosel, said Sir Launcelot, upon this covenant I will ride with you, so that ye will not rebuke this

knight Sir La Cote Male Taile no more; for he is a good knight, and I doubt not he shall prove a noble knight, and for his sake and pity that he should not be destroyed I followed him to succour him in this great need. Ah, Jesu thank you, said the damosel, for now I will say unto you and to him both, I rebuked him never for no hate that I hated him, but for great love that I had to him. For ever I supposed that he had been too young and too tender to take upon him these adventures. And therefore by my will I would have driven him away for jealousy that I had of his life, for it may be no young knight's deed that shall enchieve this adventure to the end. Pardieu, said Sir Launcelot, it is well said, and where ye are called the Damosel Maledisant I will call you the Damosel Bienpensant.

And so they rode forth a great while unto they came to the border of the country of Surluse, and there they found a fair village with a strong bridge like a fortress. And when Sir Launcelot and they were at the bridge there stert forth afore them of gentlemen and yeomen many, that said: Fair lords, ye may not pass this bridge and this fortress because of that black shield that I see one of you bear, and therefore there shall not pass but one of you at once; therefore choose you which of you shall enter within this bridge first. Then Sir Launcelot proffered himself first to enter within this bridge. Sir, said La Cote Male Taile, I beseech you let me enter within this fortress, and if I may speed well I will send for you, and if it happened that I be slain, there it goeth. And if so be that I am a prisoner taken, then may ye rescue me. I am loath, said Sir Launcelot, to let you pass this passage. Sir, said La Cote Male Taile, I pray you let me put my body in this adventure. Now go your way, said Sir Launcelot, and Jesu be your speed.

So he entered, and anon there met with him two brethren, the one hight Sir Plaine de Force, and the other hight Sir Plaine de Amours. And anon they met with Sir La Cote Male Taile; and first La Cote Male Taile smote down Plaine de Force, and after he smote down Plaine de Amours; and then they dressed them to their shields and swords, and bade La Cote Male Taile alight, and so he did; and there was dashing and foining with swords, and so they began to assail full hard La Cote Male Taile, and many great wounds they gave him upon his head, and upon his breast, and upon his shoulders. And as he might ever among he gave sad strokes again. And then the two brethren traced and traversed for to be of both hands of Sir La Cote Male Taile, but he by fine force and knightly prowess gat them afore him. And then when he felt himself so wounded, then he doubled his strokes, and gave them so many wounds that he felled them to the earth, and would have slain them had they not yielded them. And right so Sir La Cote Male Taile took the best horse that there was of them three, and so rode forth his way to the other fortress and bridge; and there he met with the third brother whose name was Sir Plenorius, a full noble knight, and there they jousted together, and

either smote other down, horse and man, to the earth. And then they avoided their horses, and dressed their shields, and drew their swords, and gave many sad strokes, and one while the one knight was afore on the bridge, and another while the other. And thus they fought two hours and more, and never rested. And ever Sir Launcelot and the damosel beheld them. Alas, said the damosel, my knight fighteth passing sore and over long. Now may ye see, said Sir Launcelot, that he is a noble knight, for to consider his first battle, and his grievous wounds; and even forthwithal so wounded as he is, it is marvel that he may endure this long battle with that good knight.

**CHAPTER VIII. How La Cote Male Taile was taken prisoner, and after rescued by Sir Launcelot, and how Sir Launcelot overcame four brethren.**

THIS meanwhile Sir La Cote Male Taile sank right down upon the earth, what for-wounded and what for-bled he might not stand. Then the other knight had pity of him, and said: Fair young knight, dismay you not, for had ye been fresh when ye met with me, as I was, I wot well that I should not have endured so long as ye have done; and therefore for your noble deeds of arms I shall show to you kindness and gentleness in all that I may. And forthwithal this noble knight, Sir Plenorius, took him up in his arms, and led him into his tower. And then he commanded him the wine, and made to search him and to stop his bleeding wounds. Sir, said La Cote Male Taile, withdraw you from me, and hie you to yonder bridge again, for there will meet with you another manner knight than ever was I. Why, said Plenorius, is there another manner knight behind of your fellowship? Yea, said La Cote Male Taile, there is a much better knight than I am. What is his name? said Plenorius. Ye shall not know for me, said La Cote Male Taile. Well, said the knight, he shall be encountered withal whatsoever he be.

Then Sir Plenorius heard a knight call that said: Sir Plenorius, where art thou? either thou must deliver me the prisoner that thou hast led unto thy tower, or else come and do battle with me. Then Plenorius gat his horse, and came with a spear in his hand walloping toward Sir Launcelot; and then they began to feutre their spears, and came together as thunder, and smote either other so mightily that their horses fell down under them. And then they avoided their horses, and pulled out their swords, and like two bulls they lashed together with great strokes and foins; but ever Sir Launcelot recovered ground upon him, and Sir Plenorius traced to have gone about him. But Sir Launcelot would not suffer that, but bare him backer and backer, till he came nigh his tower gate. And then said Sir Launcelot: I know thee well for a good knight, but wit thou well thy life and death is in my hand, and therefore yield thee to me, and thy prisoner. The

other answered no word, but struck mightily upon Sir Launcelot's helm, that the fire sprang out of his eyes. Then Sir Launcelot doubled his strokes so thick, and smote at him so mightily, that he made him kneel upon his knees. And therewith Sir Launcelot leapt upon him, and pulled him grovelling down. Then Sir Plenorius yielded him, and his tower, and all his prisoners at his will.

Then Sir Launcelot received him and took his troth; and then he rode to the other bridge, and there Sir Launcelot jousted with other three of his brethren, the one hight Pillounes, and the other hight Pellogris, and the third Sir Pellandris. And first upon horseback Sir Launcelot smote them down, and afterward he beat them on foot, and made them to yield them unto him; and then he returned unto Sir Plenorius, and there he found in his prison King Carados of Scotland, and many other knights, and all they were delivered. And then Sir La Cote Male Taile came to Sir Launcelot, and then Sir Launcelot would have given him all these fortresses and these bridges. Nay, said La Cote Male Taile, I will not have Sir Plenorius' livelihood; with that he will grant you, my lord Sir Launcelot, to come unto King Arthur's court, and to be his knight, and all his brethren, I will pray you, my lord, to let him have his livelihood. I will well, said Sir Launcelot, with this that he will come to the court of King Arthur and become his man, and his brethren five. And as for you, Sir Plenorius, I will undertake, said Sir Launcelot, at the next feast, so there be a place voided, that ye shall be Knight of the Round Table. Sir, said Plenorius, at the next feast of Pentecost I will be at Arthur's court, and at that time I will be guided and ruled as King Arthur and ye will have me. Then Sir Launcelot and Sir La Cote Male Taile reposed them there, unto the time that Sir La Cote Male Taile was whole of his wounds, and there they had merry cheer, and good rest, and many good games, and there were many fair ladies.

#### **CHAPTER IX. How Sir Launcelot made La Cote Male Taile lord of the Castle of Pendragon, and after was made knight of the Round Table.**

AND in the meanwhile came Sir Kay, the Seneschal, and Sir Brandiles, and anon they fellowshipped with them. And then within ten days, then departed those knights of Arthur's court from these fortresses. And as Sir Launcelot came by the Castle of Pendragon there he put Sir Brian de les Isles from his lands, for cause he would never be withhold with King Arthur; and all that Castle of Pendragon and all the lands thereof he gave to Sir La Cote Male Taile. And then Sir Launcelot sent for Nerovens that he made once knight, and he made him to have all the rule of that castle and of that country, under La Cote Male Taile; and so they rode to Arthur's court all wholly together. And at Pentecost next following there was Sir Plenorius and Sir La Cote Male Taile, called otherwise



by right Sir Breunor le Noire, both made Knights of the Table Round; and great lands King Arthur gave them, and there Breunor le Noire wedded that damosel Maledisant. And after she was called Beauvivante, but ever after for the more part he was called La Cote Male Taile; and he proved a passing noble knight, and mighty; and many worshipful deeds he did after in his life; and Sir Plenorius proved a noble knight and full of prowess, and all the days of their life for the most part they awaited upon Sir Launcelot; and Sir Plenorius' brethren were ever knights of King Arthur. And also, as the French book maketh mention, Sir La Cote Male Taile avenged his father's death.

#### **CHAPTER X. How La Beale Isoud sent letters to Sir Tristram by her maid Bragwaine, and of divers adventures of Sir Tristram.**

NOW leave we here Sir La Cote Male Taile, and turn we unto Sir Tristram de Lionnes that was in Brittany. When La Beale Isoud understood that he was wedded she sent to him by her maiden Bragwaine as piteous letters as could be thought and made, and her conclusion was that, an it pleased Sir Tristram, that he would come to her court, and bring with him Isoud la Blanche Mains, and they should be kept as well as she herself. Then Sir Tristram called unto him Sir Kehydus, and asked him whether he would go with him into Cornwall secretly. He answered him that he was ready at all times. And then he let ordain privily a little vessel, and therein they went, Sir Tristram, Kehydus, Dame Bragwaine, and Gouvernail, Sir Tristram's squire. So when they were in the sea a contrarious wind blew them on the coasts of North Wales, nigh the Castle Perilous. Then said Sir Tristram: Here shall ye abide me these ten days, and Gouvernail, my squire, with you. And if so be I come not again by that day take the next way into Cornwall; for in this forest are many strange adventures, as I have heard say, and some of them I cast me to prove or I depart. And when I may I shall hie me after you.

Then Sir Tristram and Kehydus took their horses and departed from their fellowship. And so they rode within that forest a mile and more; and at the last Sir Tristram saw afore him a likely knight, armed, sitting by a well, and a strong mighty horse passing nigh him tied to an oak, and a man hoving and riding by him leading an horse laden with spears. And this knight that sat at the well seemed by his countenance to be passing heavy. Then Sir Tristram rode near him and said: Fair knight, why sit ye so drooping? ye seem to be a knight-errant by your arms and harness, and therefore dress you to joust with one of us, or with both. Therewithal that knight made no words, but took his shield and buckled it about his neck, and lightly he took his horse and leapt upon him. And then he took a great spear of his squire, and departed his way a furlong. Sir Kehydus

asked leave of Sir Tristram to joust first. Do your best, said Sir Tristram. So they met together, and there Sir Kehydus had a fall, and was sore wounded on high above the paps. Then Sir Tristram said: Knight, that is well jousted, now make you ready unto me. I am ready, said the knight. And then that knight took a greater spear in his hand, and encountered with Sir Tristram, and there by great force that knight smote down Sir Tristram from his horse and had a great fall. Then Sir Tristram was sore ashamed, and lightly he avoided his horse, and put his shield afore his shoulder, and drew his sword. And then Sir Tristram required that knight of his knighthood to alight upon foot and fight with him. I will well, said the knight; and so he alighted upon foot, and avoided his horse, and cast his shield upon his shoulder, and drew his sword, and there they fought a long battle together full nigh two hours. Then Sir Tristram said: Fair knight, hold thine hand, and tell me of whence thou art, and what is thy name. As for that, said the knight, I will be avised; but an thou wilt tell me thy name peradventure I will tell thee mine.

#### **CHAPTER XI. How Sir Tristram met with Sir Lamorak de Galis, and how they fought, and after accorded never to fight together.**

NOW fair knight, he said, my name is Sir Tristram de Lioness. Sir, said the other knight, and my name is Sir Lamorak de Galis. Ah, Sir Lamorak, said Sir Tristram, well be we met, and bethink thee now of the despite thou didst me of the sending of the horn unto King Mark's court, to the intent to have slain or dishonoured my lady the queen, La Beale Isoud; and therefore wit thou well, said Sir Tristram, the one of us shall die or we depart. Sir, said Sir Lamorak, remember that we were together in the Isle of Servage, and at that time ye promised me great friendship. Then Sir Tristram would make no longer delays, but lashed at Sir Lamorak; and thus they fought long till either were weary of other. Then Sir Tristram said to Sir Lamorak: In all my life met I never with such a knight that was so big and well breathed as ye be, therefore, said Sir Tristram, it were pity that any of us both should here be mischieved. Sir said Sir Lamorak, for your renown and name I will that ye have the worship of this battle, and therefore I will yield me unto you. And therewith he took the point of his sword to yield him. Nay, said Sir Tristram, ye shall not do so, for well I know your proffers, and more of your gentleness than for any fear or dread ye have of me. And therewithal Sir Tristram proffered him his sword and said: Sir Lamorak, as an overcome knight I yield me unto you as to a man of the most noble prowess that ever I met withal. Nay, said Sir Lamorak, I will do you gentleness; I require you let us be sworn together that never none of us shall after this day have ado with other. And therewithal Sir Tristram and Sir Lamorak

sware that never none of them should fight against other, nor for weal nor for woe.

## **CHAPTER XII. How Sir Palomides followed the Questing Beast, and smote down Sir Tristram and Sir Lamorak with one spear.**

AND this meanwhile there came Sir Palomides, the good knight, following the Questing Beast that had in shape a head like a serpent's head, and a body like a leopard, buttocks like a lion, and footed like an hart; and in his body there was such a noise as it had been the noise of thirty couple of hounds questing, and such a noise that beast made wheresomever he went; and this beast ever more Sir Palomides followed, for it was called his quest. And right so as he followed this beast it came by Sir Tristram, and soon after came Palomides. And to brief this matter he smote down Sir Tristram and Sir Lamorak both with one spear; and so he departed after the beast Galtisant, that was called the Questing Beast; wherefore these two knights were passing wroth that Sir Palomides would not fight on foot with them. Here men may understand that be of worship, that he was never formed that all times might stand, but sometime he was put to the worse by malfortune; and at sometime the worse knight put the better knight to a rebuke.

Then Sir Tristram and Sir Lamorak gat Sir Kehydus upon a shield betwixt them both, and led him to a forester's lodge, and there they gave him in charge to keep him well, and with him they abode three days. Then the two knights took their horses and at the cross they departed. And then said Sir Tristram to Sir Lamorak: I require you if ye hap to meet with Sir Palomides, say him that he shall find me at the same well where I met him, and there I, Sir Tristram, shall prove whether he be better knight than I. And so either departed from other a sundry way, and Sir Tristram rode nigh thereas was Sir Kehydus; and Sir Lamorak rode until he came to a chapel, and there he put his horse unto pasture. And anon there came Sir Meliagaunce, that was King Bagdemagus' son, and he there put his horse to pasture, and was not ware of Sir Lamorak; and then this knight Sir Meliagaunce made his moan of the love that he had to Queen Guenever, and there he made a woful complaint. All this heard Sir Lamorak, and on the morn Sir Lamorak took his horse and rode unto the forest, and there he met with two knights hoving under the wood-shaw. Fair knights, said Sir Lamorak, what do ye hoving here and watching? and if ye be knights-errant that will joust, lo I am ready. Nay, sir knight, they said, not so, we abide not here to joust with you, but we lie here in await of a knight that slew our brother. What knight was that, said Sir Lamorak, that you would fain meet withal? Sir, they said, it is Sir Launcelot that slew our brother, and if ever we may meet with him

he shall not escape, but we shall slay him. Ye take upon you a great charge, said Sir Lamorak, for Sir Launcelot is a noble proved knight. As for that we doubt not, for there nis none of us but we are good enough for him. I will not believe that, said Sir Lamorak, for I heard never yet of no knight the days of my life but Sir Launcelot was too big for him.

### **CHAPTER XIII. How Sir Lamorak met with Sir Meliagaunce, and fought together for the beauty of Dame Guenever.**

RIGHT so as they stood talking thus Sir Lamorak was ware how Sir Launcelot came riding straight toward them; then Sir Lamorak saluted him, and he him again. And then Sir Lamorak asked Sir Launcelot if there were anything that he might do for him in these marches. Nay, said Sir Launcelot, not at this time I thank you. Then either departed from other, and Sir Lamorak rode again thereas he left the two knights, and then he found them hid in the leaved wood. Fie on you, said Sir Lamorak, false cowards, pity and shame it is that any of you should take the high order of knighthood. So Sir Lamorak departed from them, and within a while he met with Sir Meliagaunce. And then Sir Lamorak asked him why he loved Queen Guenever as he did: For I was not far from you when ye made your complaint by the chapel. Did ye so? said Sir Meliagaunce, then will I abide by it: I love Queen Guenever, what will ye with it? I will prove and make good that she is the fairest lady and most of beauty in the world. As to that, said Sir Lamorak, I say nay thereto, for Queen Morgawse of Orkney, mother to Sir Gawaine, and his mother is the fairest queen and lady that beareth the life. That is not so, said Sir Meliagaunce, and that will I prove with my hands upon thy body. Will ye so? said Sir Lamorak, and in a better quarrel keep I not to fight. Then they departed either from other in great wrath. And then they came riding together as it had been thunder, and either smote other so sore that their horses fell backward to the earth. And then they avoided their horses, and dressed their shields, and drew their swords. And then they hurtled together as wild boars, and thus they fought a great while. For Meliagaunce was a good man and of great might, but Sir Lamorak was hard big for him, and put him always aback, but either had wounded other sore.

And as they stood thus fighting, by fortune came Sir Launcelot and Sir Bleoberis riding. And then Sir Launcelot rode betwixt them, and asked them for what cause they fought so together: And ye are both knights of King Arthur!

### **CHAPTER XIV. How Sir Meliagaunce told for what cause they fought, and how Sir Lamorak jousted with King Arthur.**

SIR, said Meliagaunce, I shall tell you for what cause we do this battle. I

praised my lady, Queen Guenever, and said she was the fairest lady of the world, and Sir Lamorak said nay thereto, for he said Queen Morgawse of Orkney was fairer than she and more of beauty. Ah, Sir Lamorak, why sayest thou so? it is not thy part to dispraise thy princess that thou art under her obeissance, and we all. And therewith he alighted on foot, and said: For this quarrel, make thee ready, for I will prove upon thee that Queen Guenever is the fairest lady and most of bounty in the world. Sir, said Sir Lamorak, I am loath to have ado with you in this quarrel, for every man thinketh his own lady fairest; and though I praise the lady that I love most ye should not be wroth; for though my lady Queen Guenever, be fairest in your eye, wit ye well Queen Morgawse of Orkney is fairest in mine eye, and so every knight thinketh his own lady fairest; and wit ye well, sir, ye are the man in the world except Sir Tristram that I am most loathest to have ado withal, but, an ye will needs fight with me I shall endure you as long as I may. Then spake Sir Bleoberis and said: My lord Sir Launcelot, I wist you never so misadvised as ye are now, for Sir Lamorak sayeth you but reason and knightly; for I warn you I have a lady, and methinketh that she is the fairest lady of the world. Were this a great reason that ye should be wroth with me for such language? And well ye wot, that Sir Lamorak is as noble a knight as I know, and he hath ought you and us ever good will, and therefore I pray you be good friends. Then Sir Launcelot said unto Sir Lamorak. I pray you forgive me mine evil will, and if I was misadvised I will amend it. Sir, said Sir Lamorak, the amends is soon made betwixt you and me. And so Sir Launcelot and Sir Bleoberis departed, and Sir Meliagaunce and Sir Lamorak took their horses, and either departed from other.

And within a while came King Arthur, and met with Sir Lamorak, and jousted with him; and there he smote down Sir Lamorak, and wounded him sore with a spear, and so he rode from him; wherefore Sir Lamorak was wroth that he would not fight with him on foot, howbeit that Sir Lamorak knew not King Arthur.

#### **CHAPTER XV. How Sir Kay met with Sir Tristram, and after of the shame spoken of the knights of Cornwall, and how they jousted.**

NOW leave we of this tale, and speak we of Sir Tristram, that as he rode he met with Sir Kay, the Seneschal; and there Sir Kay asked Sir Tristram of what country he was. He answered that he was of the country of Cornwall. It may well be, said Sir Kay, for yet heard I never that ever good knight came out of Cornwall. That is evil spoken, said Sir Tristram, but an it please you to tell me your name I require you. Sir, wit ye well, said Sir Kay, that my name is Sir Kay, the Seneschal. Is that your name? said Sir Tristram, now wit ye well that ye are

named the shamefullest knight of your tongue that now is living; howbeit ye are called a good knight, but ye are called unfortunate, and passing overthwart of your tongue. And thus they rode together till they came to a bridge. And there was a knight would not let them pass till one of them jousted with him; and so that knight jousted with Sir Kay, and there that knight gave Sir Kay a fall: his name was Sir Tor, Sir Lamorak's half-brother. And then they two rode to their lodging, and there they found Sir Brandiles, and Sir Tor came thither anon after. And as they sat at supper these four knights, three of them spake all shame by Cornish knights. Sir Tristram heard all that they said and he said but little, but he thought the more, but at that time he discovered not his name.

Upon the morn Sir Tristram took his horse and abode them upon their way. And there Sir Brandiles proffered to joust with Sir Tristram, and Sir Tristram smote him down, horse and all, to the earth. Then Sir Tor le Fise de Vayshoure encountered with Sir Tristram and there Sir Tristram smote him down, and then he rode his way, and Sir Kay followed him, but he would not of his fellowship. Then Sir Brandiles came to Sir Kay and said: I would wit fain what is that knight's name. Come on with me, said Sir Kay, and we shall pray him to tell us his name. So they rode together till they came nigh him, and then they were ware where he sat by a well, and had put off his helm to drink at the well. And when he saw them come he laced on his helm lightly, and took his horse, and proffered them to joust. Nay, said Sir Brandiles, we jousted late enough with you, we come not in that intent. But for this we come to require you of knighthood to tell us your name. My fair knights, sithen that is your desire, and to please you, ye shall wit that my name is Sir Tristram de Liones, nephew unto King Mark of Cornwall. In good time, said Sir Brandiles, and well be ye found, and wit ye well that we be right glad that we have found you, and we be of a fellowship that would be right glad of your company. For ye are the knight in the world that the noble fellowship of the Round Table most desireth to have the company of. God thank them said Sir Tristram, of their great goodness, but as yet I feel well that I am unable to be of their fellowship, for I was never yet of such deeds of worthiness to be in the company of such a fellowship. Ah, said Sir Kay, an ye be Sir Tristram de Liones, ye are the man called now most of prowess except Sir Launcelot du Lake; for he beareth not the life, Christian nor heathen, that can find such another knight, to speak of his prowess, and of his hands, and his truth withal. For yet could there never creature say of him dishonour and make it good. Thus they talked a great while, and then they departed either from other such ways as them seemed best.

## **CHAPTER XVI. How King Arthur was brought into the Forest**

### **Perilous, and how Sir Tristram saved his life.**

NOW shall ye hear what was the cause that King Arthur came into the Forest Perilous, that was in North Wales, by the means of a lady. Her name was Annowre, and this lady came to King Arthur at Cardiff; and she by fair promise and fair behests made King Arthur to ride with her into that Forest Perilous; and she was a great sorceress; and many days she had loved King Arthur, and because she would have him to lie by her she came into that country. So when the king was gone with her many of his knights followed after King Arthur when they missed him, as Sir Launcelot, Brandiles, and many other; and when she had brought him to her tower she desired him to lie by her; and then the king remembered him of his lady, and would not lie by her for no craft that she could do. Then every day she would make him ride into that forest with his own knights, to the intent to have had King Arthur slain. For when this Lady Annowre saw that she might not have him at her will, then she laboured by false means to have destroyed King Arthur, and slain.

Then the Lady of the Lake that was alway friendly to King Arthur, she understood by her subtle crafts that King Arthur was like to be destroyed. And therefore this Lady of the Lake, that hight Nimue, came into that forest to seek after Sir Launcelot du Lake or Sir Tristram for to help King Arthur; foras that same day this Lady of the Lake knew well that King Arthur should be slain, unless that he had help of one of these two knights. And thus she rode up and down till she met with Sir Tristram, and anon as she saw him she knew him. O my lord Sir Tristram, she said, well be ye met, and blessed be the time that I have met with you; for this same day, and within these two hours, shall be done the foulest deed that ever was done in this land. O fair damosel, said Sir Tristram, may I amend it. Come on with me, she said, and that in all the haste ye may, for ye shall see the most worshipfullest knight of the world hard bestead. Then said Sir Tristram: I am ready to help such a noble man. He is neither better nor worse, said the Lady of the Lake, but the noble King Arthur himself. God defend, said Sir Tristram, that ever he should be in such distress. Then they rode together a great pace, until they came to a little turret or castle; and underneath that castle they saw a knight standing upon foot fighting with two knights; and so Sir Tristram beheld them, and at the last the two knights smote down the one knight, and that one of them unlaced his helm to have slain him. And the Lady Annowre gat King Arthur's sword in her hand to have stricken off his head. And therewithal came Sir Tristram with all his might, crying: Traitress, traitress, leave that. And anon there Sir Tristram smote the one of the knights through the body that he fell dead; and then he rashed to the other and smote his back asunder; and in the meanwhile the Lady of the Lake cried to King Arthur: Let

not that false lady escape. Then King Arthur overtook her, and with the same sword he smote off her head, and the Lady of the Lake took up her head and hung it up by the hair of her saddle-bow. And then Sir Tristram horsed King Arthur and rode forth with him, but he charged the Lady of the Lake not to discover his name as at that time.

When the king was horsed he thanked heartily Sir Tristram, and desired to wit his name; but he would not tell him, but that he was a poor knight adventurous; and so he bare King Arthur fellowship till he met with some of his knights. And within a while he met with Sir Ector de Maris, and he knew not King Arthur nor Sir Tristram, and he desired to joust with one of them. Then Sir Tristram rode unto Sir Ector, and smote him from his horse. And when he had done so he came again to the king and said: My lord, yonder is one of your knights, he may bare you fellowship, and another day that deed that I have done for you I trust to God ye shall understand that I would do you service. Alas, said King Arthur, let me wit what ye are? Not at this time, said Sir Tristram. So he departed and left King Arthur and Sir Ector together.

#### **CHAPTER XVII. How Sir Tristram came to La Beale Isoud, and how Kehydus began to love Beale Isoud, and of a letter that Tristram found.**

AND then at a day set Sir Tristram and Sir Lamorak met at the well; and then they took Kehydus at the forester's house, and so they rode with him to the ship where they left Dame Bragwaine and Gouvernail, and so they sailed into Cornwall all wholly together. And by assent and information of Dame Bragwaine when they were landed they rode unto Sir Dinas, the Seneschal, a trusty friend of Sir Tristram's. And so Dame Bragwaine and Sir Dinas rode to the court of King Mark, and told the queen, La Beale Isoud, that Sir Tristram was nigh her in that country. Then for very pure joy La Beale Isoud swooned; and when she might speak she said: Gentle knight Seneschal, help that I might speak with him, outhen my heart will brast. Then Sir Dinas and Dame Bragwaine brought Sir Tristram and Kehydus privily unto the court, unto a chamber whereas La Beale Isoud had assigned it; and to tell the joys that were betwixt La Beale Isoud and Sir Tristram, there is no tongue can tell it, nor heart think it, nor pen write it. And as the French book maketh mention, at the first time that ever Sir Kehydus saw La Beale Isoud he was so enamoured upon her that for very pure love he might never withdraw it. And at the last, as ye shall hear or the book be ended, Sir Kehydus died for the love of La Beale Isoud. And then privily he wrote unto her letters and ballads of the most goodliest that were used in those days. And when La Beale Isoud understood his letters she had pity of his complaint, and unavised she wrote another letter to comfort him withal.



And Sir Tristram was all this while in a turret at the commandment of La Beale Isoud, and when she might she came unto Sir Tristram. So on a day King Mark played at the chess under a chamber window; and at that time Sir Tristram and Sir Kehydus were within the chamber over King Mark, and as it mishapped Sir Tristram found the letter that Kehydus sent unto La Beale Isoud, also he had found the letter that she wrote unto Kehydus, and at that same time La Beale Isoud was in the same chamber. Then Sir Tristram came unto La Beale Isoud and said: Madam, here is a letter that was sent unto you, and here is the letter that ye sent unto him that sent you that letter. Alas, Madam, the good love that I have loved you; and many lands and riches have I forsaken for your love, and now ye are a traitress to me, the which doth me great pain. But as for thee, Sir Kehydus, I brought thee out of Brittany into this country, and thy father, King Howel, I won his lands, howbeit I wedded thy sister Isoud la Blanche Mains for the goodness she did unto me. And yet, as I am true knight, she is a clean maiden for me; but wit thou well, Sir Kehydus, for this falsehood and treason thou hast done me, I will revenge it upon thee. And therewithal Sir Tristram drew out his sword and said: Sir Kehydus, keep thee, and then La Beale Isoud swooned to the earth. And when Sir Kehydus saw Sir Tristram come upon him he saw none other boot, but leapt out at a bay-window even over the head where sat King Mark playing at the chess. And when the king saw one come hurling over his head he said: Fellow, what art thou, and what is the cause thou leapest out at that window? My lord the king, said Kehydus, it fortun'd me that I was asleep in the window above your head, and as I slept I slumbered, and so I fell down. And thus Sir Kehydus excused him.

CHAP TER XVIII. How Sir Tristram departed from Tintagil, and how he sorrowed and was so long in a forest till he was out of his mind.

THEN Sir Tristram dread sore lest he were discovered unto the king that he was there; wherefore he drew him to the strength of the Tower, and armed him in such armour as he had for to fight with them that would withstand him. And so when Sir Tristram saw there was no resistance against him he sent Gouvernail for his horse and his spear, and knightly he rode forth out of the castle openly, that was called the Castle of Tintagil. And even at gate he met with Gingalin, Sir Gawaine's son. And anon Sir Gingalin put his spear in his rest, and ran upon Sir Tristram and brake his spear; and Sir Tristram at that time had but a sword, and gave him such a buffet upon the helm that he fell down from his saddle, and his sword slid adown, and carved asunder his horse's neck. And so Sir Tristram rode his way into the forest, and all this doing saw King Mark. And then he sent a squire unto the hurt knight, and commanded him to come to him, and so he did. And when King Mark wist that it was Sir Gingalin he welcomed him and gave

him an horse, and asked him what knight it was that had encountered with him. Sir, said Gingalin, I wot not what knight he was, but well I wot that he sigheth and maketh great dole.

Then Sir Tristram within a while met with a knight of his own, that hight Sir Fergus. And when he had met with him he made great sorrow, insomuch that he fell down off his horse in a swoon, and in such sorrow he was in three days and three nights. Then at the last Sir Tristram sent unto the court by Sir Fergus, for to sere what tidings. And so as he rode by the way he met with a damosel that came from Sir Palomides, to know and seek how Sir Tristram did. Then Sir Fergus told her how he was almost out of his mind. Alas, said the damosel, where shall I find him? In such a place, said Sir Fergus. Then Sir Fergus found Queen Isoud sick in her bed, making the greatest dole that ever any earthly woman made. And when the damosel found Sir Tristram she made great dole because she might not amend him, for the more she made of him the more was his pain. And at the last Sir Tristram took his horse and rode away from her. And then was it three days or that she could find him, and then she brought him meat and drink, but he would none; and then another time Sir Tristram escaped away from the damosel, and it happed him to ride by the same castle where Sir Palomides and Sir Tristram did battle when La Beale Isoud departed them. And there by fortune the damosel met with Sir Tristram again, making the greatest dole that ever earthly creature made; and she yede to the lady of that castle and told her of the misadventure of Sir Tristram. Alas, said the lady of that castle, where is my lord, Sir Tristram? Right here by your castle, said the damosel. In good time, said the lady, is he so nigh me; he shall have meat and drink of the best; and an harp I have of his whereupon he taught me, for of goodly harping he beareth the prize in the world. So this lady and damosel brought him meat and drink, but he ate little thereof. Then upon a night he put his horse from him, and then he unlaced his armour, and then Sir Tristram would go into the wilderness, and brast down the trees and boughs; and otherwhile when he found the harp that the lady sent him, then would he harp, and play thereupon and weep together. And sometime when Sir Tristram was in the wood that the lady wist not where he was, then would she sit her down and play upon that harp: then would Sir Tristram come to that harp, and hearken thereto, and sometime he would harp himself. Thus he there endured a quarter of a year. Then at the last he ran his way, and she wist not where he was become. And then was he naked and waxed lean and poor of flesh; and so he fell in the fellowship of herdmen and shepherds, and daily they would give him some of their meat and drink. And when he did any shrewd deed they would beat him with rods, and so they clipped him with shears and made him like a fool.

**CHAPTER XIX. How Sir Tristram soused Dagonet in a well, and how Palomides sent a damosel to seek Tristram, and how Palomides met with King Mark.**

AND upon a day Dagonet, King Arthur's fool, came into Cornwall with two squires with him; and as they rode through that forest they came by a fair well where Sir Tristram was wont to be; and the weather was hot, and they alighted to drink of that well, and in the meanwhile their horses brake loose. Right so Sir Tristram came unto them, and first he soused Sir Dagonet in that well, and after his squires, and thereat laughed the shepherds; and forthwithal he ran after their horses and brought them again one by one, and right so, wet as they were, he made them leap up and ride their ways. Thus Sir Tristram endured there an half year naked, and would never come in town nor village. The meanwhile the damosel that Sir Palomides sent to seek Sir Tristram, she yede unto Sir Palomides and told him all the mischief that Sir Tristram endured. Alas, said Sir Palomides, it is great pity that ever so noble a knight should be so mischieved for the love of a lady; but nevertheless, I will go and seek him, and comfort him an I may. Then a little before that time La Beale Isoud had commanded Sir Kehydus out of the country of Cornwall. So Sir Kehydus departed with a dolorous heart, and by adventure he met with Sir Palomides, and they enfellowshipped together; and either complained to other of their hot love that they loved La Beale Isoud. Now let us, said Sir Palomides, seek Sir Tristram, that loved her as well as we, and let us prove whether we may recover him. So they rode into that forest, and three days and three nights they would never take their lodging, but ever sought Sir Tristram.

And upon a time, by adventure, they met with King Mark that was ridden from his men all alone. When they saw him Sir Palomides knew him, but Sir Kehydus knew him not. Ah, false king, said Sir Palomides, it is pity thou hast thy life, for thou art a destroyer of all worshipful knights, and by thy mischief and thy vengeance thou hast destroyed that most noble knight, Sir Tristram de Liones. And therefore defend thee, said Sir Palomides, for thou shalt die this day. That were shame, said King Mark, for ye two are armed and I am unarmed. As for that, said Sir Palomides, I shall find a remedy therefore; here is a knight with me, and thou shalt have his harness. Nay, said King Mark, I will not have ado with you, for cause have ye none to me; for all the misease that Sir Tristram hath was for a letter that he found; for as to me I did to him no displeasure, and God knoweth I am full sorry for his disease and malady. So when the king had thus excused him they were friends, and King Mark would have had them unto Tintagil; but Sir Palomides would not, but turned unto the realm of Logris, and

Sir Kehydius said that he would go into Brittany.

Now turn we unto Sir Dagonet again, that when he and his squires were upon horseback he deemed that the shepherds had sent that fool to array them so, because that they laughed at them, and so they rode unto the keepers of beasts and all to-beat them. Sir Tristram saw them beat that were wont to give him meat and drink, then he ran thither and gat Sir Dagonet by the head, and gave him such a fall to the earth that he bruised him sore so that he lay still. And then he wrast his sword out of his hand, and therewith he ran to one of his squires and smote off his head, and the other fled. And so Sir Tristram took his way with that sword in his hand, running as he had been wild wood. Then Sir Dagonet rode to King Mark and told him how he had sped in that forest. And therefore, said Sir Dagonet, beware, King Mark, that thou come not about that well in the forest, for there is a fool naked, and that fool and I fool met together, and he had almost slain me. Ah, said King Mark, that is Sir Matto le Breune, that fell out of his wit because he lost his lady; for when Sir Gaheris smote down Sir Matto and won his lady of him, never since was he in his mind, and that was pity, for he was a good knight.

#### **CHAPTER XX. How it was noised how Sir Tristram was dead, and how La Beale Isoud would have slain herself.**

THEN Sir Andred, that was cousin unto Sir Tristram, made a lady that was his paramour to say and to noise it that she was with Sir Tristram or ever he died. And this tale she brought unto King Mark's court, that she buried him by a well, and that or he died he besought King Mark to make his cousin, Sir Andred, king of the country of Liones, of the which Sir Tristram was lord of. All this did Sir Andred because he would have had Sir Tristram's lands. And when King Mark heard tell that Sir Tristram was dead he wept and made great dole. But when Queen Isoud heard of these tidings she made such sorrow that she was nigh out of her mind; and so upon a day she thought to slay herself and never to live after Sir Tristram's death. And so upon a day La Beale Isoud gat a sword privily and bare it to her garden, and there she pight the sword through a plum tree up to the hilt, so that it stuck fast, and it stood breast high. And as she would have run upon the sword and to have slain herself all this espied King Mark, how she kneeled down and said: Sweet Lord Jesu, have mercy upon me, for I may not live after the death of Sir Tristram de Liones, for he was my first love and he shall be the last. And with these words came King Mark and took her in his arms, and then he took up the sword, and bare her away with him into a tower; and there he made her to be kept, and watched her surely, and after that she lay long sick, nigh at the point of death.

This meanwhile ran Sir Tristram naked in the forest with the sword in his hand, and so he came to an hermitage, and there he laid him down and slept; and in the meanwhile the hermit stole away his sword, and laid meat down by him. Thus was he kept there ten days; and at the last he departed and came to the herdmen again. And there was a giant in that country that hight Tauleas, and for fear of Sir Tristram more than seven year he durst never much go at large, but for the most part he kept him in a sure castle of his own; and so this Tauleas heard tell that Sir Tristram was dead, by the noise of the court of King Mark. Then this Tauleas went daily at large. And so he happed upon a day he came to the herdmen wandering and lingering, and there he set him down to rest among them. The meanwhile there came a knight of Cornwall that led a lady with him, and his name was Sir Dinant; and when the giant saw him he went from the herdmen and hid him under a tree, and so the knight came to that well, and there he alighted to repose him. And as soon as he was from his horse this giant Tauleas came betwixt this knight and his horse, and took the horse and leapt upon him. So forthwith he rode unto Sir Dinant and took him by the collar, and pulled him afore him upon his horse, and there would have stricken off his head. Then the herdmen said unto Sir Tristram: Help yonder knight. Help ye him, said Sir Tristram. We dare not, said the herdmen. Then Sir Tristram was ware of the sword of the knight thereas it lay; and so thither he ran and took up the sword and struck off Sir Tauleas' head, and so he yede his way to the herdmen.

### **CHAPTER XXI. How King Mark found Sir Tristram naked, and made him to be borne home to Tintagil, and how he was there known by a brachet.**

THEN the knight took up the giant's head and bare it with him unto King Mark, and told him what adventure betid him in the forest, and how a naked man rescued him from the grimly giant, Tauleas. Where had ye this adventure? said King Mark. Forsooth, said Sir Dinant, at the fair fountain in your forest where many adventurous knights meet, and there is the mad man. Well, said King Mark, I will see that wild man. So within a day or two King Mark commanded his knights and his hunters that they should be ready on the morn for to hunt, and so upon the morn he went unto that forest. And when the king came to that well he found there lying by that well a fair naked man, and a sword by him. Then King Mark blew and straked, and therewith his knights came to him; and then the king commanded his knights to: Take that naked man with fairness, and bring him to my castle. So they did softly and fair, and cast mantles upon Sir Tristram, and so led him unto Tintagil; and there they bathed him, and washed him, and gave him hot suppings till they had brought him well to his

remembrance; but all this while there was no creature that knew Sir Tristram, nor what man he was.

So it fell upon a day that the queen, La Beale Isoud, heard of such a man, that ran naked in the forest, and how the king had brought him home to the court. Then La Beale Isoud called unto her Dame Bragwaine and said: Come on with me, for we will go see this man that my lord brought from the forest the last day. So they passed forth, and spered where was the sick man. And then a squire told the queen that he was in the garden taking his rest, and reposing him against the sun. So when the queen looked upon Sir Tristram she was not remembered of him. But ever she said unto Dame Bragwaine: Meseemeth I should have seen him heretofore in many places. But as soon as Sir Tristram saw her he knew her well enough. And then he turned away his visage and wept.

Then the queen had always a little brachet with her that Sir Tristram gave her the first time that ever she came into Cornwall, and never would that brachet depart from her but if Sir Tristram was nigh thereas was La Beale Isoud; and this brachet was sent from the king's daughter of France unto Sir Tristram for great love. And anon as this little brachet felt a savour of Sir Tristram, she leapt upon him and licked his lears and his ears, and then she whined and quested, and she smelled at his feet and at his hands, and on all parts of his body that she might come to. Ah, my lady, said Dame Bragwaine unto La Beale Isoud, alas, alas, said she, I see it is mine own lord, Sir Tristram. And thereupon Isoud fell down in a swoon, and so lay a great while And when she might speak she said: My lord Sir Tristram, blessed be God ye have your life, and now I am sure ye shall be discovered by this little brachet, for she will never leave you. And also I am sure as soon as my lord, King Mark, do know you he will banish you out of the country of Cornwall, or else he will destroy you; for God's sake, mine own lord, grant King Mark his will, and then draw you unto the court of King Arthur, for there are ye beloved, and ever when I may I shall send unto you; and when ye list ye may come to me, and at all times early and late I will be at your commandment, to live as poor a life as ever did queen or lady. O Madam, said Sir Tristram, go from me, for mickle anger and danger have I escaped for your love.

## **CHAPTER XXII. How King Mark, by the advice of his council, banished Sir Tristram out of Cornwall the term of ten years.**

THEN the queen departed, but the brachet would not from him; and therewithal came King Mark, and the brachet set upon him, and bayed at them all. There withal Sir Andred spake and said: Sir, this is Sir Tristram, I see by the brachet. Nay, said the king, I cannot suppose that. Then the king asked him upon

his faith what he was, and what was his name. So God me help, said he, my name is Sir Tristram de Liones; now do by me what ye list. Ah, said King Mark, me repenteth of your recovery. And then he let call his barons to judge Sir Tristram to the death. Then many of his barons would not assent thereto, and in especial Sir Dinas, the Seneschal, and Sir Fergus. And so by the advice of them all Sir Tristram was banished out of the country for ten year, and thereupon he took his oath upon a book before the king and his barons. And so he was made to depart out of the country of Cornwall; and there were many barons brought him unto his ship, of the which some were his friends and some his foes. And in the meanwhile there came a knight of King Arthur's, his name was Dinadan, and his coming was for to seek after Sir Tristram; then they showed him where he was armed at all points going to the ship. Now fair knight, said Sir Dinadan, or ye pass this court that ye will joust with me I require thee. With a good will, said Sir Tristram, an these lords will give me leave. Then the barons granted thereto, and so they ran together, and there Sir Tristram gave Sir Dinadan a fall. And then he prayed Sir Tristram to give him leave to go in his fellowship. Ye shall be right welcome, said then Sir Tristram.

And so they took their horses and rode to their ships together, and when Sir Tristram was in the sea he said: Greet well King Mark and all mine enemies, and say them I will come again when I may; and well am I rewarded for the fighting with Sir Marhaus, and delivered all this country from servage; and well am I rewarded for the fetching and costs of Queen Isoud out of Ireland, and the danger that I was in first and last, and by the way coming home what danger I had to bring again Queen Isoud from the Castle Pluere; and well am I rewarded when I fought with Sir Bleoberis for Sir Segwarides' wife; and well am I rewarded when I fought with Sir Blamore de Ganis for King Anguish, father unto La Beale Isoud; and well am I rewarded when I smote down the good knight, Sir Lamorak de Galis, at King Mark's request; and well am I rewarded when I fought with the King with the Hundred Knights, and the King of Northgalis, and both these would have put his land in servage, and by me they were put to a rebuke; and well am I rewarded for the slaying of Tauleas, the mighty giant, and many other deeds have I done for him, and now have I my warison. And tell King Mark that many noble knights of the Table Round have spared the barons of this country for my sake. Also am I not well rewarded when I fought with the good knight Sir Palomides and rescued Queen Isoud from him; and at that time King Mark said afore all his barons I should have been better rewarded. And forthwithal he took the sea.

### **CHAPTER XXIII. How a damosel sought help to help Sir Launcelot**

**against thirty knights, and how Sir Tristram fought with them.**

AND at the next landing, fast by the sea, there met with Sir Tristram and with Sir Dinadan, Sir Ector de Maris and Sir Bors de Ganis; and there Sir Ector jousted with Sir Dinadan, and he smote him and his horse down. And then Sir Tristram would have jousted with Sir Bors, and Sir Bors said that he would not joust with no Cornish knights, for they are not called men of worship; and all this was done upon a bridge. And with this came Sir Bleoberis and Sir Driant, and Sir Bleoberis proffered to joust with Sir Tristram, and there Sir Tristram smote down Sir Bleoberis. Then said Sir Bors de Ganis: I wist never Cornish knight of so great valour nor so valiant as that knight that beareth the trappings embroidered with crowns. And then Sir Tristram and Sir Dinadan departed from them into a forest, and there met them a damosel that came for the love of Sir Launcelot to seek after some noble knights of King Arthur's court for to rescue Sir Launcelot. And so Sir Launcelot was ordained, for-by the treason of Queen Morgan le Fay to have slain Sir Launcelot, and for that cause she ordained thirty knights to lie in await for Sir Launcelot, and this damosel knew this treason. And for this cause the damosel came for to seek noble knights to help Sir Launcelot. For that night, or the day after, Sir Launcelot should come where these thirty knights were. And so this damosel met with Sir Bors and Sir Ector and with Sir Driant, and there she told them all four of the treason of Morgan le Fay; and then they promised her that they would be nigh where Sir Launcelot should meet with the thirty knights. And if so be they set upon him we will do rescues as we can.

So the damosel departed, and by adventure the damosel met with Sir Tristram and with Sir Dinadan, and there the damosel told them all the treason that was ordained for Sir Launcelot. Fair damosel, said Sir Tristram, bring me to that same place where they should meet with Sir Launcelot. Then said Sir Dinadan: What will ye do? it is not for us to fight with thirty knights, and wit you well I will not thereof; as to match one knight two or three is enough an they be men, but for to match fifteen knights that will I never undertake. Fie for shame, said Sir Tristram, do but your part. Nay, said Sir Dinadan, I will not thereof but if ye will lend me your shield, for ye bear a shield of Cornwall; and for the cowardice that is named to the knights of Cornwall, by your shields ye be ever forborne. Nay, said Sir Tristram, I will not depart from my shield for her sake that gave it me. But one thing, said Sir Tristram, I promise thee, Sir Dinadan, but if thou wilt promise me to abide with me, here I shall slay thee, for I desire no more of thee but answer one knight. And if thy heart will not serve thee, stand by and look upon me and them. Sir, said Sir Dinadan, I promise you to look upon and to do what I may to save myself, but I would I had not met with you.



So then anon these thirty knights came fast by these four knights, and they were ware of them, and either of other. And so these thirty knights let them pass, for this cause, that they would not wrath them, if case be that they had ado with Sir Launcelot; and the four knights let them pass to this intent, that they would see and behold what they would do with Sir Launcelot. And so the thirty knights passed on and came by Sir Tristram and by Sir Dinadan, and then Sir Tristram cried on high: Lo, here is a knight against you for the love of Sir Launcelot. And there he slew two with one spear and ten with his sword. And then came in Sir Dinadan and he did passing well, and so of the thirty knights there went but ten away, and they fled. All this battle saw Sir Bors de Ganis and his three fellows, and then they saw well it was the same knight that jousted with them at the bridge; then they took their horses and rode unto Sir Tristram, and praised him and thanked him of his good deeds, and they all desired Sir Tristram to go with them to their lodging; and he said: Nay, he would not go to no lodging. Then they all four knights prayed him to tell them his name. Fair lords, said Sir Tristram, as at this time I will not tell you my name.

#### **CHAPTER XXIV. How Sir Tristram and Sir Dinadan came to a lodging where they must joust with two knights.**

THEN Sir Tristram and Sir Dinadan rode forth their way till they came to the shepherds and to the herdmen, and there they asked them if they knew any lodging or harbour there nigh hand. Forsooth, sirs, said the herdmen, hereby is good lodging in a castle; but there is such a custom that there shall no knight be harboured but if he joust with two knights, and if he be but one knight he must joust with two. And as ye be therein soon shall ye be matched. There is shrewd harbour, said Sir Dinadan; lodge where ye will, for I will not lodge there. Fie for shame, said Sir Tristram, are ye not a knight of the Table Round? wherefore ye may not with your worship refuse your lodging. Not so, said the herdmen, for an ye be beaten and have the worse ye shall not be lodged there, and if ye beat them ye shall be well harboured. Ah, said Sir Dinadan, they are two sure knights. Then Sir Dinadan would not lodge there in no manner but as Sir Tristram required him of his knighthood; and so they rode thither. And to make short tale, Sir Tristram and Sir Dinadan smote them down both, and so they entered into the castle and had good cheer as they could think or devise.

And when they were unarmed, and thought to be merry and in good rest, there came in at the gates Sir Palomides and Sir Gaheris, requiring to have the custom of the castle. What array is this? said Sir Dinadan, I would have my rest. That may not be, said Sir Tristram; now must we needs defend the custom of this castle, insomuch as we have the better of the lords of this castle, and therefore,

said Sir Tristram, needs must ye make you ready. In the devil's name, said Sir Dinadan, came I into your company. And so they made them ready; and Sir Gaheris encountered with Sir Tristram, and Sir Gaheris had a fall; and Sir Palomides encountered with Sir Dinadan, and Sir Dinadan had a fall: then was it fall for fall. So then must they fight on foot. That would not Sir Dinadan, for he was so sore bruised of the fall that Sir Palomides gave him. Then Sir Tristram unlaced Sir Dinadan's helm, and prayed him to help him. I will not, said Sir Dinadan, for I am sore wounded of the thirty knights that we had but late ago to do withal. But ye fare, said Sir Dinadan unto Sir Tristram, as a madman and as a man that is out of his mind that would cast himself away, and I may curse the time that ever I saw you, for in all the world are not two such knights that be so wood as is Sir Launcelot and ye Sir Tristram; for once I fell in the fellowship of Sir Launcelot as I have done now with you, and he set me a work that a quarter of a year I kept my bed. Jesu defend me, said Sir Dinadan, from such two knights, and specially from your fellowship. Then, said Sir Tristram, I will fight with them both. Then Sir Tristram bade them come forth both, for I will fight with you. Then Sir Palomides and Sir Gaheris dressed them, and smote at them both. Then Dinadan smote at Sir Gaheris a stroke or two, and turned from him. Nay, said Sir Palomides, it is too much shame for us two knights to fight with one. And then he did bid Sir Gaheris stand aside with that knight that hath no list to fight. Then they rode together and fought long, and at the last Sir Tristram doubled his strokes, and drove Sir Palomides aback more than three strides. And then by one assent Sir Gaheris and Sir Dinadan went betwixt them, and departed them in-sunder. And then by assent of Sir Tristram they would have lodged together. But Sir Dinadan would not lodge in that castle. And then he cursed the time that ever he came in their fellowship, and so he took his horse, and his harness, and departed.

Then Sir Tristram prayed the lords of that castle to lend him a man to bring him to a lodging, and so they did, and overtook Sir Dinadan, and rode to their lodging two mile thence with a good man in a priory, and there they were well at ease. And that same night Sir Bors and Sir Bleoberis, and Sir Ector and Sir Driant, abode still in the same place whereas Sir Tristram fought with the thirty knights; and there they met with Sir Launcelot the same night, and had made promise to lodge with Sir Colgrevance the same night.

**CHAPTER XXV. How Sir Tristram jousted with Sir Kay and Sir  
Sagramore le Desirous, and how Sir Gawaine turned Sir Tristram from  
Morgan le Fay.**

BUT anon as the noble knight, Sir Launcelot, heard of the shield of

Cornwall, then wist he well that it was Sir Tristram that fought with his enemies. And then Sir Launcelot praised Sir Tristram, and called him the man of most worship in the world. So there was a knight in that priory that hight Pellinore, and he desired to wit the name of Sir Tristram, but in no wise he could not; and so Sir Tristram departed and left Sir Dinadan in the priory, for he was so weary and so sore bruised that he might not ride. Then this knight, Sir Pellinore, said to Sir Dinadan: Sithen that ye will not tell me that knight's name I will ride after him and make him to tell me his name, or he shall die therefore. Beware, sir knight, said Sir Dinadan, for an ye follow him ye shall repent it. So that knight, Sir Pellinore, rode after Sir Tristram and required him of jousts. Then Sir Tristram smote him down and wounded him through the shoulder, and so he passed on his way. And on the next day following Sir Tristram met with pursuivants, and they told him that there was made a great cry of tournament between King Carados of Scotland and the King of North Wales, and either should joust against other at the Castle of Maidens; and these pursuivants sought all the country after the good knights, and in especial King Carados let make seeking for Sir Launcelot du Lake, and the King of Northgalis let seek after Sir Tristram de Lionnes. And at that time Sir Tristram thought to be at that jousts; and so by adventure they met with Sir Kay, the Seneschal, and Sir Sagramore le Desirous; and Sir Kay required Sir Tristram to joust, and Sir Tristram in a manner refused him, because he would not be hurt nor bruised against the great jousts that should be before the Castle of Maidens, and therefore thought to repose him and to rest him. And alway Sir Kay cried: Sir knight of Cornwall, joust with me, or else yield thee to me as recreant. When Sir Tristram heard him say so he turned to him, and then Sir Kay refused him and turned his back. Then Sir Tristram said: As I find thee I shall take thee. Then Sir Kay turned with evil will, and Sir Tristram smote Sir Kay down, and so he rode forth.

Then Sir Sagramore le Desirous rode after Sir Tristram, and made him to joust with him, and there Sir Tristram smote down Sir Sagramore le Desirous from his horse, and rode his way; and the same day he met with a damosel that told him that he should win great worship of a knight adventurous that did much harm in all that country. When Sir Tristram heard her say so, he was glad to go with her to win worship. So Sir Tristram rode with that damosel a six mile, and then met him Sir Gawaine, and therewithal Sir Gawaine knew the damosel, that she was a damosel of Queen Morgan le Fay. Then Sir Gawaine understood that she led that knight to some mischief. Fair knight, said Sir Gawaine, whither ride you now with that damosel? Sir, said Sir Tristram, I wot not whither I shall ride but as the damosel will lead me. Sir, said Sir Gawaine, ye shall not ride with her, for she and her lady did never good, but ill. And then Sir Gawaine pulled out his

sword and said: Damosel, but if thou tell me anon for what cause thou ledest this knight with thee thou shalt die for it right anon: I know all your lady's treason, and yours. Mercy, Sir Gawaine, she said, and if ye will save my life I will tell you. Say on, said Sir Gawaine, and thou shalt have thy life. Sir, she said, Queen Morgan le Fay, my lady, hath ordained a thirty ladies to seek and espy after Sir Launcelot or Sir Tristram, and by the trains of these ladies, who that may first meet any of these two knights they should turn them unto Morgan le Fay's castle, saying that they should do deeds of worship; and if any of the two knights came there, there be thirty knights lying and watching in a tower to wait upon Sir Launcelot or upon Sir Tristram. Fie for shame, said Sir Gawaine, that ever such false treason should be wrought or used in a queen, and a king's sister, and a king and queen's daughter.

#### **CHAPTER XXVI. How Sir Tristram and Sir Gawaine rode to have foughten with the thirty knights, but they durst not come out.**

SIR, said Sir Gawaine, will ye stand with me, and we will see the malice of these thirty knights. Sir, said Sir Tristram, go ye to them, an it please you, and ye shall see I will not fail you, for it is not long ago since I and a fellow met with thirty knights of that queen's fellowship; and God speed us so that we may win worship. So then Sir Gawaine and Sir Tristram rode toward the castle where Morgan le Fay was, and ever Sir Gawaine deemed well that he was Sir Tristram de Liones, because he heard that two knights had slain and beaten thirty knights. And when they came afore the castle Sir Gawaine spake on high and said: Queen Morgan le Fay, send out your knights that ye have laid in a watch for Sir Launcelot and for Sir Tristram. Now, said Sir Gawaine, I know your false treason, and through all places where that I ride men shall know of your false treason; and now let see, said Sir Gawaine, whether ye dare come out of your castle, ye thirty knights. Then the queen spake and all the thirty knights at once, and said: Sir Gawaine, full well wottest thou what thou dost and sayest; for by God we know thee passing well, but all that thou speakest and dost, thou sayest it upon pride of that good knight that is there with thee. For there be some of us that know full well the hands of that knight over all well. And wit thou well, Sir Gawaine, it is more for his sake than for thine that we will not come out of this castle. For wit ye well, Sir Gawaine, the knight that beareth the arms of Cornwall, we know him and what he is.

Then Sir Gawaine and Sir Tristram departed and rode on their ways a day or two together; and there by adventure, they met with Sir Kay and Sir Sagramore le Desirous. And then they were glad of Sir Gawaine, and he of them, but they wist not what he was with the shield of Cornwall, but by deeming. And thus they

rode together a day or two. And then they were ware of Sir Breuse Saunce Pite chasing a lady for to have slain her, for he had slain her paramour afore. Hold you all still, said Sir Gawaine, and show none of you forth, and ye shall see me reward yonder false knight; for an he espy you he is so well horsed that he will escape away. And then Sir Gawaine rode betwixt Sir Breuse and the lady, and said: False knight, leave her, and have ado with me. When Sir Breuse saw no more but Sir Gawaine he feutred his spear, and Sir Gawaine against him; and there Sir Breuse overthrew Sir Gawaine, and then he rode over him, and overthwart him twenty times to have destroyed him; and when Sir Tristram saw him do so villainous a deed, he hurled out against him. And when Sir Breuse saw him with the shield of Cornwall he knew him well that it was Sir Tristram, and then he fled, and Sir Tristram followed after him; and Sir Breuse Saunce Pite was so horsed that he went his way quite, and Sir Tristram followed him long, for he would fain have been avenged upon him. And so when he had long chased him, he saw a fair well, and thither he rode to repose him, and tied his horse till a tree.

**CHAPTER XXVII. How damosel Bragwaine found Tristram sleeping by a well, and how she delivered letters to him from La Beale Isoud.**

AND then he pulled off his helm and washed his visage and his hands, and so he fell asleep. In the meanwhile came a damosel that had sought Sir Tristram many ways and days within this land. And when she came to the well she looked upon him, and had forgotten him as in remembrance of Sir Tristram, but by his horse she knew him, that hight Passe-Brewel that had been Sir Tristram's horse many years. For when he was mad in the forest Sir Fergus kept him. So this lady, Dame Bragwaine, abode still till he was awake. So when she saw him wake she saluted him, and he her again, for either knew other of old acquaintance; then she told him how she had sought him long and broad, and there she told him how she had letters from Queen La Beale Isoud. Then anon Sir Tristram read them, and wit ye well he was glad, for therein was many a piteous complaint. Then Sir Tristram said: Lady Bragwaine, ye shall ride with me till that tournament be done at the Castle of Maidens, and then shall bear letters and tidings with you. And then Sir Tristram took his horse and sought lodging, and there he met with a good ancient knight and prayed him to lodge with him. Right so came Gouvernail unto Sir Tristram, that was glad of that lady. So this old knight's name was Sir Pellounes, and he told of the great tournament that should be at the Castle of Maidens. And there Sir Launcelot and thirty-two knights of his blood had ordained shields of Cornwall. And right so there came one unto Sir Pellounes, and told him that Sir Persides de Bloise was

come home; then that knight held up his hands and thanked God of his coming home. And there Sir Pellounes told Sir Tristram that in two years he had not seen his son, Sir Persides. Sir, said Sir Tristram, I know your son well enough for a good knight.

So on a time Sir Tristram and Sir Persides came to their lodging both at once, and so they unarmed them, and put upon them their clothing. And then these two knights each welcomed other. And when Sir Persides understood that Sir Tristram was of Cornwall, he said he was once in Cornwall: And there I jousted afore King Mark; and so it happed me at that time to overthrow ten knights, and then came to me Sir Tristram de Liones and overthrew me, and took my lady away from me, and that shall I never forget, but I shall remember me an ever I see my time. Ah, said Sir Tristram, now I understand that ye hate Sir Tristram. What deem ye, ween ye that Sir Tristram is not able to withstand your malice? Yes, said Sir Persides, I know well that Sir Tristram is a noble knight and a much better knight than I, yet shall I not owe him my good will. Right as they stood thus talking at a bay-window of that castle, they saw many knights riding to and fro toward the tournament. And then was Sir Tristram ware of a likely knight riding upon a great black horse, and a black-covered shield. What knight is that, said Sir Tristram, with the black horse and the black shield? he seemeth a good knight. I know him well, said Sir Persides, he is one of the best knights of the world. Then is it Sir Launcelot, said Tristram. Nay, said Sir Persides, it is Sir Palomides, that is yet unchristened.

### **CHAPTER XXVIII. How Sir Tristram had a fall with Sir Palomides, and how Launcelot overthrew two knights.**

THEN they saw much people of the country salute Sir Palomides. And within a while after there came a squire of the castle, that told Sir Pellounes that was lord of that castle, that a knight with a black shield had smitten down thirteen knights. Fair brother, said Sir Tristram unto Sir Persides, let us cast upon us cloaks, and let us go see the play. Not so, said Sir Persides, we will not go like knaves thither, but we will ride like men and good knights to withstand our enemies. So they armed them, and took their horses and great spears, and thither they went thereas many knights assayed themselves before the tournament. And anon Sir Palomides saw Sir Persides, and then he sent a squire unto him and said: Go thou to the yonder knight with the green shield and therein a lion of gold, and say him I require him to joust with me, and tell him that my name is Sir Palomides. When Sir Persides understood that request of Sir Palomides, he made him ready, and there anon they met together, but Sir Persides had a fall. Then Sir Tristram dressed him to be revenged upon Sir Palomides, and that saw

Sir Palomides that was ready and so was not Sir Tristram, and took him at an advantage and smote him over his horse's tail when he had no spear in his rest. Then stert up Sir Tristram and took his horse lightly, and was wroth out of measure, and sore ashamed of that fall. Then Sir Tristram sent unto Sir Palomides by Gouvernail, and prayed him to joust with him at his request. Nay, said Sir Palomides, as at this time I will not joust with that knight, for I know him better than he weeneth. And if he be wroth he may right it to-morn at the Castle of Maidens, where he may see me and many other knights.

With that came Sir Dinadan, and when he saw Sir Tristram wroth he list not to jape. Lo, said Sir Dinadan, here may a man prove, be a man never so good yet may he have a fall, and he was never so wise but he might be overseen, and he rideth well that never fell. So Sir Tristram was passing wroth, and said to Sir Persides and to Sir Dinadan: I will revenge me. Right so as they stood talking there, there came by Sir Tristram a likely knight riding passing soberly and heavily with a black shield. What knight is that? said Sir Tristram unto Sir Persides. I know him well, said Sir Persides, for his name is Sir Briant of North Wales; so he passed on among other knights of North Wales. And there came in Sir Launcelot du Lake with a shield of the arms of Cornwall, and he sent a squire unto Sir Briant, and required him to joust with him. Well, said Sir Briant, sithen I am required to joust I will do what I may; and there Sir Launcelot smote down Sir Briant from his horse a great fall. And then Sir Tristram marvelled what knight he was that bare the shield of Cornwall. Whatsoever he be, said Sir Dinadan, I warrant you he is of King Ban's blood, the which be knights of the most noble prowess in the world, for to account so many for so many. Then there came two knights of Northgalis, that one hight Hew de la Montaine, and the other Sir Madok de la Montaine, and they challenged Sir Launcelot foot-hot. Sir Launcelot not refusing them but made him ready, with one spear he smote them down both over their horses' croups; and so Sir Launcelot rode his way. By the good lord, said Sir Tristram, he is a good knight that beareth the shield of Cornwall, and meseemeth he rideth in the best manner that ever I saw knight ride.

Then the King of Northgalis rode unto Sir Palomides and prayed him heartily for his sake to joust with that knight that hath done us of Northgalis despite. Sir, said Sir Palomides, I am full loath to have ado with that knight, and cause why is, for as to-morn the great tournament shall be; and therefore I will keep myself fresh by my will. Nay, said the King of Northgalis, I pray you require him of jousts. Sir, said Sir Palomides, I will joust at your request, and require that knight to joust with me, and often I have seen a man have a fall at his own request.

## **CHAPTER XXIX. How Sir Launcelot jousted with Palomides and overthrew him, and after he was assailed with twelve knights.**

THEN Sir Palomides sent unto Sir Launcelot a squire, and required him of jousts. Fair fellow, said Sir Launcelot, tell me thy lord's name. Sir, said the squire, my lord's name is Sir Palomides, the good knight. In good hour, said Sir Launcelot, for there is no knight that I saw this seven years that I had liefer ado withal than with him. And so either knights made them ready with two great spears. Nay, said Sir Dinadan, ye shall see that Sir Palomides will quit him right well. It may be so, said Sir Tristram, but I undertake that knight with the shield of Cornwall shall give him a fall. I believe it not, said Sir Dinadan. Right so they spurred their horses and feutred their spears, and either hit other, and Sir Palomides brake a spear upon Sir Launcelot, and he sat and moved not; but Sir Launcelot smote him so lightly that he made his horse to avoid the saddle, and the stroke brake his shield and the hauberk, and had he not fallen he had been slain. How now, said Sir Tristram, I wist well by the manner of their riding both that Sir Palomides should have a fall.

Right so Sir Launcelot rode his way, and rode to a well to drink and to repose him, and they of Northgalis espied him whither he rode; and then there followed him twelve knights for to have mischieved him, for this cause that upon the morn at the tournament of the Castle of Maidens that he should not win the victory. So they came upon Sir Launcelot suddenly, and unnethe he might put upon him his helm and take his horse, but they were in hands with him; and then Sir Launcelot gat his spear, and rode through them, and there he slew a knight and brake a spear in his body. Then he drew his sword and smote upon the right hand and upon the left hand, so that within a few strokes he had slain other three knights, and the remnant that abode he wounded them sore all that did abide. Thus Sir Launcelot escaped from his enemies of North Wales, and then Sir Launcelot rode his way till a friend, and lodged him till on the morn; for he would not the first day have ado in the tournament because of his great labour. And on the first day he was with King Arthur thereas he was set on high upon a scaffold to discern who was best worthy of his deeds. So Sir Launcelot was with King Arthur, and jousted not the first day.

## **CHAPTER XXX. How Sir Tristram behaved him the first day of the tournament, and there he had the prize.**

NOW turn we unto Sir Tristram de Liones, that commanded Gouvernail, his servant, to ordain him a black shield with none other remembrance therein. And so Sir Persides and Sir Tristram departed from their host Sir Pellounes, and they



rode early toward the tournament, and then they drew them to King Carados' side, of Scotland; and anon knights began the field what of King Northgalis' part, and what of King Carados' part, and there began great party. Then there was hurling and rashing. Right so came in Sir Persides and Sir Tristram and so they did fare that they put the King of Northgalis aback. Then came in Sir Bleoberis de Ganis and Sir Gaheris with them of Northgalis, and then was Sir Persides smitten down and almost slain, for more than forty horse men went over him. For Sir Bleoberis did great deeds of arms, and Sir Gaheris failed him not. When Sir Tristram beheld them, and saw them do such deeds of arms, he marvelled what they were. Also Sir Tristram thought shame that Sir Persides was so done to; and then he gat a great spear in his hand, and then he rode to Sir Gaheris and smote him down from his horse. And then was Sir Bleoberis wroth, and gat a spear and rode against Sir Tristram in great ire; and there Sir Tristram met with him, and smote Sir Bleoberis from his horse. So then the King with the Hundred Knights was wroth, and he horsed Sir Bleoberis and Sir Gaheris again, and there began a great medley; and ever Sir Tristram held them passing short, and ever Sir Bleoberis was passing busy upon Sir Tristram; and there came Sir Dinadan against Sir Tristram, and Sir Tristram gave him such a buffet that he swooned in his saddle. Then anon Sir Dinadan came to Sir Tristram and said: Sir, I know thee better than thou weenest; but here I promise thee my troth I will never come against thee more, for I promise thee that sword of thine shall never come on mine helm.

With that came Sir Bleoberis, and Sir Tristram gave him such a buffet that down he laid his head; and then he caught him so sore by the helm that he pulled him under his horse's feet. And then King Arthur blew to lodging. Then Sir Tristram departed to his pavilion, and Sir Dinadan rode with him; and Sir Persides and King Arthur then, and the kings upon both parties, marvelled what knight that was with the black shield. Many said their advice, and some knew him for Sir Tristram, and held their peace and would nought say. So that first day King Arthur, and all the kings and lords that were judges, gave Sir Tristram the prize; howbeit they knew him not, but named him the Knight with the Black Shield.

### **CHAPTER XXXI. How Sir Tristram returned against King Arthur's party because he saw Sir Palomides on that party.**

THEN upon the morn Sir Palomides returned from the King of Northgalis, and rode to King Arthur's side, where was King Carados, and the King of Ireland, and Sir Launcelot's kin, and Sir Gawaine's kin. So Sir Palomides sent the damosel unto Sir Tristram that he sent to seek him when he was out of his

mind in the forest, and this damosel asked Sir Tristram what he was and what was his name? As for that, said Sir Tristram, tell Sir Palomides ye shall not wit as at this time unto the time I have broken two spears upon him. But let him wit thus much, said Sir Tristram, that I am the same knight that he smote down in over-evening[\*10] at the tournament; and tell him plainly on what party that Sir Palomides be I will be of the contrary party. Sir, said the damosel, ye shall understand that Sir Palomides will be on King Arthur's side, where the most noble knights of the world be. In the name of God, said Sir Tristram, then will I be with the King of Northgalis, because Sir Palomides will be on King Arthur's side, and else I would not but for his sake. So when King Arthur was come they blew unto the field; and then there began a great party, and so King Carados jousted with the King of the Hundred Knights, and there King Carados had a fall: then was there hurling and rushing, and right so came in knights of King Arthur's, and they bare aback the King of Northgalis' knights.

[\*10] "the evening afore," W. de W.

Then Sir Tristram came in, and began so roughly and so bigly that there was none might withstand him, and thus Sir Tristram dured long. And at the last Sir Tristram fell among the fellowship of King Ban, and there fell upon him Sir Bors de Ganis, and Sir Ector de Maris, and Sir Blamore de Ganis, and many other knights. And then Sir Tristram smote on the right hand and on the left hand, that all lords and ladies spake of his noble deeds. But at the last Sir Tristram should have had the worse had not the King with the Hundred Knights been. And then he came with his fellowship and rescued Sir Tristram, and brought him away from those knights that bare the shields of Cornwall. And then Sir Tristram saw another fellowship by themselves, and there were a forty knights together, and Sir Kay, the Seneschal, was their governor. Then Sir Tristram rode in amongst them, and there he smote down Sir Kay from his horse; and there he fared among those knights like a greyhound among conies.

Then Sir Launcelot found a knight that was sore wounded upon the head. Sir, said Sir Launcelot, who wounded you so sore? Sir, he said, a knight that beareth a black shield, and I may curse the time that ever I met with him, for he is a devil and no man. So Sir Launcelot departed from him and thought to meet with Sir Tristram, and so he rode with his sword drawn in his hand to seek Sir Tristram; and then he espied him how he hurled here and there, and at every stroke Sir Tristram wellnigh smote down a knight. O mercy Jesu! said the king, sith the times I bare arms saw I never no knight do so marvellous deeds of arms. And if I should set upon this knight, said Sir Launcelot to himself, I did shame to myself, and therewithal Sir Launcelot put up his sword. And then the King with the Hundred Knights and an hundred more of North Wales set upon the twenty of

Sir Launcelot's kin: and they twenty knights held them ever together as wild swine, and none would fail other. And so when Sir Tristram beheld the noblesse or these twenty knights he marvelled of their good deeds, for he saw by their fare and by their rule that they had liefer die than avoid the field. Now Jesu, said Sir Tristram, well may he be valiant and full of prowess that hath such a sort of noble knights unto his kin, and full like is he to be a noble man that is their leader and governor. He meant it by Sir Launcelot du Lake. So when Sir Tristram had beholden them long he thought shame to see two hundred knights battering upon twenty knights. Then Sir Tristram rode unto the King with the Hundred Knights and said: Sir, leave your fighting with those twenty knights, for ye win no worship of them, ye be so many and they so few; and wit ye well they will not out of the field I see by their cheer and countenance; and worship get ye none an ye slay them. Therefore leave your fighting with them, for I to increase my worship I will ride to the twenty knights and help them with all my might and power. Nay, said the King with the Hundred Knights, ye shall not do so; now I see your courage and courtesy I will withdraw my knights for your pleasure, for evermore a good knight will favour another, and like will draw to like.

### **CHAPTER XXXII. How Sir Tristram found Palomides by a well, and brought him with him to his lodging.**

THEN the King with the Hundred Knights withdrew his knights. And all this while, and long to-fore, Sir Launcelot had watched upon Sir Tristram with a very purpose to have fellowshipped with him. And then suddenly Sir Tristram, Sir Dinadan, and Gouvernail, his man, rode their way into the forest, that no man perceived where they went. So then King Arthur blew unto lodging, and gave the King of Northgalis the prize because Sir Tristram was upon his side. Then Sir Launcelot rode here and there, so wood as lion that fauted his fill, because he had lost Sir Tristram, and so he returned unto King Arthur. And then in all the field was a noise that with the wind it might be heard two mile thence, how the lords and ladies cried: The Knight with the Black Shield hath won the field. Alas, said King Arthur, where is that knight become? It is shame to all those in the field so to let him escape away from you; but with gentleness and courtesy ye might have brought him unto me to the Castle of Maidens. Then the noble King Arthur went unto his knights and comforted them in the best wise that he could, and said: My fair fellows, be not dismayed, howbeit ye have lost the field this day. And many were hurt and sore wounded, and many were whole. My fellows, said King Arthur, look that ye be of good cheer, for to-morn I will be in the field with you and revenge you of your enemies. So that night King Arthur

and his knights reposed themselves.

The damosel that came from La Beale Isoud unto Sir Tristram, all the while the tournament was a-doing she was with Queen Guenever, and ever the queen asked her for what cause she came into that country. Madam, she answered, I come for none other cause but from my lady La Beale Isoud to wit of your welfare. For in no wise she would not tell the queen that she came for Sir Tristram's sake. So this lady, Dame Bragwaine, took her leave of Queen Guenever, and she rode after Sir Tristram. And as she rode through the forest she heard a great cry; then she commanded her squire to go into the forest to wit what was that noise. And so he came to a well, and there he found a knight bounden till a tree crying as he had been wood, and his horse and his harness standing by him. And when he espied that squire, therewith he abraid and brake himself loose, and took his sword in his hand, and ran to have slain the squire. Then he took his horse and fled all that ever he might unto Dame Bragwaine, and told her of his adventure. Then she rode unto Sir Tristram's pavilion, and told Sir Tristram what adventure she had found in the forest. Alas, said Sir Tristram, upon my head there is some good knight at mischief.

Then Sir Tristram took his horse and his sword and rode thither, and there he heard how the knight complained unto himself and said: I, woful knight Sir Palomides, what misadventure befalleth me, that thus am defoiled with falsehood and treason, through Sir Bors and Sir Ector. Alas, he said, why live I so long! And then he gat his sword in his hands, and made many strange signs and tokens; and so through his raging he threw his sword into that fountain. Then Sir Palomides wailed and wrang his hands. And at the last for pure sorrow he ran into that fountain, over his belly, and sought after his sword. Then Sir Tristram saw that, and ran upon Sir Palomides, and held him in his arms fast. What art thou, said Palomides, that holdeth me so? I am a man of this forest that would thee none harm. Alas, said Sir Palomides, I may never win worship where Sir Tristram is; for ever where he is an I be there, then get I no worship; and if he be away for the most part I have the gree, unless that Sir Launcelot be there or Sir Lamorak. Then Sir Palomides said: Once in Ireland Sir Tristram put me to the worse, and another time in Cornwall, and in other places in this land. What would ye do, said Sir Tristram, an ye had Sir Tristram? I would fight with him, said Sir Palomides, and ease my heart upon him; and yet, to say thee sooth, Sir Tristram is the gentlest knight in this world living. What will ye do, said Sir Tristram, will ye go with me to your lodging? Nay, said he, I will go to the King with the Hundred Knights, for he rescued me from Sir Bors de Ganis and Sir Ector and else had I been slain traitorly. Sir Tristram said him such kind words that Sir Palomides went with him to his lodging. Then Gouvernail went to-fore,

and charged Dame Bragwaine to go out of the way to her lodging And bid ye Sir Persides that he make him no quarrels. And so they rode together till they came to Sir Tristram's pavilion, and there Sir Palomides had all the cheer that might be had all that night. But in no wise Sir Palomides might not know what was Sir Tristram; and so after supper they yede to rest, and Sir Tristram for great travail slept till it was day. And Sir Palomides might not sleep for anguish; and in the dawning of the day he took his horse privily, and rode his way unto Sir Gaheris and unto Sir Sagramore le Desirous, where they were in their pavilions; for they three were fellows at the beginning of the tournament. And then upon the morn the king blew unto the tournament upon the third day.

### **CHAPTER XXXIII. How Sir Tristram smote down Sir Palomides, and how he jouted with King Arthur, and other feats.**

SO the King of Northgalis and the King with the Hundred Knights, they two encountered with King Carados and with the King of Ireland; and there the King with the Hundred Knights smote down King Carados, and the King of Northgalis smote down the King of Ireland. With that came in Sir Palomides, and when he came he made great work, for by his indented shield he was well known. So came in King Arthur, and did great deeds of arms together, and put the King of Northgalis and the King with the Hundred Knights to the worse. With this came in Sir Tristram with his black shield, and anon he jouted with Sir Palomides, and there by fine force Sir Tristram smote Sir Palomides over his horse's croup. Then King Arthur cried: Knight with the Black Shield, make thee ready to me, and in the same wise Sir Tristram smote King Arthur. And then by force of King Arthur's knights the King and Sir Palomides were horsed again. Then King Arthur with a great eager heart he gat a spear in his hand, and there upon the one side he smote Sir Tristram over his horse. Then foot-hot Sir Palomides came upon Sir Tristram, as he was upon foot, to have overridden him. Then Sir Tristram was ware of him, and there he stooped aside, and with great ire he gat him by the arm, and pulled him down from his horse. Then Sir Palomides lightly arose, and then they dashed together mightily with their swords; and many kings, queens, and lords, stood and beheld them. And at the last Sir Tristram smote Sir Palomides upon the helm three mighty strokes, and at every stroke that he gave him he said: This for Sir Tristram's sake. With that Sir Palomides fell to the earth grovelling.

Then came the King with the Hundred Knights, and brought Sir Tristram an horse, and so was he horsed again. By then was Sir Palomides horsed, and with great ire he jouted upon Sir Tristram with his spear as it was in the rest, and gave him a great dash with his sword. Then Sir Tristram avoided his spear, and

gat him by the neck with his both hands, and pulled him clean out of his saddle, and so he bare him afore him the length of ten spears, and then in the presence of them all he let him fall at his adventure. Then Sir Tristram was ware of King Arthur with a naked sword in his hand, and with his spear Sir Tristram ran upon King Arthur; and then King Arthur boldly abode him and with his sword he smote a-two his spear, and therewithal Sir Tristram stonied; and so King Arthur gave him three or four strokes or he might get out his sword, and at the last Sir Tristram drew his sword and [either] assailed other passing hard. With that the great press departed [them]. Then Sir Tristram rode here and there and did his great pain, that eleven of the good knights of the blood of King Ban, that was of Sir Launcelot's kin, that day Sir Tristram smote down; that all the estates marvelled of his great deeds and all cried upon the Knight with the Black Shield.

#### **CHAPTER XXXIV. How Sir Launcelot hurt Sir Tristram, and how after Sir Tristram smote down Sir Palomides.**

THEN this cry was so large that Sir Launcelot heard it. And then he gat a great spear in his hand and came towards the cry. Then Sir Launcelot cried: The Knight with the Black Shield, make thee ready to joust with me. When Sir Tristram heard him say so he gat his spear in his hand, and either abashed down their heads, and came together as thunder; and Sir Tristram's spear brake in pieces, and Sir Launcelot by malfortune struck Sir Tristram on the side a deep wound nigh to the death; but yet Sir Tristram avoided not his saddle, and so the spear brake. Therewithal Sir Tristram that was wounded gat out his sword, and he rushed to Sir Launcelot, and gave him three great strokes upon the helm that the fire sprang thereout, and Sir Launcelot abashed his head lowly toward his saddle-bow. And therewithal Sir Tristram departed from the field, for he felt him so wounded that he weened he should have died; and Sir Dinadan espied him and followed him into the forest. Then Sir Launcelot abode and did many marvellous deeds.

So when Sir Tristram was departed by the forest's side he alighted, and unlaced his harness and freshed his wound; then weened Sir Dinadan that he should have died. Nay, nay, said Sir Tristram, Dinadan never dread thee, for I am heart-whole, and of this wound I shall soon be whole, by the mercy of God. By that Sir Dinadan was ware where came Palomides riding straight upon them. And then Sir Tristram was ware that Sir Palomides came to have destroyed him. And so Sir Dinadan gave him warning, and said: Sir Tristram, my lord, ye are so sore wounded that ye may not have ado with him, therefore I will ride against him and do to him what I may, and if I be slain ye may pray for my soul; and in the meanwhile ye may withdraw you and go into the castle, or in the forest, that

he shall not meet with you. Sir Tristram smiled and said: I thank you, Sir Dinadan, of your good will, but ye shall wit that I am able to handle him. And then anon hastily he armed him, and took his horse, and a great spear in his hand, and said to Sir Dinadan: Adieu; and rode toward Sir Palomides a soft pace. Then when Sir Palomides saw that, he made countenance to amend his horse, but he did it for this cause, for he abode Sir Gaheris that came after him. And when he was come he rode toward Sir Tristram. Then Sir Tristram sent unto Sir Palomides, and required him to joust with him; and if he smote down Sir Palomides he would do no more to him; and if it so happened that Sir Palomides smote down Sir Tristram, he bade him do his utterance. So they were accorded. Then they met together, and Sir Tristram smote down Sir Palomides that he had a grievous fall, so that he lay still as he had been dead. And then Sir Tristram ran upon Sir Gaheris, and he would not have jousted; but whether he would or not Sir Tristram smote him over his horse's croup, that he lay still as though he had been dead. And then Sir Tristram rode his way and left Sir Persides' squire within the pavilions, and Sir Tristram and Sir Dinadan rode to an old knight's place to lodge them. And that old knight had five sons at the tournament, for whom he prayed God heartily for their coming home. And so, as the French book saith, they came home all five well beaten.

And when Sir Tristram departed into the forest Sir Launcelot held alway the stour like hard, as a man araged that took no heed to himself, and wit ye well there was many a noble knight against him. And when King Arthur saw Sir Launcelot do so marvellous deeds of arms he then armed him, and took his horse and his armour, and rode into the field to help Sir Launcelot; and so many knights came in with King Arthur. And to make short tale in conclusion, the King of Northgalis and the King of the Hundred Knights were put to the worse; and because Sir Launcelot abode and was the last in the field the prize was given him. But Sir Launcelot would neither for king, queen, nor knight, have the prize, but where the cry was cried through the field: Sir Launcelot, Sir Launcelot hath won the field this day, Sir Launcelot let make another cry contrary: Sir Tristram hath won the field, for he began first, and last he hath endured, and so hath he done the first day, the second, and the third day.

#### **CHAPTER XXXV. How the prize of the third day was given to Sir Launcelot, and Sir Launcelot gave it to Sir Tristram.**

THEN all the estates and degrees high and low said of Sir Launcelot great worship, for the honour that he did unto Sir Tristram; and for that honour doing to Sir Tristram he was at that time more praised and renowned than an he had overthrown five hundred knights; and all the people wholly for this gentleness,

first the estates both high and low, and after the commonalty cried at once: Sir Launcelot hath won the field whosoever say nay. Then was Sir Launcelot wroth and ashamed, and so therewithal he rode to King Arthur. Alas, said the king, we are all dismayed that Sir Tristram is thus departed from us. By God, said King Arthur, he is one of the noblest knights that ever I saw hold spear or sword in hand, and the most courteoust knight in his fighting; for full hard I saw him, said King Arthur, when he smote Sir Palomides upon the helm thrice, that he abashed his helm with his strokes, and also he said: Here is a stroke for Sir Tristram, and thus thrice he said. Then King Arthur, Sir Launcelot, and Sir Dodinas le Savage took their horses to seek Sir Tristram, and by the means of Sir Persides he had told King Arthur where Sir Tristram was in his pavilion. But when they came there, Sir Tristram and Sir Dinadan were gone.

Then King Arthur and Sir Launcelot were heavy, and returned again to the Castle of Maidens making great dole for the hurt of Sir Tristram, and his sudden departing. So God me help, said King Arthur, I am more heavy that I cannot meet with him than for all the hurts that all my knights have had at the tournament. Right so came Sir Gaheris and told King Arthur how Sir Tristram had smitten down Sir Palomides, and it was at Sir Palomides' own request. Alas, said King Arthur, that was great dishonour to Sir Palomides, inasmuch as Sir Tristram was sore wounded, and now may we all, kings, and knights, and men of worship, say that Sir Tristram may be called a noble knight, and one of the best knights that ever I saw the days of my life. For I will that ye all, kings and knights, know, said King Arthur, that I never saw knight do so marvellously as he hath done these three days; for he was the first that began and that longest held on, save this last day. And though he was hurt, it was a manly adventure of two noble knights, and when two noble men encounter needs must the one have the worse, like as God will suffer at that time. As for me, said Sir Launcelot, for all the lands that ever my father left me I would not have hurt Sir Tristram an I had known him at that time; that I hurt him was for I saw not his shield. For an I had seen his black shield, I would not have meddled with him for many causes; for late he did as much for me as ever did knight, and that is well known that he had ado with thirty knights, and no help save Sir Dinadan. And one thing shall I promise, said Sir Launcelot, Sir Palomides shall repent it as in his unkindly dealing for to follow that noble knight that I by mishap hurted thus. Sir Launcelot said all the worship that might be said by Sir Tristram. Then King Arthur made a great feast to all that would come. And thus we let pass King Arthur, and a little we will turn unto Sir Palomides, that after he had a fall of Sir Tristram, he was nigh-hand araged out of his wit for despite of Sir Tristram. And so he followed him by adventure. And as he came by a river, in his woodness he



would have made his horse to have leapt over; and the horse failed footing and fell in the river, wherefore Sir Palomides was adread lest he should have been drowned; and then he avoided his horse, and swam to the land, and let his horse go down by adventure.

**CHAPTER XXXVI. How Palomides came to the castle where Sir Tristram was, and of the quest that Sir Launcelot and ten knights made for Sir Tristram.**

AND when he came to the land he took off his harness, and sat roaring and crying as a man out of his mind. Right so came a damosel even by Sir Palomides, that was sent from Sir Gawaine and his brother unto Sir Mordred, that lay sick in the same place with that old knight where Sir Tristram was. For, as the French book saith, Sir Persides hurt so Sir Mordred a ten days afore; and had it not been for the love of Sir Gawaine and his brother, Sir Persides had slain Sir Mordred. And so this damosel came by Sir Palomides, and she and he had language together, the which pleased neither of them; and so the damosel rode her ways till she came to the old knight's place, and there she told that old knight how she met with the wooddest knight by adventure that ever she met withal. What bare he in his shield? said Sir Tristram. It was indented with white and black, said the damosel. Ah, said Sir Tristram, that was Sir Palomides, the good knight. For well I know him, said Sir Tristram, for one of the best knights living in this realm. Then that old knight took a little hackney, and rode for Sir Palomides, and brought him unto his own manor; and full well knew Sir Tristram Sir Palomides, but he said but little, for at that time Sir Tristram was walking upon his feet, and well amended of his hurts; and always when Sir Palomides saw Sir Tristram he would behold him full marvellously, and ever him seemed that he had seen him. Then would he say unto Sir Dinadan: An ever I may meet with Sir Tristram he shall not escape mine hands. I marvel, said Sir Dinadan, that ye boast behind Sir Tristram, for it is but late that he was in your hands, and ye in his hands; why would ye not hold him when ye had him? for I saw myself twice or thrice that ye gat but little worship of Sir Tristram. Then was Sir Palomides ashamed. So leave we them a little while in the old castle with the old knight Sir Darras.

Now shall we speak of King Arthur, that said to Sir Launcelot: Had not ye been we had not lost Sir Tristram, for he was here daily unto the time ye met with him, and in an evil time, said Arthur, ye encountered with him. My lord Arthur, said Launcelot, ye put upon me that I should be cause of his departure; God knoweth it was against my will. But when men be hot in deeds of arms oft they hurt their friends as well as their foes. And my lord, said Sir Launcelot, ye

shall understand that Sir Tristram is a man that I am loath to offend, for he hath done for me more than ever I did for him as yet. But then Sir Launcelot made bring forth a book: and then Sir Launcelot said: Here we are ten knights that will swear upon a book never to rest one night where we rest another this twelvemonth until that we find Sir Tristram. And as for me, said Sir Launcelot, I promise you upon this book that an I may meet with him, either with fairness or foulness I shall bring him to this court, or else I shall die therefore. And the names of these ten knights that had undertaken this quest were these following: First was Sir Launcelot, Sir Ector de Maris, Sir Bors de Ganis, and Bleoberis, and Sir Blamore de Ganis, and Lucan the Butler, Sir Uwaine, Sir Galihud Lionel, and Galiodin. So these ten noble knights departed from the court of King Arthur, and so they rode upon their quest together until they came to a cross where departed four ways, and there departed the fellowship in four to seek Sir Tristram.

And as Sir Launcelot rode by adventure he met with Dame Bragwaine that was sent into that country to seek Sir Tristram, and she fled as fast as her palfrey might go. So Sir Launcelot met with her and asked her why she fled. Ah, fair knight, said Dame Bragwaine, I flee for dread of my life, for here followeth me Sir Breuse Saunce Pite to slay me. Hold you nigh me, said Sir Launcelot. Then when Sir Launcelot saw Sir Breuse Saunce Pite, Sir Launcelot cried unto him, and said: False knight destroyer of ladies and damosels, now thy last days be come. When Sir Breuse Saunce Pite saw Sir Launcelot's shield he knew it well, for at that time he bare not the arms of Cornwall, but he bare his own shield. And then Sir Breuse fled, and Sir Launcelot followed after him. But Sir Breuse was so well horsed that when him list to flee he might well flee, and also abide when him list. And then Sir Launcelot returned unto Dame Bragwaine, and she thanked him of his great labour.

### **CHAPTER XXXVII. How Sir Tristram, Sir Palomides, and Sir Dinadan were taken and put in prison.**

NOW will we speak of Sir Lucan the butler, that by fortune he came riding to the same place thereas was Sir Tristram, and in he came in none other intent but to ask harbour. Then the porter asked what was his name. Tell your lord that my name is Sir Lucan, the butler, a Knight of the Round Table. So the porter went unto Sir Darras, lord of the place, and told him who was there to ask harbour. Nay, nay, said Sir Daname, that was nephew to Sir Darras, say him that he shall not be lodged here, but let him wit that I, Sir Daname, will meet with him anon, and bid him make him ready. So Sir Daname came forth on horseback, and there they met together with spears, and Sir Lucan smote down

Sir Daname over his horse's croup, and then he fled into that place, and Sir Lucan rode after him, and asked after him many times.

Then Sir Dinadan said to Sir Tristram: It is shame to see the lord's cousin of this place defoiled. Abide, said Sir Tristram, and I shall redress it. And in the meanwhile Sir Dinadan was on horseback, and he joustet with Lucan the butler, and there Sir Lucan smote Dinadan through the thick of the thigh, and so he rode his way; and Sir Tristram was wroth that Sir Dinadan was hurt, and followed after, and thought to avenge him; and within a while he overtook Sir Lucan, and bade him turn; and so they met together so that Sir Tristram hurt Sir Lucan passing sore and gave him a fall. With that came Sir Uwaine, a gentle knight, and when he saw Sir Lucan so hurt he called Sir Tristram to joust with him. Fair knight, said Sir Tristram, tell me your name I require you. Sir knight, wit ye well my name is Sir Uwaine le Fise de Roy Ureine. Ah, said Sir Tristram, by my will I would not have ado with you at no time. Ye shall not so, said Sir Uwaine, but ye shall have ado with me. And then Sir Tristram saw none other bote, but rode against him, and overthrew Sir Uwaine and hurt him in the side, and so he departed unto his lodging again. And when Sir Dinadan understood that Sir Tristram had hurt Sir Lucan he would have ridden after Sir Lucan for to have slain him, but Sir Tristram would not suffer him. Then Sir Uwaine let ordain an horse litter, and brought Sir Lucan to the abbey of Ganis, and the castle thereby hight the Castle of Ganis, of the which Sir Bleoberis was lord. And at that castle Sir Launcelot promised all his fellows to meet in the quest of Sir Tristram.

So when Sir Tristram was come to his lodging there came a damosel that told Sir Darras that three of his sons were slain at that tournament, and two grievously wounded that they were never like to help themselves. And all this was done by a noble knight that bare the black shield, and that was he that bare the prize. Then came there one and told Sir Darras that the same knight was within, him that bare the black shield. Then Sir Darras yede unto Sir Tristram's chamber, and there he found his shield and showed it to the damosel. Ah sir, said the damosel, that same is he that slew your three sons. Then without any tarrying Sir Darras put Sir Tristram, and Sir Palomides, and Sir Dinadan, within a strong prison, and there Sir Tristram was like to have died of great sickness; and every day Sir Palomides would reprove Sir Tristram of old hate betwixt them. And ever Sir Tristram spake fair and said little. But when Sir Palomides saw the falling of sickness of Sir Tristram, then was he heavy for him, and comforted him in all the best wise he could. And as the French book saith, there came forty knights to Sir Darras that were of his own kin, and they would have slain Sir Tristram and his two fellows, but Sir Darras would not suffer that, but kept them in prison, and meat and drink they had. So Sir Tristram endured there great pain,

for sickness had undertaken him, and that is the greatest pain a prisoner may have. For all the while a prisoner may have his health of body he may endure under the mercy of God and in hope of good deliverance; but when sickness toucheth a prisoner's body, then may a prisoner say all wealth is him bereft, and then he hath cause to wail and to weep. Right so did Sir Tristram when sickness had undertaken him, for then he took such sorrow that he had almost slain himself.

**CHAPTER XXXVIII. How King Mark was sorry for the good renown  
of Sir Tristram. Some of King Arthur's knights jousted with knights of  
Cornwall.**

NOW will we speak, and leave Sir Tristram, Sir Palomides, and Sir Dinadan in prison, and speak we of other knights that sought after Sir Tristram many divers parts of this land. And some yede into Cornwall; and by adventure Sir Gaheris, nephew unto King Arthur, came unto King Mark, and there he was well received and sat at King Mark's own table and ate of his own mess. Then King Mark asked Sir Gaheris what tidings there were in the realm of Logris. Sir, said Sir Gaheris, the king reigneth as a noble knight; and now but late there was a great jousts and tournament as ever I saw any in the realm of Logris, and the most noble knights were at that jousts. But there was one knight that did marvellously three days, and he bare a black shield, and of all knights that ever I saw he proved the best knight. Then, said King Mark, that was Sir Launcelot, or Sir Palomides the paynim. Not so, said Sir Gheris, for both Sir Launcelot and Sir Palomides were on the contrary party against the Knight with the Black Shield. Then was it Sir Tristram, said the king. Yea, said Sir Gaheris. And therewithal the king smote down his head, and in his heart he feared sore that Sir Tristram should get him such worship in the realm of Logris wherethrough that he himself should not be able to withstand him. Thus Sir Gaheris had great cheer with King Mark, and with Queen La Beale Isoud, the which was glad of Sir Gaheris' words; for well she wist by his deeds and manners that it was Sir Tristram. And then the king made a feast royal, and to that feast came Sir Uwaine le Fise de Roy Ureine, and some called him Uwaine le Blanchemains. And this Sir Uwaine challenged all the knights of Cornwall. Then was the king wood wroth that he had no knights to answer him. Then Sir Andred, nephew unto King Mark, leapt up and said: I will encounter with Sir Uwaine. Then he yede and armed him and horsed him in the best manner. And there Sir Uwaine met with Sir Andred, and smote him down that he swooned on the earth. Then was King Mark sorry and wroth out of measure that he had no knight to revenge his nephew, Sir Andred.

So the king called unto him Sir Dinas, the Seneschal, and prayed him for his

sake to take upon him to joust with Sir Uwaine. Sir, said Sir Dinas, I am full loath to have ado with any knight of the Round Table. Yet, said the king, for my love take upon thee to joust. So Sir Dinas made him ready, and anon they encountered together with great spears, but Sir Dinas was overthrown, horse and man, a great fall. Who was wroth but King Mark! Alas, he said, have I no knight that will encounter with yonder knight? Sir, said Sir Gaheris, for your sake I will joust. So Sir Gaheris made him ready, and when he was armed he rode into the field. And when Sir Uwaine saw Sir Gaheris' shield he rode to him and said: Sir, ye do not your part. For, sir, the first time ye were made Knight of the Round Table ye sware that ye should not have ado with your fellowship wittingly. And pardie, Sir Gaheris, ye knew me well enough by my shield, and so do I know you by your shield, and though ye would break your oath I would not break mine; for there is not one here, nor ye, that shall think I am afeard of you, but I durst right well have ado with you, and yet we be sisters' sons. Then was Sir Gaheris ashamed, and so therewithal every knight went their way, and Sir Uwaine rode into the country.

Then King Mark armed him, and took his horse and his spear, with a squire with him. And then he rode afore Sir Uwaine, and suddenly at a gap he ran upon him as he that was not ware of him, and there he smote him almost through the body, and there left him. So within a while there came Sir Kay and found Sir Uwaine, and asked him how he was hurt. I wot not, said Sir Uwaine, why nor wherefore, but by treason I am sure I gat this hurt; for here came a knight suddenly upon me or that I was ware, and suddenly hurt me. Then there was come Sir Andred to seek King Mark. Thou traitor knight, said Sir Kay, an I wist it were thou that thus traitorly hast hurt this noble knight thou shouldst never pass my hands. Sir, said Sir Andred, I did never hurt him, and that I will report me to himself. Fie on you false knight, said Sir Kay, for ye of Cornwall are nought worth. So Sir Kay made carry Sir Uwaine to the Abbey of the Black Cross, and there he was healed. And then Sir Gaheris took his leave of King Mark, but or he departed he said: Sir king, ye did a foul shame unto you and your court, when ye banished Sir Tristram out of this country, for ye needed not to have doubted no knight an he had been here. And so he departed.

### **CHAPTER XXXIX. Of the treason of King Mark, and how Sir Gaheris smote him down and Andred his cousin.**

THEN there came Sir Kay, the Seneschal, unto King Mark, and there he had good cheer showing outward. Now, fair lords, said he, will ye prove any adventure in the forest of Morris, in the which I know well is as hard an adventure as I know any. Sir, said Sir Kay, I will prove it. And Sir Gaheris said

he would be avised for King Mark was ever full of treason: and therewithal Sir Gaheris departed and rode his way. And by the same way that Sir Kay should ride he laid him down to rest, charging his squire to wait upon Sir Kay; And warn me when he cometh. So within a while Sir Kay came riding that way, and then Sir Gaheris took his horse and met him, and said: Sir Kay, ye are not wise to ride at the request of King Mark, for he dealeth all with treason. Then said Sir Kay: I require you let us prove this adventure. I shall not fail you, said Sir Gaheris. And so they rode that time till a lake that was that time called the Perilous Lake, and there they abode under the shaw of the wood.

The meanwhile King Mark within the castle of Tintagil avoided all his barons, and all other save such as were privy with him were avoided out of his chamber. And then he let call his nephew Sir Andred, and bade arm him and horse him lightly; and by that time it was midnight. And so King Mark was armed in black, horse and all; and so at a privy postern they two issued out with their varlets with them, and rode till they came to that lake. Then Sir Kay espied them first, and gat his spear, and proffered to joust. And King Mark rode against him, and smote each other full hard, for the moon shone as the bright day. And there at that jousts Sir Kay's horse fell down, for his horse was not so big as the king's horse, and Sir Kay's horse bruised him full sore. Then Sir Gaheris was wroth that Sir Kay had a fall. Then he cried: Knight, sit thou fast in thy saddle, for I will revenge my fellow. Then King Mark was afeard of Sir Gaheris, and so with evil will King Mark rode against him, and Sir Gaheris gave him such a stroke that he fell down. So then forthwithal Sir Gaheris ran unto Sir Andred and smote him from his horse quite, that his helm smote in the earth, and nigh had broken his neck. And therewithal Sir Gaheris alighted, and gat up Sir Kay. And then they yode both on foot to them, and bade them yield them, and tell their names outhere they should die. Then with great pain Sir Andred spake first, and said: It is King Mark of Cornwall, therefore be ye ware what ye do, and I am Sir Andred, his cousin. Fie on you both, said Sir Gaheris, for a false traitor, and false treason hast thou wrought and he both, under the feigned cheer that ye made us! it were pity, said Sir Gaheris, that thou shouldst live any longer. Save my life, said King Mark, and I will make amends; and consider that I am a king anointed. It were the more shame, said Sir Gaheris, to save thy life; thou art a king anointed with cream, and therefore thou shouldst hold with all men of worship; and therefore thou art worthy to die. With that he lashed at King Mark without saying any more, and covered him with his shield and defended him as he might. And then Sir Kay lashed at Sir Andred, and therewithal King Mark yielded him unto Sir Gaheris. And then he kneeled adown, and made his oath upon the cross of the sword, that never while he lived he would be against errant-knights. And

also he sware to be good friend unto Sir Tristram if ever he came into Cornwall.

By then Sir Andred was on the earth, and Sir Kay would have slain him. Let be, said Sir Gaheris, slay him not I pray you. It were pity, said Sir Kay, that he should live any longer, for this is nigh cousin unto Sir Tristram, and ever he hath been a traitor unto him, and by him he was exiled out of Cornwall, and therefore I will slay him, said Sir Kay. Ye shall not, said Sir Gaheris; sithen I have given the king his life, I pray you give him his life. And therewithal Sir Kay let him go. And so Sir Kay and Sir Gaheris rode their way unto Dinas, the Seneschal, for because they heard say that he loved well Sir Tristram. So they reposed them there, and soon after they rode unto the realm of Logris. And so within a little while they met with Sir Launcelot that always had Dame Bragwaine with him, to that intent he weened to have met the sooner with Sir Tristram; and Sir Launcelot asked what tidings in Cornwall, and whether they heard of Sir Tristram or not. Sir Kay and Sir Gaheris answered and said, that they heard not of him. Then they told Sir Launcelot word by word of their adventure. Then Sir Launcelot smiled and said: Hard it is to take out of the flesh that is bred in the bone; and so made them merry together.

#### **CHAPTER XL. How after that Sir Tristram, Sir Palomides, and Sir Dinadan had been long in prison they were delivered.**

NOW leave we off this tale, and speak we of sir Dinas that had within the castle a paramour, and she loved another knight better than him. And so when sir Dinas went out a-hunting she slipped down by a towel, and took with her two brachets, and so she yede to the knight that she loved, and he her again. And when sir Dinas came home and missed his paramour and his brachets, then was he the more wrother for his brachets than for the lady. So then he rode after the knight that had his paramour, and bade him turn and joust. So sir Dinas smote him down, that with the fall he brake his leg and his arm. And then his lady and paramour cried sir Dinas mercy, and said she would love him better than ever she did. Nay, said sir Dinas, I shall never trust them that once betrayed me, and therefore, as ye have begun, so end, for I will never meddle with you. And so sir Dinas departed, and took his brachets with him, and so rode to his castle.

Now will we turn unto sir Launcelot, that was right heavy that he could never hear no tidings of sir Tristram, for all this while he was in prison with sir Darras, Palomides, and Dinadan. Then Dame Bragwaine took her leave to go into Cornwall, and sir Launcelot, sir Kay, and sir Gaheris rode to seek sir Tristram in the country of Surluse.

Now speaketh this tale of sir Tristram and of his two fellows, for every day sir Palomides brawled and said language against sir Tristram. I marvel, said sir

Dinadan, of thee, sir Palomides, an thou haddest sir Tristram here thou wouldst do him no harm; for an a wolf and a sheep were together in a prison the wolf would suffer the sheep to be in peace. And wit thou well, said sir Dinadan, this same is sir Tristram at a word, and now must thou do thy best with him, and let see now if ye can skift it with your hands. Then was sir Palomides abashed and said little. Sir Palomides, then said sir Tristram, I have heard much of your maugre against me, but I will not meddle with you as at this time by my will, because I dread the lord of this place that hath us in governance; for an I dread him not more than I do thee, soon it should be skift: so they peaced themself. Right so came in a damosel and said: Knights, be of good cheer, for ye are sure of your lives, and that I heard say my lord, Sir Darras. Then were they glad all three, for daily they weened they should have died.

Then soon after this Sir Tristram fell sick that he weened to have died; then Sir Dinadan wept, and so did Sir Palomides under them both making great sorrow. So a damosel came in to them and found them mourning. Then she went unto Sir Darras, and told him how that mighty knight that bare the black shield was likely to die. That shall not be, said Sir Darras, for God defend when knights come to me for succour that I should suffer them to die within my prison. Therefore, said Sir Darras to the damosel, fetch that knight and his fellows afore me. And then anon Sir Darras saw Sir Tristram brought afore him. He said: Sir knight, me repenteth of thy sickness for thou art called a full noble knight, and so it seemeth by thee; and wit ye well it shall never be said that Sir Darras shall destroy such a noble knight as thou art in prison, howbeit that thou hast slain three of my sons whereby I was greatly aggrieved. But now shalt thou go and thy fellows, and your harness and horses have been fair and clean kept, and ye shall go where it liketh you, upon this covenant, that thou, knight, wilt promise me to be good friend to my sons two that be now alive, and also that thou tell me thy name. Sir, said he, as for me my name is Sir Tristram de Liones, and in Cornwall was I born, and nephew I am unto King Mark. And as for the death of your sons I might not do withal, for an they had been the next kin that I have I might have done none otherwise. And if I had slain them by treason or treachery I had been worthy to have died. All this I consider, said Sir Darras, that all that ye did was by force of knighthood, and that was the cause I would not put you to death. But sith ye be Sir Tristram, the good knight, I pray you heartily to be my good friend and to my sons. Sir, said Sir Tristram, I promise you by the faith of my body, ever while I live I will do you service, for ye have done to us but as a natural knight ought to do. Then Sir Tristram reposed him there till that he was amended of his sickness; and when he was big and strong they took their leave, and every knight took their horses, and so departed and rode together till they came to a



cross way. Now fellows, said Sir Tristram, here will we depart in sundry ways. And because Sir Dinadan had the first adventure of him I will begin.

**CHAPTER XLI. How Sir Dinadan rescued a lady from Sir Breuse Saunce Pite, and how Sir Tristram received a shield of Morgan le Fay.**

SO as Sir Dinadan rode by a well he found a lady making great dole. What aileth you? said Sir Dinadan. Sir knight, said the lady, I am the wofullest lady of the world, for within these five days here came a knight called Sir Breuse Saunce Pite, and he slew mine own brother, and ever since he hath kept me at his own will, and of all men in the world I hate him most; and therefore I require you of knighthood to avenge me, for he will not tarry, but be here anon. Let him come, said Sir Dinadan, and because of honour of all women I will do my part. With this came Sir Breuse, and when he saw a knight with his lady he was wood wroth. And then he said: Sir knight, keep thee from me. So they hurtled together as thunder, and either smote other passing sore, but Sir Dinadan put him through the shoulder a grievous wound, and or ever Sir Dinadan might turn him Sir Breuse was gone and fled. Then the lady prayed him to bring her to a castle there beside but four mile thence; and so Sir Dinadan brought her there, and she was welcome, for the lord of that castle was her uncle; and so Sir Dinadan rode his way upon his adventure.

Now turn we this tale unto Sir Tristram, that by adventure he came to a castle to ask lodging, wherein was Queen Morgan le Fay; and so when Sir Tristram was let into that castle he had good cheer all that night. And upon the morn when he would have departed the queen said: Wit ye well ye shall not depart lightly, for ye are here as a prisoner. Jesu defend! said Sir Tristram, for I was but late a prisoner. Fair knight, said the queen, ye shall abide with me till that I wit what ye are and from whence ye come. And ever the queen would set Sir Tristram on her own side, and her paramour on the other side. And ever Queen Morgan would behold Sir Tristram, and thereat the knight was jealous, and was in will suddenly to have run upon Sir Tristram with a sword, but he left it for shame. Then the queen said to Sir Tristram: Tell me thy name, and I shall suffer you to depart when ye will. Upon that covenant I tell you my name is Sir Tristram de Liones. Ah, said Morgan le Fay, an I had wist that, thou shouldst not have departed so soon as thou shalt. But sithen I have made a promise I will hold it, with that thou wilt promise me to bear upon thee a shield that I shall deliver thee, unto the castle of the Hard Rock, where King Arthur had cried a great tournament, and there I pray you that ye will be, and to do for me as much deeds of arms as ye may do. For at the Castle of Maidens, Sir Tristram, ye did marvellous deeds of arms as ever I heard knight do. Madam, said Sir Tristram,

let me see the shield that I shall bear. Then the shield was brought forth, and the field was goldish, with a king and a queen therein painted, and a knight standing above them, [one foot] upon the king's head, and the other upon the queen's. Madam, said Sir Tristram, this is a fair shield and a mighty; but what signifieth this king and this queen, and the knight standing upon both their heads? I shall tell you, said Morgan le Fay, it signifieth King Arthur and Queen Guenever, and a knight who holdeth them both in bondage and in servage. Who is that knight? said Sir Tristram. That shall ye not wit as at this time, said the queen. But as the French book saith, Queen Morgan loved Sir Launcelot best, and ever she desired him, and he would never love her nor do nothing at her request, and therefore she held many knights together for to have taken him by strength. And because she deemed that Sir Launcelot loved Queen Guenever paramour, and she him again, therefore Queen Morgan le Fay ordained that shield to put Sir Launcelot to a rebuke, to that intent that King Arthur might understand the love between them. Then Sir Tristram took that shield and promised her to bear it at the tournament at the Castle of the Hard Rock. But Sir Tristram knew not that that shield was ordained against Sir Launcelot, but afterward he knew it.

#### **CHAPTER XLII. How Sir Tristram took with him the shield, and also how he slew the paramour of Morgan le Fay.**

SO then Sir Tristram took his leave of the queen, and took the shield with him. Then came the knight that held Queen Morgan le Fay, his name was Sir Hemison, and he made him ready to follow Sir Tristram. Fair friend, said Morgan, ride not after that knight, for ye shall not win no worship of him. Fie on him, coward, said Sir Hemison, for I wist never good knight come out of Cornwall but if it were Sir Tristram de Lionnes. What an that be he? said she. Nay, nay, said he, he is with La Beale Isoud, and this is but a daffish knight. Alas, my fair friend, ye shall find him the best knight that ever ye met withal, for I know him better than ye do. For your sake, said Sir Hemison, I shall slay him. Ah, fair friend, said the queen, me repenteth that ye will follow that knight, for I fear me sore of your again coming. With this this knight rode his way wood wroth, and he rode after Sir Tristram as fast as he had been chased with knights. When Sir Tristram heard a knight come after him so fast he returned about, and saw a knight coming against him. And when he came nigh to Sir Tristram he cried on high: Sir knight, keep thee from me. Then they rushed together as it had been thunder, and Sir Hemison brised his spear upon Sir Tristram, but his harness was so good that he might not hurt him. And Sir Tristram smote him harder, and bare him through the body, and he fell over his horse's croup. Then Sir Tristram turned to have done more with his sword, but he saw so much blood

go from him that him seemed he was likely to die, and so he departed from him and came to a fair manor to an old knight, and there Sir Tristram lodged.

#### **CHAPTER XLIII. How Morgan le Fay buried her paramour, and how Sir Tristram praised Sir Launcelot and his kin.**

NOW leave to speak of Sir Tristram, and speak we of the knight that was wounded to the death. Then his varlet alighted, and took off his helm, and then he asked his lord whether there were any life in him. There is in me life said the knight, but it is but little; and therefore leap thou up behind me when thou hast holpen me up, and hold me fast that I fall not, and bring me to Queen Morgan le Fay; for deep draughts of death draw to my heart that I may not live, for I would fain speak with her or I died: for else my soul will be in great peril an I die. For[thwith] with great pain his varlet brought him to the castle, and there Sir Hemison fell down dead. When Morgan le Fay saw him dead she made great sorrow out of reason; and then she let despoil him unto his shirt, and so she let him put into a tomb. And about the tomb she let write: Here lieth Sir Hemison, slain by the hands of Sir Tristram de Liones.

Now turn we unto Sir Tristram, that asked the knight his host if he saw late any knights adventurous. Sir, he said, the last night here lodged with me Ector de Maris and a damosel with him, and that damosel told me that he was one of the best knights of the world. That is not so, said Sir Tristram, for I know four better knights of his own blood, and the first is Sir Launcelot du Lake, call him the best knight, and Sir Bors de Ganis, Sir Bleoberis, Sir Blamore de Ganis, and Sir Gaheris. Nay, said his host, Sir Gawaine is a better knight than he. That is not so, said Sir Tristram, for I have met with them both, and I felt Sir Gaheris for the better knight, and Sir Lamorak I call him as good as any of them except Sir Launcelot. Why name ye not Sir Tristram? said his host, for I account him as good as any of them. I know not Sir Tristram, said Tristram. Thus they talked and bourded as long as them list, and then went to rest. And on the morn Sir Tristram departed, and took his leave of his host, and rode toward the Roche Dure, and none adventure had Sir Tristram but that; and so he rested not till he came to the castle, where he saw five hundred tents.

#### **CHAPTER XLIV. How Sir Tristram at a tournament bare the shield that Morgan le Fay delivered to him.**

THEN the King of Scots and the King of Ireland held against King Arthur's knights, and there began a great medley. So came in Sir Tristram and did marvellous deeds of arms, for there he smote down many knights. And ever he was afore King Arthur with that shield. And when King Arthur saw that shield

he marvelled greatly in what intent it was made; but Queen Guenever deemed as it was, wherefore she was heavy. Then was there a damosel of Queen Morgan in a chamber by King Arthur, and when she heard King Arthur speak of that shield, then she spake openly unto King Arthur. Sir King, wit ye well this shield was ordained for you, to warn you of your shame and dishonour, and that longeth to you and your queen. And then anon that damosel picked her away privily, that no man wist where she was become. Then was King Arthur sad and wroth, and asked from whence came that damosel. There was not one that knew her nor wist where she was become. Then Queen Guenever called to her Sir Ector de Maris, and there she made her complaint to him, and said: I wot well this shield was made by Morgan le Fay in despite of me and of Sir Launcelot, wherefore I dread me sore lest I should be destroyed. And ever the king beheld Sir Tristram, that did so marvellous deeds of arms that he wondered sore what knight he might be, and well he wist it was not Sir Launcelot. And it was told him that Sir Tristram was in Petit Britain with Isoud la Blanche Mains, for he deemed, an he had been in the realm of Logris, Sir Launcelot or some of his fellows that were in the quest of Sir Tristram that they should have found him or that time. So King Arthur had marvel what knight he might be. And ever Sir Arthur's eye was on that shield. All that espied the queen, and that made her sore afeard.

Then ever Sir Tristram smote down knights wonderly to behold, what upon the right hand and upon the left hand, that unnethe no knight might withstand him. And the King of Scots and the King of Ireland began to withdraw them. When Arthur espied that, he thought that that knight with the strange shield should not escape him. Then he called unto him Sir Uwaine le Blanche Mains, and bade him arm him and make him ready. So anon King Arthur and Sir Uwaine dressed them before Sir Tristram, and required him to tell them where he had that shield. Sir, he said, I had it of Queen Morgan le Fay, sister unto King Arthur.

So here endeth this history of this book, for it is the first book of Sir Tristram de Liones and the second book of Sir Tristram followeth.

## BOOK X

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### **CHAPTER I. How Sir Tristram jousted, and smote down King Arthur, because he told him not the cause why he bare that shield.**

AND if so be ye can describe what ye bear, ye are worthy to bear the arms. As for that, said Sir Tristram, I will answer you; this shield was given me, not desired, of Queen Morgan le Fay; and as for me, I can not describe these arms, for it is no point of my charge, and yet I trust to God to bear them with worship. Truly, said King Arthur, ye ought not to bear none arms but if ye wist what ye bear: but I pray you tell me your name. To what intent? said Sir Tristram. For I would wit, said Arthur. Sir, ye shall not wit as at this time. Then shall ye and I do battle together, said King Arthur. Why, said Sir Tristram, will ye do battle with me but if I tell you my name? and that little needeth you an ye were a man of worship, for ye have seen me this day have had great travail, and therefore ye are a villainous knight to ask battle of me, considering my great travail; howbeit I will not fail you, and have ye no doubt that I fear not you; though you think you have me at a great advantage yet shall I right well endure you. And there withal King Arthur dressed his shield and his spear, and Sir Tristram against him, and they came so eagerly together. And there King Arthur brake his spear all to pieces upon Sir Tristram's shield. But Sir Tristram hit Arthur again, that horse and man fell to the earth. And there was King Arthur wounded on the left side, a great wound and a perilous.

Then when Sir Uwaine saw his lord Arthur lie on the ground sore wounded, he was passing heavy. And then he dressed his shield and his spear, and cried aloud unto Sir Tristram and said: Knight, defend thee. So they came together as thunder, and Sir Uwaine brised his spear all to pieces upon Sir Tristram's shield, and Sir Tristram smote him harder and sorer, with such a might that he bare him clean out of his saddle to the earth. With that Sir Tristram turned about and said: Fair knights, I had no need to joust with you, for I have had enough to do this day. Then arose Arthur and went to Sir Uwaine, and said to Sir Tristram: We have as we have deserved, for through our orgulyt we demanded battle of you, and yet we knew not your name. Nevertheless, by Saint Cross, said Sir Uwaine, he is a strong knight at mine advice as any is now living.

Then Sir Tristram departed, and in every place he asked and demanded after Sir Launcelot, but in no place he could not hear of him whether he were dead or alive; wherefore Sir Tristram made great dole and sorrow. So Sir Tristram rode by a forest, and then was he ware of a fair tower by a marsh on that one side, and on that other side a fair meadow. And there he saw ten knights fighting together. And ever the nearer he came he saw how there was but one knight did battle against nine knights, and that one did so marvellously that Sir Tristram had great wonder that ever one knight might do so great deeds of arms. And then within a little while he had slain half their horses and unhorsed them, and their horses ran in the fields and forest. Then Sir Tristram had so great pity of that one knight that endured so great pain, and ever he thought it should be Sir Palomides, by his shield. And so he rode unto the knights and cried unto them, and bade them cease of their battle, for they did themselves great shame so many knights to fight with one. Then answered the master of those knights, his name was called Breuse Saunce PitÃ©, that was at that time the most mischievous knight living, and said thus: Sir knight, what have ye ado with us to meddle? and therefore, an ye be wise, depart on your way as ye came, for this knight shall not escape us. That were pity, said Sir Tristram, that so good a knight as he is should be slain so cowardly; and therefore I warn you I will succour him with all my puissance.

## **CHAPTER II. How Sir Tristram saved Sir Palomides' life, and how they promised to fight together within a fortnight.**

So Sir Tristram alighted off his horse because they were on foot, that they should not slay his horse, and then dressed his shield, with his sword in his hand, and he smote on the right hand and on the left hand passing sore, that well-nigh at every stroke he struck down a knight. And when they espied his strokes they fled all with Breuse Saunce PitÃ© unto the tower, and Sir Tristram followed fast after with his sword in his hand, but they escaped into the tower, and shut Sir Tristram without the gate. And when Sir Tristram saw this he returned aback unto Sir Palomides, and found him sitting under a tree sore wounded. Ah, fair knight, said Sir Tristram, well be ye found. Gramercy, said Sir Palomides, of your great goodness, for ye have rescued me of my life, and saved me from my death. What is your name? said Sir Tristram. He said: My name is Sir Palomides. O Jesu, said Sir Tristram, thou hast a fair grace of me this day that I should rescue thee, and thou art the man in the world that I most hate; but now make thee ready, for I will do battle with thee. What is your name? said Sir Palomides. My name is Sir Tristram, your mortal enemy. It may be so, said Sir Palomides; but ye have done over much for me this day that I should fight with you; for inasmuch as ye have saved my life it will be no worship for you to have

ado with me, for ye are fresh and I am wounded sore, and therefore, an ye will needs have ado with me, assign me a day and then I shall meet with you without fail. Ye say well, said Sir Tristram, now I assign you to meet me in the meadow by the river of Camelot, where Merlin set the peron. So they were agreed.

Then Sir Tristram asked Sir Palomides why the ten knights did battle with him. For this cause, said Sir Palomides; as I rode upon mine adventures in a forest here beside I espied where lay a dead knight, and a lady weeping beside him. And when I saw her making such dole, I asked her who slew her lord. Sir, she said, the falsest knight of the world now living, and he is the most villain that ever man heard speak of and his name is Sir Breuse Saunce PitÃ©. Then for pity I made the damosel to leap on her palfrey, and I promised her to be her warrant, and to help her to inter her lord. And so, suddenly, as I came riding by this tower, there came out Sir Breuse Saunce PitÃ©, and suddenly he struck me from my horse. And then or I might recover my horse this Sir Breuse slew the damosel. And so I took my horse again, and I was sore ashamed, and so began the medley betwixt us: and this is the cause wherefore we did this battle. Well, said Sir Tristram, now I understand the manner of your battle, but in any wise have remembrance of your promise that ye have made with me to do battle with me this day fortnight. I shall not fail you, said Sir Palomides. Well, said Sir Tristram, as at this time I will not fail you till that ye be out of the danger of your enemies.

So they mounted upon their horses, and rode together unto that forest, and there they found a fair well, with clear water bubbling. Fair sir, said Sir Tristram, to drink of that water have I courage; and then they alighted off their horses. And then were they ware by them where stood a great horse tied to a tree, and ever he neighed. And then were they ware of a fair knight armed, under a tree, lacking no piece of harness, save his helm lay under his head. By the good lord, said Sir Tristram, yonder lieth a well-faring knight; what is best to do? Awake him, said Sir Palomides. So Sir Tristram awaked him with the butt of his spear. And so the knight rose up hastily and put his helm upon his head, and gat a great spear in his hand; and without any more words he hurled unto Sir Tristram, and smote him clean from his saddle to the earth, and hurt him on the left side, that Sir Tristram lay in great peril. Then he walloped farther, and fetched his course, and came hurling upon Sir Palomides, and there he struck him a part through the body, that he fell from his horse to the earth. And then this strange knight left them there, and took his way through the forest. With this Sir Palomides and Sir Tristram were on foot, and gat their horses again, and either asked counsel of other, what was best to do. By my head, said Sir Tristram, I will follow this strong knight that thus hath shamed us. Well, said Sir Palomides, and I will repose me hereby

with a friend of mine. Beware, said Sir Tristram unto Palomides, that ye fail not that day that ye have set with me to do battle, for, as I deem, ye will not hold your day, for I am much bigger than ye. As for that, said Sir Palomides, be it as it be may, for I fear you not, for an I be not sick nor prisoner, I will not fail you; but I have cause to have more doubt of you that ye will not meet with me, for ye ride after yonder strong knight. And if ye meet with him it is an hard adventure an ever ye escape his hands. Right so Sir Tristram and Sir Palomides departed, and either took their ways diverse.

### **CHAPTER III**



## **How Sir Tristram sought a strong knight that had smitten him down, and many other knights of the Round Table.**

AND so Sir Tristram rode long after this strong knight. And at the last he saw where lay a lady overthwart a dead knight. Fair lady, said Sir Tristram, who hath slain your lord? Sir, she said, here came a knight riding, as my lord and I rested us here, and asked him of whence he was, and my lord said of Arthur's court. Therefore, said the strong knight, I will joust with thee, for I hate all these that be of Arthur's court. And my lord that lieth here dead amounted upon his horse, and the strong knight and my lord encountered together, and there he smote my lord throughout with his spear, and thus he hath brought me in great woe and damage. That me repenteth, said Sir Tristram, of your great anger; an it please you tell me your husband's name. Sir, said she, his name was Galardoun, that would have proved a good knight. So departed Sir Tristram from that dolorous lady, and had much evil lodging. Then on the third day Sir Tristram met with Sir Gawaine and with Sir Bleoberis in a forest at a lodge, and either were sore wounded. Then Sir Tristram asked Sir Gawaine and Sir Bleoberis if they met with such a knight, with such a cognisance, with a covered shield. Fair sir, said these knights, such a knight met with us to our great damage. And first he smote down my fellow, Sir Bleoberis, and sore wounded him because he bade me I should not have ado with him, for why he was overstrong for me. That strong knight took his words at scorn, and said he said it for mockery. And then they rode together, and so he hurt my fellow. And when he had done so I might not for shame but I must joust with him. And at the first course he smote me down and my horse to the earth. And there he had almost slain me, and from us he took his horse and departed, and in an evil time we met with him. Fair knights, said Sir Tristram, so he met with me, and with another knight that hight Palomides, and he smote us both down with one spear, and hurt us right sore. By my faith, said Sir Gawaine, by my counsel ye shall let him pass and seek him no further; for at the next feast of the Round Table, upon pain of my head ye shall find him there. By my faith, said Sir Tristram, I shall never rest till that I find him. And then Sir Gawaine asked him his name. Then he said: My name is Sir Tristram. And so either told other their names, and then departed Sir Tristram and rode his way.

And by fortune in a meadow Sir Tristram met with Sir Kay, the Seneschal,

and Sir Dinadan. What tidings with you, said Sir Tristram, with you knights? Not good, said these knights. Why so? said Sir Tristram; I pray you tell me, for I ride to seek a knight. What cognisance beareth he? said Sir Kay. He beareth, said Sir Tristram, a covered shield close with cloth. By my head, said Sir Kay, that is the same knight that met with us, for this night we were lodged within a widow's house, and there was that knight lodged; and when he wist we were of Arthur's court he spoke great villainy by the king, and specially by the Queen Guenever, and then on the morn was waged battle with him for that cause. And at the first recounter, said Sir Kay, he smote me down from my horse and hurt me passing sore; and when my fellow, Sir Dinadan, saw me smitten down and hurt he would not revenge me, but fled from me; and thus he departed. And then Sir Tristram asked them their names, and so either told other their names. And so Sir Tristram departed from Sir Kay, and from Sir Dinadan, and so he passed through a great forest into a plain, till he was ware of a priory, and there he reposed him with a good man six days.

#### **CHAPTER IV. How Sir Tristram smote down Sir Sagramore le Desirous and Sir Dodinas le Savage.**

AND then he sent his man that hight Gouvernail, and commanded him to go to a city thereby to fetch him new harness; for it was long time afore that that Sir Tristram had been refreshed, his harness was brised and broken. And when Gouvernail, his servant, was come with his apparel, he took his leave at the widow, and mounted upon his horse, and rode his way early on the morn. And by sudden adventure Sir Tristram met with Sir Sagramore le Desirous, and with Sir Dodinas le Savage. And these two knights met with Sir Tristram and questioned with him, and asked him if he would joust with them. Fair knights, said Sir Tristram, with a good will I would joust with you, but I have promised at a day set, near hand, to do battle with a strong knight; and therefore I am loath to have ado with you, for an it misfortuned me here to be hurt I should not be able to do my battle which I promised. As for that, said Sagramore, maugre your head, ye shall joust with us or ye pass from us. Well, said Sir Tristram, if ye enforce me thereto I must do what I may. And then they dressed their shields, and came running together with great ire. But through Sir Tristram's great force he struck Sir Sagramore from his horse. Then he hurled his horse farther, and said to Sir Dodinas: Knight, make thee ready; and so through fine force Sir Tristram struck Dodinas from his horse. And when he saw them lie on the earth he took his bridle, and rode forth on his way, and his man Gouvernail with him.

Anon as Sir Tristram was passed, Sir Sagramore and Sir Dodinas gat again their horses, and mounted up lightly and followed after Sir Tristram. And when

Sir Tristram saw them come so fast after him he returned with his horse to them, and asked them what they would. It is not long ago sithen I smote you to the earth at your own request and desire: I would have ridden by you, but ye would not suffer me, and now meseemeth ye would do more battle with me. That is truth, said Sir Sagramore and Sir Dodinas, for we will be revenged of the despite ye have done to us. Fair knights, said Sir Tristram, that shall little need you, for all that I did to you ye caused it; wherefore I require you of your knighthood leave me as at this time, for I am sure an I do battle with you I shall not escape without great hurts, and as I suppose ye shall not escape all lotless. And this is the cause why I am so loath to have ado with you; for I must fight within these three days with a good knight, and as valiant as any is now living, and if I be hurt I shall not be able to do battle with him. What knight is that, said Sir Sagramore, that ye shall fight withal? Sirs, said he, it is a good knight called Sir Palomides. By my head, said Sir Sagramore and Sir Dodinas, ye have cause to dread him, for ye shall find him a passing good knight, and a valiant. And because ye shall have ado with him we will forbear you as at this time, and else ye should not escape us lightly. But, fair knight, said Sir Sagramore, tell us your name. Sir, said he, my name is Sir Tristram de Lioness. Ah, said Sagramore and Sir Dodinas, well be ye found, for much worship have we heard of you. And then either took leave of other, and departed on their way.

#### **CHAPTER V. How Sir Tristram met at the peron with Sir Launcelot, and how they fought together unknown.**

THEN departed Sir Tristram and rode straight unto Camelot, to the peron that Merlin had made to-fore, where Sir Lanceor, that was the king's son of Ireland, was slain by the hands of Balin. And in that same place was the fair lady Colombe slain, that was love unto Sir Lanceor; for after he was dead she took his sword and thrust it through her body. And by the craft of Merlin he made to inter this knight, Lanceor, and his lady, Colombe, under one stone. And at that time Merlin prophesied that in that same place should fight two the best knights that ever were in Arthur's days, and the best lovers. So when Sir Tristram came to the tomb where Lanceor and his lady were buried he looked about him after Sir Palomides. Then was he ware of a seemly knight came riding against him all in white, with a covered shield. When he came nigh Sir Tristram he said on high: Ye be welcome, sir knight, and well and truly have ye holden your promise. And then they dressed their shields and spears, and came together with all their might of their horses; and they met so fiercely that both their horses and knights fell to the earth, and as fast as they might avoided their horses, and put their shields afore them; and they struck together with bright swords, as men that were of

might, and either wounded other wonderly sore, that the blood ran out upon the grass. And thus they fought the space of four hours, that never one would speak to other one word, and of their harness they had hewn off many pieces. O Lord Jesu, said Gouvernail, I marvel greatly of the strokes my master hath given to your master. By my head, said Sir Launcelot's servant, your master hath not given so many but your master has received as many or more. O Jesu, said Gouvernail, it is too much for Sir Palomides to suffer or Sir Launcelot, and yet pity it were that either of these good knights should destroy other's blood. So they stood and wept both, and made great dole when they saw the bright swords over-covered with blood of their bodies.

Then at the last spake Sir Launcelot and said: Knight, thou fightest wonderly well as ever I saw knight, therefore, an it please you, tell me your name. Sir, said Sir Tristram, that is me loath to tell any man my name. Truly, said Sir Launcelot, an I were required I was never loath to tell my name. It is well said, said Sir Tristram, then I require you to tell me your name? Fair knight, he said, my name is Sir Launcelot du Lake. Alas, said Sir Tristram, what have I done! for ye are the man in the world that I love best. Fair knight, said Sir Launcelot, tell me your name? Truly, said he, my name is Sir Tristram de Liones. O Jesu, said Sir Launcelot, what adventure is befallen me! And therewith Sir Launcelot kneeled down and yielded him up his sword. And therewith Sir Tristram kneeled adown, and yielded him up his sword. And so either gave other the degree. And then they both forthwithal went to the stone, and set them down upon it, and took off their helms to cool them, and either kissed other an hundred times. And then anon after they took off their helms and rode to Camelot. And there they met with Sir Gawaine and with Sir Gaheris that had made promise to Arthur never to come again to the court till they had brought Sir Tristram with them.

## **CHAPTER VI. How Sir Launcelot brought Sir Tristram to the court, and of the great joy that the king and other made for the coming of Sir Tristram.**

RETURN again, said Sir Launcelot, for your quest is done, for I have met with Sir Tristram: lo, here is his own person! Then was Sir Gawaine glad, and said to Sir Tristram: Ye are welcome, for now have ye eased me greatly of my labour. For what cause, said Sir Gawaine, came ye into this court? Fair sir, said Sir Tristram, I came into this country because of Sir Palomides; for he and I had assigned at this day to have done battle together at the peron, and I marvel I hear not of him. And thus by adventure my lord, Sir Launcelot, and I met together. With this came King Arthur, and when he wist that there was Sir Tristram, then he ran unto him and took him by the hand and said: Sir Tristram, ye are as

welcome as any knight that ever came to this court. And when the king had heard how Sir Launcelot and he had foughten, and either had wounded other wonderly sore, then the king made great dole. Then Sir Tristram told the king how he came thither for to have had ado with Sir Palomides. And then he told the king how he had rescued him from the nine knights and Breuse Saunce PitÃ©; and how he found a knight lying by a well, and that knight smote down Sir Palomides and me, but his shield was covered with a cloth. So Sir Palomides left me, and I followed after that knight; and in many places I found where he had slain knights, and forjousted many. By my head, said Sir Gawaine, that same knight smote me down and Sir Bleoberis, and hurt us sore both, he with the covered shield. Ah, said Sir Kay, that knight smote me adown and hurt me passing sore, and fain would I have known him, but I might not. Jesu, mercy, said Arthur, what knight was that with the covered shield? I know not, said Sir Tristram; and so said they all. Now, said King Arthur, then wot I, for it is Sir Launcelot. Then they all looked upon Sir Launcelot and said: Ye have beguiled us with your covered shield. It is not the first time, said Arthur, he hath done so. My lord, said Sir Launcelot, truly wit ye well I was the same knight that bare the covered shield; and because I would not be known that I was of your court I said no worship of your house. That is truth, said Sir Gawaine, Sir Kay, and Sir Bleoberis.

Then King Arthur took Sir Tristram by the hand and went to the Table Round. Then came Queen Guenever and many ladies with her, and all the ladies said at one voice: Welcome, Sir Tristram! Welcome, said the damosels. Welcome, said knights. Welcome, said Arthur, for one of the best knights, and the gentlest of the world, and the man of most worship; for of all manner of hunting thou bearest the prize, and of all measures of blowing thou art the beginning, and of all the terms of hunting and hawking ye are the beginner, of all instruments of music ye are the best; therefore, gentle knight, said Arthur, ye are welcome to this court. And also, I pray you, said Arthur, grant me a boon. It shall be at your commandment, said Tristram. Well, said Arthur, I will desire of you that ye will abide in my court. Sir, said Sir Tristram, thereto is me loath, for I have ado in many countries. Not so, said Arthur, ye have promised it me, ye may not say nay. Sir, said Sir Tristram, I will as ye will. Then went Arthur unto the sieges about the Round Table, and looked in every siege the which were void that lacked knights. And then the king saw in the siege of Marhaus letters that said: This is the siege of the noble knight, Sir Tristram. And then Arthur made Sir Tristram Knight of the Table Round, with great nobley and great feast as might be thought. For Sir Marhaus was slain afore by the hands of Sir Tristram in an island; and that was well known at that time in the court of Arthur, for this

Marhaus was a worthy knight. And for evil deeds that he did unto the country of Cornwall Sir Tristram and he fought. And they fought so long, tracing and traversing, till they fell bleeding to the earth; for they were so sore wounded that they might not stand for bleeding. And Sir Tristram by fortune recovered, and Sir Marhaus died through the stroke on the head. So leave we of Sir Tristram and speak we of King Mark.

**CHAPTER VII. How for the despite of Sir Tristram King Mark came with two knights into England, and how he slew one of the knights.**

THEN King Mark had great despite of the renown of Sir Tristram, and then he chased him out of Cornwall: yet was he nephew unto King Mark, but he had great suspicion unto Sir Tristram because of his queen, La Beale Isoud; for him seemed that there was too much love between them both. So when Sir Tristram departed out of Cornwall into England King Mark heard of the great prowess that Sir Tristram did there, the which grieved him sore. So he sent on his part men to espy what deeds he did. And the queen sent privily on her part spies to know what deeds he had done, for great love was between them twain. So when the messengers were come home they told the truth as they had heard, that he passed all other knights but if it were Sir Launcelot. Then King Mark was right heavy of these tidings, and as glad was La Beale Isoud. Then in great despite he took with him two good knights and two squires, and disguised himself, and took his way into England, to the intent for to slay Sir Tristram. And one of these two knights hight Bersules, and the other knight was called Amant. So as they rode King Mark asked a knight that he met, where he should find King Arthur. He said: At Camelot. Also he asked that knight after Sir Tristram, whether he heard of him in the court of King Arthur. Wit you well, said that knight, ye shall find Sir Tristram there for a man of as great worship as is now living; for through his prowess he won the tournament of the Castle of Maidens that standeth by the Hard Rock. And sithen he hath won with his own hands thirty knights that were men of great honour. And the last battle that ever he did he fought with Sir Launcelot; and that was a marvellous battle. And not by force Sir Launcelot brought Sir Tristram to the court, and of him King Arthur made passing great joy, and so made him Knight of the Table Round; and his seat was where the good knight's, Sir Marhaus, seat was. Then was King Mark passing sorry when he heard of the honour of Sir Tristram; and so they departed.

Then said King Mark unto his two knights: Now will I tell you my counsel: ye are the men that I trust most to alive, and I will that ye wit my coming hither is to this intent, for to destroy Sir Tristram by wiles or by treason; and it shall be hard if ever he escape our hands. Alas, said Sir Bersules, what mean you? for ye

be set in such a way ye are disposed shamefully; for Sir Tristram is the knight of most worship that we know living, and therefore I warn you plainly I will never consent to do him to the death; and therefore I will yield my service, and forsake you. When King Mark heard him say so, suddenly he drew his sword and said: Ah, traitor; and smote Sir Bersules on the head, that the sword went to his teeth. When Amant, the knight, saw him do that villainous deed, and his squires, they said it was foul done, and mischievously: Wherefore we will do thee no more service, and wit ye well, we will appeach thee of treason afore Arthur. Then was King Mark wonderly wroth and would have slain Amant; but he and the two squires held them together, and set nought by his malice. When King Mark saw he might not be revenged on them, he said thus unto the knight, Amant: Wit thou well, an thou appeach me of treason I shall thereof defend me afore King Arthur; but I require thee that thou tell not my name, that I am King Mark, whatsoever come of me. As for that, said Sir Amant, I will not discover your name; and so they departed, and Amant and his fellows took the body of Bersules and buried it.

#### **CHAPTER VIII. How King Mark came to a fountain where he found Sir Lamorak complaining for the love of King Lot's wife.**

THEN King Mark rode till he came to a fountain, and there he rested him, and stood in a doubt whether he would ride to Arthur's court or none, or return again to his country. And as he thus rested him by that fountain there came by him a knight well armed on horseback; and he alighted, and tied his horse until a tree, and set him down by the brink of the fountain; and there he made great languor and dole, and made the dolefullest complaint of love that ever man heard; and all this while was he not ware of King Mark. And this was a great part of his complaint: he cried and wept, saying: O fair Queen of Orkney, King Lot's wife, and mother of Sir Gawaine, and to Sir Gaheris, and mother to many other, for thy love I am in great pains. Then King Mark arose and went near him and said: Fair knight, ye have made a piteous complaint. Truly, said the knight, it is an hundred part more ruefuller than my heart can utter. I require you, said King Mark, tell me your name. Sir, said he, as for my name I will not hide it from no knight that beareth a shield, and my name is Sir Lamorak de Galis. But when Sir Lamorak heard King Mark speak, then wist he well by his speech that he was a Cornish knight. Sir, said Sir Lamorak, I understand by your tongue ye be of Cornwall, wherein there dwelleth the shamefullest king that is now living, for he is a great enemy to all good knights; and that proveth well, for he hath chased out of that country Sir Tristram, that is the worshipfullest knight that now is living, and all knights speak of him worship; and for jealousy of his queen

he hath chased him out of his country. It is pity, said Sir Lamorak, that ever any such false knight-coward as King Mark is, should be matched with such a fair lady and good as La Beale Isoud is, for all the world of him speaketh shame, and of her worship that any queen may have. I have not ado in this matter, said King Mark, neither nought will I speak thereof. Well said, said Sir Lamorak. Sir, can ye tell me any tidings? I can tell you, said Sir Lamorak, that there shall be a great tournament in haste beside Camelot, at the Castle of Jagent; and the King with the Hundred Knights and the King of Ireland, as I suppose, make that tournament.

Then there came a knight that was called Sir Dinadan, and saluted them both. And when he wist that King Mark was a knight of Cornwall he reprov'd him for the love of King Mark a thousand fold more than did Sir Lamorak. Then he proffered to joust with King Mark. And he was full loath thereto, but Sir Dinadan edged him so, that he joust'd with Sir Lamorak. And Sir Lamorak smote King Mark so sore that he bare him on his spear end over his horse's tail. And then King Mark arose again, and followed after Sir Lamorak. But Sir Dinadan would not joust with Sir Lamorak, but he told King Mark that Sir Lamorak was Sir Kay, the Seneschal. That is not so, said King Mark, for he is much bigger than Sir Kay; and so he followed and overtook him, and bade him abide. What will you do? said Sir Lamorak. Sir, he said, I will fight with a sword, for ye have shamed me with a spear; and therewith they dashed together with swords, and Sir Lamorak suffered him and forbore him. And King Mark was passing hasty, and smote thick strokes. Sir Lamorak saw he would not stint, and waxed somewhat wroth, and doubled his strokes, for he was one of the noblest knights of the world; and he beat him so on the helm that his head hung nigh on the saddle bow. When Sir Lamorak saw him fare so, he said: Sir knight, what cheer? meseemeth you have nigh your fill of fighting, it were pity to do you any more harm, for ye are but a mean knight, therefore I give you leave to go where ye list. Gramercy, said King Mark, for ye and I be not matches.

Then Sir Dinadan mocked King Mark and said: Ye are not able to match a good knight. As for that, said King Mark, at the first time I joust'd with this knight ye refused him. Think ye that it is a shame to me? said Sir Dinadan: nay, sir, it is ever worship to a knight to refuse that thing that he may not attain, therefore your worship had been much more to have refused him as I did; for I warn you plainly he is able to beat such five as ye and I be; for ye knights of Cornwall are no men of worship as other knights are. And because ye are no men of worship ye hate all men of worship, for never was bred in your country such a knight as is Sir Tristram.



**CHAPTER IX. How King Mark, Sir Lamorak, and Sir Dinadan came to a castle, and how King Mark was known there.**

THEN they rode forth all together, King Mark, Sir Lamorak, and Sir Dinadan, till that they came to a bridge, and at the end thereof stood a fair tower. Then saw they a knight on horseback well armed, brandishing a spear, crying and proffering himself to joust. Now, said Sir Dinadan unto King Mark, yonder are two brethren, that one hight Alein, and the other hight Trian, that will joust with any that passeth this passage. Now proffer yourself, said Dinadan to King Mark, for ever ye be laid to the earth. Then King Mark was ashamed, and therewith he feutred his spear, and hurtled to Sir Trian, and either brake their spears all to pieces, and passed through anon. Then Sir Trian sent King Mark another spear to joust more; but in no wise he would not joust no more. Then they came to the castle all three knights, and prayed the lord of the castle of harbour. Ye are right welcome, said the knights of the castle, for the love of the lord of this castle, the which hight Sir Tor le Fise Aries. And then they came into a fair court well repaired, and they had passing good cheer, till the lieutenant of this castle, that hight Berluse, espied King Mark of Cornwall. Then said Berluse: Sir knight, I know you better than you ween, for ye are King Mark that slew my father afore mine own eyen; and me had ye slain had I not escaped into a wood; but wit ye well, for the love of my lord of this castle I will neither hurt you nor harm you, nor none of your fellowship. But wit ye well, when ye are past this lodging I shall hurt you an I may, for ye slew my father traitorly. But first for the love of my lord, Sir Tor, and for the love of Sir Lamorak, the honourable knight that here is lodged, ye shall have none ill lodging; for it is pity that ever ye should be in the company of good knights; for ye are the most villainous knight or king that is now known alive, for ye are a destroyer of good knights, and all that ye do is but treason.

**CHAPTER X. How Sir Berluse met with King Mark, and how Sir Dinadan took his part.**

THEN was King Mark sore ashamed, and said but little again. But when Sir Lamorak and Sir Dinadan wist that he was King Mark they were sorry of his fellowship. So after supper they went to lodging. So on the morn they arose early, and King Mark and Sir Dinadan rode together; and three mile from their lodging there met with them three knights, and Sir Berluse was one, and that other his two cousins. Sir Berluse saw King Mark, and then he cried on high: Traitor, keep thee from me for wit thou well that I am Berluse. Sir knight, said Sir Dinadan, I counsel you to leave off at this time, for he is riding to King Arthur; and because I have promised to conduct him to my lord King Arthur

needs must I take a part with him; howbeit I love not his condition, and fain I would be from him. Well, Dinadan, said Sir Berluse, me repenteth that ye will take part with him, but now do your best. And then he hurtled to King Mark, and smote him sore upon the shield, that he bare him clean out of his saddle to the earth. That saw Sir Dinadan, and he feutred his spear, and ran to one of Berluse's fellows, and smote him down off his saddle. Then Dinadan turned his horse, and smote the third knight in the same wise to the earth, for Sir Dinadan was a good knight on horseback; and there began a great battle, for Berluse and his fellows held them together strongly on foot. And so through the great force of Sir Dinadan King Mark had Berluse to the earth, and his two fellows fled; and had not been Sir Dinadan King Mark would have slain him. And so Sir Dinadan rescued him of his life, for King Mark was but a murderer. And then they took their horses and departed and left Sir Berluse there sore wounded.

Then King Mark and Sir Dinadan rode forth a four leagues English, till that they came to a bridge where hove a knight on horseback, armed and ready to joust. Lo, said Sir Dinadan unto King Mark, yonder hoveth a knight that will joust, for there shall none pass this bridge but he must joust with that knight. It is well, said King Mark, for this jousts falleth with thee. Sir Dinadan knew the knight well that he was a noble knight, and fain he would have jousted, but he had had liefer King Mark had jousted with him, but by no mean King Mark would not joust. Then Sir Dinadan might not refuse him in no manner. And then either dressed their spears and their shields, and smote together, so that through fine force Sir Dinadan was smitten to the earth; and lightly he rose up and gat his horse, and required that knight to do battle with swords. And he answered and said: Fair knight, as at this time I may not have ado with you no more, for the custom of this passage is such. Then was Sir Dinadan passing wroth that he might not be revenged of that knight; and so he departed, and in no wise would that knight tell his name. But ever Sir Dinadan thought he should know him by his shield that it should be Sir Tor.

#### **CHAPTER XI. How King Mark mocked Sir Dinadan, and how they met with six knights of the Round Table.**

So as they rode by the way King Mark then began to mock Sir Dinadan, and said: I weened you knights of the Table Round might not in no wise find their matches. Ye say well, said Sir Dinadan; as for you, on my life I call you none of the best knights; but sith ye have such a despite at me I require you to joust with me to prove my strength. Not so, said King Mark, for I will not have ado with you in no manner; but I require you of one thing, that when ye come to Arthur's court discover not my name, for I am there so hated. It is shame to you, said Sir

Dinadan, that ye govern you so shamefully; for I see by you ye are full of cowardice, and ye are a murderer, and that is the greatest shame that a knight may have; for never a knight being a murderer hath worship, nor never shall have; for I saw but late through my force ye would have slain Sir Berluse, a better knight than ye, or ever ye shall be, and more of prowess. Thus they rode forth talking till they came to a fair place, where stood a knight, and prayed them to take their lodging with him. So at the request of that knight they reposed there, and made them well at ease, and had great cheer. For all errant-knights were welcome to him, and specially all those of Arthur's court. Then Sir Dinadan demanded his host what was the knight's name that kept the bridge. For what cause ask you it? said the host. For it is not long ago, said Sir Dinadan, sithen he gave me a fall. Ah, fair knight, said his host, thereof have ye no marvel, for he is a passing good knight, and his name is Sir Tor, the son of Aries le Vaysher. Ah, said Sir Dinadan, was that Sir Tor? for truly so ever me thought.

Right as they stood thus talking together they saw come riding to them over a plain six knights of the court of King Arthur, well armed at all points. And there by their shields Sir Dinadan knew them well. The first was the good knight Sir Uwaine, the son of King Uriens, the second was the noble knight Sir Brandiles, the third was Ozana le Cure Hardy, the fourth was Uwaine les Aventurous, the fifth was Sir Agravaine, the sixth Sir Mordred, brother to Sir Gawaine. When Sir Dinadan had seen these six knights he thought in himself he would bring King Mark by some wile to joust with one of them. And anon they took their horses and ran after these knights well a three mile English. Then was King Mark ware where they sat all six about a well, and ate and drank such meats as they had, and their horses walking and some tied, and their shields hung in divers places about them. Lo, said Sir Dinadan, yonder are knights-errant that will joust with us. God forbid, said King Mark, for they be six and we but two. As for that, said Sir Dinadan, let us not spare, for I will assay the foremost; and therewith he made him ready. When King Mark saw him do so, as fast as Sir Dinadan rode toward them, King Mark rode froward them with all his menial meiny. So when Sir Dinadan saw King Mark was gone, he set the spear out of the rest, and threw his shield upon his back, and came, riding to the fellowship of the Table Round. And anon Sir Uwaine knew Sir Dinadan, and welcomed him, and so did all his fellowship.

## **CHAPTER XII. How the six knights sent Sir Dagonet to joust with King Mark, and how King Mark refused him.**

AND then they asked him of his adventures, and whether he had seen Sir Tristram or Sir Launcelot. So God me help, said Sir Dinadan, I saw none of them

sithen I departed from Camelot. What knight is that, said Sir Brandiles, that so suddenly departed from you, and rode over yonder field? Sir, said he, it was a knight of Cornwall, and the most horrible coward that ever bestrode horse. What is his name? said all these knights. I wot not, said Sir Dinadan. So when they had reposed them, and spoken together, they took their horses and rode to a castle where dwelt an old knight that made all knights-errant good cheer. Then in the meanwhile that they were talking came into the castle Sir Griflet le Fise de Dieu, and there was he welcome; and they all asked him whether he had seen Sir Launcelot or Sir Tristram. Sirs, he answered, I saw him not sithen he departed from Camelot. So as Sir Dinadan walked and beheld the castle, thereby in a chamber he espied King Mark, and then he rebuked him, and asked him why he departed so. Sir, said he, for I durst not abide because they were so many. But how escaped ye? said King Mark. Sir, said Sir Dinadan, they were better friends than I weened they had been. Who is captain of that fellowship? said the king. Then for to fear him Sir Dinadan said that it was Sir Launcelot. O Jesu, said the king, might I know Sir Launcelot by his shield? Yea, said Dinadan, for he beareth a shield of silver and black bends. All this he said to fear the king, for Sir Launcelot was not in his fellowship. Now I pray you, said King Mark, that ye will ride in my fellowship. That is me loath to do, said Sir Dinadan, because ye forsook my fellowship.

Right so Sir Dinadan went from King Mark, and went to his own fellowship; and so they mounted upon their horses, and rode on their ways, and talked of the Cornish knight, for Dinadan told them that he was in the castle where they were lodged. It is well said, said Sir Griflet, for here have I brought Sir Dagonet, King Arthur's fool, that is the best fellow and the merriest in the world. Will ye do well? said Sir Dinadan: I have told the Cornish knight that here is Sir Launcelot, and the Cornish knight asked me what shield he bare. Truly, I told him that he bare the same shield that Sir Mordred beareth. Will ye do well? said Sir Mordred; I am hurt and may not well bear my shield nor harness, and therefore put my shield and my harness upon Sir Dagonet, and let him set upon the Cornish knight. That shall be done, said Sir Dagonet, by my faith. Then anon was Dagonet armed him in Mordred's harness and his shield, and he was set on a great horse, and a spear in his hand. Now, said Dagonet, shew me the knight, and I trow I shall bear him down. So all these knights rode to a woodside, and abode till King Mark came by the way. Then they put forth Sir Dagonet, and he came on all the while his horse might run, straight upon King Mark. And when he came nigh King Mark, he cried as he were wood, and said: Keep thee, knight of Cornwall, for I will slay thee. Anon, as King Mark beheld his shield, he said to himself: Yonder is Sir Launcelot; alas, now am I destroyed; and therewithal he

made his horse to run as fast as it might through thick and thin. And ever Sir Dagonet followed after King Mark, crying and rating him as a wood man, through a great forest. When Sir Uwaine and Sir Brandiles saw Dagonet so chase King Mark, they laughed all as they were wood. And then they took their horses, and rode after to see how Sir Dagonet sped, for they would not for no good that Sir Dagonet were shent, for King Arthur loved him passing well, and made him knight with his own hands. And at every tournament he began to make King Arthur to laugh. Then the knights rode here and there, crying and chasing after King Mark, that all the forest rang of the noise.

### **CHAPTER XIII. How Sir Palomides by adventure met King Mark flying, and how he overthrew Dagonet and other knights.**

SO King Mark rode by fortune by a well, in the way where stood a knight-errant on horseback, armed at all points, with a great spear in his hand. And when he saw King Mark coming flying he said: Knight, return again for shame and stand with me, and I shall be thy warrant. Ah, fair knight, said King Mark, let me pass, for yonder cometh after me the best knight of the world, with the black bended shield. Fie, for shame, said the knight, he is none of the worthy knights, and if he were Sir Launcelot or Sir Tristram I should not doubt to meet the better of them both. When King Mark heard him say that word, he turned his horse and abode by him. And then that strong knight bare a spear to Dagonet, and smote him so sore that he bare him over his horse's tail, and nigh he had broken his neck. And anon after him came Sir Brandiles, and when he saw Dagonet have that fall he was passing wroth, and cried: Keep thee, knight, and so they hurtled together wonder sore. But the knight smote Sir Brandiles so sore that he went to the earth, horse and man. Sir Uwaine came after and saw all this. Jesu, said he, yonder is a strong knight. And then they feutred their spears, and this knight came so eagerly that he smote down Sir Uwaine. Then came Ozana with the hardy heart, and he was smitten down. Now, said Sir Griflet, by my counsel let us send to yonder errant-knight, and wit whether he be of Arthur's court, for as I deem it is Sir Lamorak de Galis. So they sent unto him, and prayed the strange knight to tell his name, and whether he were of Arthur's court or not. As for my name they shall not wit, but tell them I am a knight-errant as they are, and let them wit that I am no knight of King Arthur's court; and so the squire rode again unto them and told them his answer of him. By my head, said Sir Agravaire, he is one of the strongest knights that ever I saw, for he hath overthrown three noble knights, and needs we must encounter with him for shame. So Sir Agravaire feutred his spear, and that other was ready, and smote him down over his horse to the earth. And in the same wise he smote Sir Uwaine

les Avoutres and also Sir Griflet. Then had he served them all but Sir Dinadan, for he was behind, and Sir Mordred was unarmed, and Dagonet had his harness.

So when this was done, this strong knight rode on his way a soft pace, and King Mark rode after him, praising him mickle; but he would answer no words, but sighed wonderly sore, hanging down his head, taking no heed to his words. Thus they rode well a three mile English, and then this knight called to him a varlet, and bade him ride until yonder fair manor, and recommend me to the lady of that castle and place, and pray her to send me refreshing of good meats and drinks. And if she ask thee what I am, tell her that I am the knight that followeth the glatisant beast: that is in English to say the questing beast; for that beast wheresomever he yede he quested in the belly with such a noise as it had been a thirty couple of hounds. Then the varlet went his way and came to the manor, and saluted the lady, and told her from whence he came. And when she understood that he came from the knight that followed the questing beast: O sweet Lord Jesu, she said, when shall I see that noble knight, my dear son Palomides? Alas, will he not abide with me? and therewith she swooned and wept, and made passing great dole. And then also soon as she might she gave the varlet all that he asked. And the varlet returned unto Sir Palomides, for he was a varlet of King Mark. And as soon as he came, he told the knight's name was Sir Palomides. I am well pleased, said King Mark, but hold thee still and say nothing. Then they alighted and set them down and reposed them a while. Anon withal King Mark fell asleep. When Sir Palomides saw him sound asleep he took his horse and rode his way, and said to them: I will not be in the company of a sleeping knight. And so he rode forth a great pace.

#### **CHAPTER XIV. How King Mark and Sir Dinadan heard Sir Palomides making great sorrow and mourning for La Beale Isoud.**

NOW turn we unto Sir Dinadan, that found these seven knights passing heavy. And when he wist how that they sped, as heavy was he. My lord Uwaine, said Dinadan, I dare lay my head it is Sir Lamorak de Galis. I promise you all I shall find him an he may be found in this country. And so Sir Dinadan rode after this knight; and so did King Mark, that sought him through the forest. So as King Mark rode after Sir Palomides he heard the noise of a man that made great dole. Then King Mark rode as nigh that noise as he might and as he durst. Then was he ware of a knight that was descended off his horse, and had put off his helm, and there he made a piteous complaint and a dolorous, of love.

Now leave we that, and talk we of Sir Dinadan, that rode to seek Sir Palomides. And as he came within a forest he met with a knight, a chaser of a deer. Sir, said Sir Dinadan, met ye with a knight with a shield of silver and lions'

heads? Yea, fair knight, said the other, with such a knight met I with but a while ago, and straight yonder way he yede. Gramercy, said Sir Dinadan, for might I find the track of his horse I should not fail to find that knight. Right so as Sir Dinadan rode in the even late he heard a doleful noise as it were of a man. Then Sir Dinadan rode toward that noise; and when he came nigh that noise he alighted off his horse, and went near him on foot. Then was he ware of a knight that stood under a tree, and his horse tied by him, and the helm off his head; and ever that knight made a doleful complaint as ever made knight. And always he made his complaint of La Beale Isoud, the Queen of Cornwall, and said: Ah, fair lady, why love I thee! for thou art fairest of all other, and yet showest thou never love to me, nor bounty. Alas, yet must I love thee. And I may not blame thee, fair lady, for mine eyes be cause of this sorrow. And yet to love thee I am but a fool, for the best knight of the world loveth thee, and ye him again, that is Sir Tristram de Liones. And the falsest king and knight is your husband, and the most coward and full of treason, is your lord, King Mark. Alas, that ever so fair a lady and peerless of all other should be matched with the most villainous knight of the world. All this language heard King Mark, what Sir Palomides said by him; wherefore he was adread when he saw Sir Dinadan, lest he espied him, that he would tell Sir Palomides that he was King Mark; and therefore he withdrew him, and took his horse and rode to his men, where he commanded them to abide. And so he rode as fast as he might unto Camelot; and the same day he found there Amant, the knight, ready that afore Arthur had appealed him of treason; and so, lightly the king commanded them to do battle. And by misadventure King Mark smote Amant through the body. And yet was Amant in the righteous quarrel. And right so he took his horse and departed from the court for dread of Sir Dinadan, that he would tell Sir Tristram and Sir Palomides what he was. Then were there maidens that La Beale Isoud had sent to Sir Tristram, that knew Sir Amant well.

**CHAPTER XV. How King Mark had slain Sir Amant wrongfully tofore King Arthur, and Sir Launcelot fetched King Mark to King Arthur.**

THEN by the license of King Arthur they went to him and spake with him; for while the truncheon of the spear stuck in his body he spake: Ah, fair damosels, said Amant, recommend me unto La Beale Isoud, and tell her that I am slain for the love of her and of Sir Tristram. And there he told the damosels how cowardly King Mark had slain him, and Sir Bersules, his fellow. And for that deed I appealed him of treason, and here am I slain in a righteous quarrel; and all was because Sir Bersules and I would not consent by treason to slay the noble knight, Sir Tristram. Then the two maidens cried aloud that all the court

might hear it, and said: O sweet Lord Jesu, that knowest all hid things, why sufferest Thou so false a traitor to vanquish and slay a true knight that fought in a righteous quarrel? Then anon it was sprung to the king, and the queen, and to all the lords, that it was King Mark that had slain Sir Amant, and Sir Bersules afore hand; wherefore they did their battle. Then was King Arthur wroth out of measure, and so were all the other knights. But when Sir Tristram knew all the matter he made great dole and sorrow out of measure, and wept for sorrow for the loss of the noble knights, Sir Bersules and of Sir Amant.

When Sir Launcelot espied Sir Tristram weep he went hastily to King Arthur, and said: Sir, I pray you give me leave to return again to yonder false king and knight. I pray you, said King Arthur, fetch him again, but I would not that ye slew him, for my worship. Then Sir Launcelot armed him in all haste, and mounted upon a great horse, and took a spear in his hand and rode after King Mark. And from thence a three mile English Sir Launcelot over took him, and bade him: Turn recreant king and knight, for whether thou wilt or not thou shalt go with me to King Arthur's court. King Mark returned and looked upon Sir Launcelot, and said: Fair sir, what is your name? Wit thou well, said he, my name is Sir Launcelot, and therefore defend thee. And when King Mark wist that it was Sir Launcelot, and came so fast upon him with a spear, he cried then aloud: I yield me to thee, Sir Launcelot, honourable knight. But Sir Launcelot would not hear him, but came fast upon him. King Mark saw that, and made no defence, but tumbled adown out of his saddle to the earth as a sack, and there he lay still, and cried Sir Launcelot mercy. Arise, recreant knight and king. I will not fight, said King Mark, but whither that ye will I will go with you. Alas, alas, said Sir Launcelot, that I may not give thee one buffet for the love of Sir Tristram and of La Beale Isoud, and for the two knights that thou hast slain traitorly. And so he mounted upon his horse and brought him to King Arthur; and there King Mark alighted in that same place, and threw his helm from him upon the earth, and his sword, and fell flat to the earth of King Arthur's feet, and put him in his grace and mercy. So God me help, said Arthur, ye are welcome in a manner, and in a manner ye are not welcome. In this manner ye are welcome, that ye come hither maugre thy head, as I suppose. That is truth, said King Mark, and else I had not been here, for my lord, Sir Launcelot, brought me hither through his fine force, and to him am I yolden to as recreant. Well, said Arthur, ye understand ye ought to do me service, homage, and fealty. And never would ye do me none, but ever ye have been against me, and a destroyer of my knights; now, how will ye acquit you? Sir, said King Mark, right as your lordship will require me, unto my power, I will make a large amends. For he was a fair speaker, and false thereunder. Then for great pleasure of Sir Tristram, to make



them twain accorded, the king withheld King Mark as at that time, and made a broken love-day between them.

### **CHAPTER XVI. How Sir Dinadan told Sir Palomides of the battle between Sir Launcelot and Sir Tristram.**

NOW turn we again unto Sir Palomides, how Sir Dinadan comforted him in all that he might, from his great sorrow. What knight are ye? said Sir Palomides. Sir, I am a knight-errant as ye be, that hath sought you long by your shield. Here is my shield, said Sir Palomides, wit ye well, an ye will ought, therewith I will defend it. Nay, said Sir Dinadan, I will not have ado with you but in good manner. And if ye will, ye shall find me soon ready. Sir, said Sir Dinadan, whitherward ride you this way? By my head, said Sir Palomides, I wot not, but as fortune leadeth me. Heard ye or saw ye ought of Sir Tristram? So God me help, of Sir Tristram I both heard and saw, and not for then we loved not inwardly well together, yet at my mischief Sir Tristram rescued me from my death; and yet, or he and I departed, by both our assents we assigned a day that we should have met at the stony grave that Merlin set beside Camelot, and there to have done battle together; howbeit I was letted, said Sir Palomides, that I might not hold my day, the which grieveth me sore; but I have a large excuse. For I was prisoner with a lord, and many other more, and that shall Sir Tristram right well understand, that I brake it not of fear of cowardice. And then Sir Palomides told Sir Dinadan the same day that they should have met. So God me help, said Sir Dinadan, that same day met Sir Launcelot and Sir Tristram at the same grave of stone. And there was the most mightiest battle that ever was seen in this land betwixt two knights, for they fought more than two hours. And there they both bled so much blood that all men marvelled that ever they might endure it. And so at the last, by both their assents, they were made friends and sworn-brethren for ever, and no man can judge the better knight. And now is Sir Tristram made a knight of the Round Table, and he sitteth in the siege of the noble knight, Sir Marhaus. By my head, said Sir Palomides, Sir Tristram is far bigger than Sir Launcelot, and the hardier knight. Have ye assayed them both? said Sir Dinadan. I have seen Sir Tristram fight, said Sir Palomides, but never Sir Launcelot to my witting. But at the fountain where Sir Launcelot lay asleep, there with one spear he smote down Sir Tristram and me, said Palomides, but at that time they knew not either other. Fair knight, said Sir Dinadan, as for Sir Launcelot and Sir Tristram let them be, for the worst of them will not be lightly matched of no knights that I know living. No, said Sir Palomides, God defend, but an I had a quarrel to the better of them both I would with as good a will fight with him as with you. Sir, I require you tell me your name, and in good faith I

shall hold you company till that we come to Camelot; and there shall ye have great worship now at this great tournament; for there shall be the Queen Guenever, and La Beale Isoud of Cornwall. Wit you well, sir knight, for the love of La Beale Isoud I will be there, and else not, but I will not have ado in King Arthur's court. Sir, said Dinadan, I shall ride with you and do you service, so you will tell me your name. Sir, ye shall understand my name is Sir Palomides, brother to Safere, the good and noble knight. And Sir Segwarides and I, we be Saracens born, of father and mother. Sir, said Sir Dinadan, I thank you much for the telling of your name. For I am glad of that I know your name, and I promise you by the faith of my body, ye shall not be hurt by me by my will, but rather be advanced. And thereto will I help you with all my power, I promise you, doubt ye not. And certainly on my life ye shall win great worship in the court of King Arthur, and be right welcome. So then they dressed on their helms and put on their shields, and mounted upon their horses, and took the broad way towards Camelot. And then were they ware of a castle that was fair and rich, and also passing strong as any was within this realm.

#### **CHAPTER XVII. How Sir Lamorak jousted with divers knights of the castle wherein was Morgan le Fay.**

SIR PALOMIDES, said Dinadan, here is a castle that I know well, and therein dwelleth Queen Morgan le Fay, King Arthur's sister; and King Arthur gave her this castle, the which he hath repented him sithen a thousand times, for sithen King Arthur and she have been at debate and strife; but this castle could he never get nor win of her by no manner of engine; and ever as she might she made war on King Arthur. And all dangerous knights she withholdeth with her, for to destroy all these knights that King Arthur loveth. And there shall no knight pass this way but he must joust with one knight, or with two, or with three. And if it hap that King Arthur's knight be beaten, he shall lose his horse and his harness and all that he hath, and hard, if that he escape, but that he shall be prisoner. So God me help, said Palomides, this is a shameful custom, and a villainous usance for a queen to use, and namely to make such war upon her own lord, that is called the Flower of Chivalry that is christian or heathen; and with all my heart I would destroy that shameful custom. And I will that all the world wit she shall have no service of me. And if she send out any knights, as I suppose she will, for to joust, they shall have both their hands full. And I shall not fail you, said Sir Dinadan, unto my puissance, upon my life.

So as they stood on horseback afore the castle, there came a knight with a red shield, and two squires after him; and he came straight unto Sir Palomides, the good knight, and said to him: Fair and gentle knight-errant, I require thee for the

love thou owest unto knighthood, that ye will not have ado here with these men of this castle; for this was Sir Lamorak that thus said. For I came hither to seek this deed, and it is my request; and therefore I beseech you, knight, let me deal, and if I be beaten revenge me. In the name of God, said Palomides, let see how ye will speed, and we shall behold you. Then anon came forth a knight of the castle, and proffered to joust with the Knight with the Red Shield. Anon they encountered together, and he with the red shield smote him so hard that he bare him over to the earth. Therewith anon came another knight of the castle, and he was smitten so sore that he avoided his saddle. And forthwithal came the third knight, and the Knight with the Red Shield smote him to the earth. Then came Sir Palomides, and besought him that he might help him to joust. Fair knight, said he unto him, suffer me as at this time to have my will, for an they were twenty knights I shall not doubt them. And ever there were upon the walls of the castle many lords and ladies that cried and said: Well have ye jousted, Knight with the Red Shield. But as soon as the knight had smitten them down, his squire took their horses, and avoided their saddles and bridles of the horses, and turned them into the forest, and made the knights to be kept to the end of the jousts. Right so came out of the castle the fourth knight, and freshly proffered to joust with the Knight with the Red Shield: and he was ready, and he smote him so hard that horse and man fell to the earth, and the knight's back brake with the fall, and his neck also. O Jesu, said Sir Palomides, that yonder is a passing good knight, and the best jousting that ever I saw. By my head, said Sir Dinadan, he is as good as ever was Sir Launcelot or Sir Tristram, what knight somever he be.

### **CHAPTER XVIII. How Sir Palomides would have jousted for Sir Lamorak with the knights of the castle.**

THEN forthwithal came a knight out of the castle, with a shield bended with black and with white. And anon the Knight with the Red Shield and he encountered so hard that he smote the knight of the castle through the bended shield and through the body, and brake the horse's back. Fair knight, said Sir Palomides, ye have overmuch on hand, therefore I pray you let me joust, for ye had need to be reposed. Why sir, said the knight, seem ye that I am weak and feeble? and sir, methinketh ye proffer me wrong, and to me shame, when I do well enough. I tell you now as I told you erst; for an they were twenty knights I shall beat them, and if I be beaten or slain then may ye revenge me. And if ye think that I be weary, and ye have an appetite to joust with me, I shall find you jousting enough. Sir, said Palomides, I said it not because I would joust with you, but meseemeth that ye have overmuch on hand. And therefore, an ye were gentle, said the Knight with the Red Shield, ye should not proffer me shame;

therefore I require you to joust with me, and ye shall find that I am not weary. Sith ye require me, said Sir Palomides, take keep to yourself. Then they two knights came together as fast as their horses might run, and the knight smote Sir Palomides sore on the shield that the spear went into his side a great wound, and a perilous. And therewithal Sir Palomides avoided his saddle. And that knight turned unto Sir Dinadan; and when he saw him coming he cried aloud, and said: Sir, I will not have ado with you; but for that he let it not, but came straight upon him. So Sir Dinadan for shame put forth his spear and all to-shivered it upon the knight. But he smote Sir Dinadan again so hard that he smote him clean from his saddle; but their horses he would not suffer his squires to meddle with, and because they were knights-errant.

Then he dressed him again to the castle, and jousted with seven knights more, and there was none of them might withstand him, but he bare him to the earth. And of these twelve knights he slew in plain jousts four. And the eight knights he made them to swear on the cross of a sword that they should never use the evil customs of the castle. And when he had made them to swear that oath he let them pass. And ever stood the lords and the ladies on the castle walls crying and saying: Knight with the Red Shield, ye have marvellously well done as ever we saw knight do. And therewith came a knight out of the castle unarmed, and said: Knight with the Red Shield, overmuch damage hast thou done to us this day, therefore return whither thou wilt, for here are no more will have ado with thee; for we repent sore that ever thou camest here, for by thee is fordone the old custom of this castle. And with that word he turned again into the castle, and shut the gates. Then the Knight with the Red Shield turned and called his squires, and so passed forth on his way, and rode a great pace.

And when he was past Sir Palomides went to Sir Dinadan, and said: I had never such a shame of one knight that ever I met; and therefore I cast me to ride after him, and to be revenged with my sword, for a-horseback I deem I shall get no worship of him. Sir Palomides, said Dinadan, ye shall not meddle with him by my counsel, for ye shall get no worship of him; and for this cause, ye have seen him this day have had overmuch to do, and overmuch travailed. By almighty Jesu, said Palomides, I shall never be at ease till that I have had ado with him. Sir, said Dinadan, I shall give you my beholding. Well, said Palomides, then shall ye see how we shall redress our mights. So they took their horses of their varlets, and rode after the Knight with the Red Shield; and down in a valley beside a fountain they were ware where he was alighted to repose him, and had done off his helm for to drink at the well.

## **CHAPTER XIX. How Sir Lamorak jousted with Sir Palomides, and**

**hurt him grievously.**

THEN Palomides rode fast till he came nigh him. And then he said: Knight, remember ye of the shame ye did to me right now at the castle, therefore dress thee, for I will have ado with thee. Fair knight, said he to Palomides, of me ye win no worship, for ye have seen this day that I have been travailed sore. As for that, said Palomides, I will not let, for wit ye well I will be revenged. Well, said the knight, I may happen to endure you. And therewithal he mounted upon his horse, and took a great spear in his hand ready for to joust. Nay, said Palomides, I will not joust, for I am sure at jousting I get no prize. Fair knight, said that knight, it would beseem a knight to joust and to fight on horseback. Ye shall see what I will do, said Palomides. And therewith he alighted down upon foot, and dressed his shield afore him and pulled out his sword. Then the Knight with the Red Shield descended down from his horse, and dressed his shield afore him, and so he drew out his sword. And then they came together a soft pace, and wonderly they lashed together passing thick the mountenance of an hour or ever they breathed. Then they traced and traversed, and waxed wonderly wroth, and either behight other death; they hewed so fast with their swords that they cut in down half their swords and mails, that the bare flesh in some place stood above their harness. And when Sir Palomides beheld his fellow's sword over-hylled with his blood it grieved him sore: some while they foined, some while they struck as wild men. But at the last Sir Palomides waxed faint, because of his first wound that he had at the castle with a spear, for that wound grieved him wonderly sore. Fair knight, said Palomides, meseemeth we have assayed either other passing sore, and if it may please thee, I require thee of thy knighthood tell me thy name. Sir, said the knight to Palomides, that is me loath to do, for thou hast done me wrong and no knighthood to proffer me battle, considering my great travail, but an thou wilt tell me thy name I will tell thee mine. Sir, said he, wit thou well my name is Palomides. Ah, sir, ye shall understand my name is Sir Lamorak de Galis, son and heir unto the good knight and king, King Pellinore, and Sir Tor, the good knight, is my half brother. When Sir Palomides heard him say so he kneeled down and asked mercy, For outrageously have I done to you this day; considering the great deeds of arms I have seen you do, shamefully and unknighly I have required you to do battle. Ah, Sir Palomides, said Sir Lamorak, overmuch have ye done and said to me. And therewith he embraced him with his both hands, and said: Palomides, the worthy knight, in all this land is no better than ye, nor more of prowess, and me repenteth sore that we should fight together. So it doth not me, said Sir Palomides, and yet am I sorer wounded than ye be; but as for that I shall soon thereof be whole. But certainly I would not for the fairest castle in this land, but if thou and I had met, for I shall love

you the days of my life afore all other knights except my brother, Sir Safere. I say the same, said Sir Lamorak, except my brother, Sir Tor. Then came Sir Dinadan, and he made great joy of Sir Lamorak. Then their squires dressed both their shields and their harness, and stopped their wounds. And thereby at a priory they rested them all night.

## **CHAPTER XX. How it was told Sir Launcelot that Dagonet chased King Mark, and how a knight overthrew him and six knights.**

Now turn we again. When Sir Ganis and Sir Brandiles with his fellows came to the court of King Arthur they told the king, Sir Launcelot, and Sir Tristram, how Sir Dagonet, the fool, chased King Mark through the forest, and how the strong knight smote them down all seven with one spear. There was great laughing and japing at King Mark and at Sir Dagonet. But all these knights could not tell what knight it was that rescued King Mark. Then they asked King Mark if that he knew him, and he answered and said: He named himself the Knight that followed the Questing Beast, and on that name he sent one of my varlets to a place where was his mother; and when she heard from whence he came she made passing great dole, and discovered to my varlet his name, and said: Oh, my dear son, Sir Palomides, why wilt thou not see me? And therefore, sir, said King Mark, it is to understand his name is Sir Palomides, a noble knight. Then were all these seven knights glad that they knew his name.

Now turn we again, for on the morn they took their horses, both Sir Lamorak, Palomides, and Dinadan, with their squires and varlets, till they saw a fair castle that stood on a mountain well closed, and thither they rode, and there they found a knight that hight Galahalt, that was lord of that castle, and there they had great cheer and were well eased. Sir Dinadan, said Sir Lamorak, what will ye do? Oh sir, said Dinadan, I will to-morrow to the court of King Arthur. By my head, said Sir Palomides, I will not ride these three days, for I am sore hurt, and much have I bled, and therefore I will repose me here. Truly, said Sir Lamorak, and I will abide here with you; and when ye ride, then will I ride, unless that ye tarry over long; then will I take my horse. Therefore I pray you, Sir Dinadan, abide and ride with us. Faithfully, said Dinadan, I will not abide, for I have such a talent to see Sir Tristram that I may not abide long from him. Ah, Dinadan, said Sir Palomides, now do I understand that ye love my mortal enemy, and therefore how should I trust you. Well, said Dinadan, I love my lord Sir Tristram, above all other, and him will I serve and do honour. So shall I, said Sir Lamorak, in all that may lie in my power.

So on the morn Sir Dinadan rode unto the court of King Arthur; and by the way as he rode he saw where stood an errant knight, and made him ready for to

joust. Not so, said Dinadan, for I have no will to joust. With me shall ye joust, said the knight, or that ye pass this way. Whether ask ye jousts, by love or by hate? The knight answered: Wit ye well I ask it for love, and not for hate. It may well be so, said Sir Dinadan, but ye proffer me hard love when ye will joust with me with a sharp spear. But, fair knight, said Sir Dinadan, sith ye will joust with me, meet with me in the court of King Arthur, and there shall I joust with you. Well, said the knight, sith ye will not joust with me, I pray you tell me your name. Sir knight, said he, my name is Sir Dinadan. Ah, said the knight, full well know I you for a good knight and a gentle, and wit you well I love you heartily. Then shall there be no jousts, said Dinadan, betwixt us. So they departed. And the same day he came to Camelot, where lay King Arthur. And there he saluted the king and the queen, Sir Launcelot, and Sir Tristram; and all the court was glad of Sir Dinadan, for he was gentle, wise, and courteous, and a good knight. And in especial, the valiant knight Sir Tristram loved Sir Dinadan passing well above all other knights save Sir Launcelot.

Then the king asked Sir Dinadan what adventures he had seen. Sir, said Dinadan, I have seen many adventures, and of some King Mark knoweth, but not all. Then the king hearkened Sir Dinadan, how he told that Sir Palomides and he were afore the castle of Morgan le Fay, and how Sir Lamorak took the jousts afore them, and how he forjousted twelve knights, and of them four he slew, and how after he smote down Sir Palomides and me both. t I may not believe that, said the king, for Sir Palomides is a passing good knight. That is very truth, said Sir Dinadan, but yet I saw him better proved, hand for hand. And then he told the king all that battle, and how Sir Palomides was more weaker, and more hurt, and more lost of his blood. And without doubt, said Sir Dinadan, had the battle longer lasted, Palomides had been slain. O Jesu, said King Arthur, this is to me a great marvel. Sir, said Tristram, marvel ye nothing thereof, for at mine advice there is not a valianter knight in the world living, for I know his might. And now I will say you, I was never so weary of knight but if it were Sir Launcelot. And there is no knight in the world except Sir Launcelot that did so well as Sir Lamorak. So God me help, said the king, I would that knight, Sir Lamorak, came to this Court. Sir, said Dinadan, he will be here in short space, and Sir Palomides both, but I fear that Palomides may not yet travel.

## **CHAPTER XXI. How King Arthur let do cry a jousts, and how Sir Lamorak came in, and overthrew Sir Gawaine and many other.**

THEN within three days after the king let make a jousting at a priory. And there made them ready many knights of the Round Table, for Sir Gawaine and his brethren made them ready to joust; but Tristram, Launcelot, nor Dinadan,

would not joust, but suffered Sir Gawaine, for the love of King Arthur, with his brethren, to win the gree if they might. Then on the morn they appalled them to joust, Sir Gawaine and his four brethren, and did there great deeds of arms. And Sir Ector de Maris did marvellously well, but Sir Gawaine passed all that fellowship; wherefore King Arthur and all the knights gave Sir Gawaine the honour at the beginning.

Right so King Arthur was ware of a knight and two squires, the which came out of a forest side, with a shield covered with leather, and then he came slyly and hurtled here and there, and anon with one spear he had smitten down two knights of the Round Table. Then with his hurtling he lost the covering of his shield, then was the king and all other ware that he bare a red shield. O Jesu, said King Arthur, see where rideth a stout knight, he with the red shield. And there was noise and crying Beware the Knight with the Red Shield. So within a little while he had overthrown three brethren of Sir Gawaine's. So God me help, said King Arthur, meseemeth yonder is the best jouter that ever I saw. With that he saw him encounter with Sir Gawaine, and he smote him down with so great force that he made his horse to avoid his saddle. How now, said the king, Sir Gawaine hath a fall; well were me an I knew what knight he were with the red shield. I know him well, said Dinadan, but as at this time ye shall not know his name. By my head, said Sir Tristram, he jouted better than Sir Palomides, and if ye list to know his name, wit ye well his name is Sir Lamorak de Galis.

As they stood thus talking, Sir Gawaine and he encountered together again, and there he smote Sir Gawaine from his horse, and bruised him sore. And in the sight of King Arthur he smote down twenty knights, beside Sir Gawaine and his brethren. And so clearly was the prize given him as a knight peerless. Then slyly and marvellously Sir Lamorak withdrew him from all the fellowship into the forest side. All this espied King Arthur, for his eye went never from him. Then the king, Sir Launcelot, Sir Tristram, and Sir Dinadan, took their hackneys, and rode straight after the good knight, Sir Lamorak de Galis, and there found him. And thus said the king: Ah, fair knight, well be ye found. When he saw the king he put off his helm and saluted him, and when he saw Sir Tristram he alighted down off his horse and ran to him to take him by the thighs, but Sir Tristram would not suffer him, but he alighted or that he came, and either took other in arms, and made great joy of other. The king was glad, and also was all the fellowship of the Round Table, except Sir Gawaine and his brethren. And when they wist that he was Sir Lamorak, they had great despite at him, and were wonderly wroth with him that he had put him to dishonour that day.

Then Gawaine called privily in council all his brethren, and to them said thus: Fair brethren, here may ye see, whom that we hate King Arthur loveth, and



whom that we love he hateth. And wit ye well, my fair brethren, that this Sir Lamorak will never love us, because we slew his father, King Pellinore, for we deemed that he slew our father, King of Orkney. And for the despite of Pellinore, Sir Lamorak did us a shame to our mother, therefore I will be revenged. Sir, said Sir Gawaine's brethren, let see how ye will or may be revenged, and ye shall find us ready. Well, said Gawaine, hold you still and we shall espy our time.

### **CHAPTER XXII. How King Arthur made King Mark to be accorded with Sir Tristram, and how they departed toward Cornwall.**

NOW pass we our matter, and leave we Sir Gawaine, and speak of King Arthur, that on a day said unto King Mark: Sir, I pray you give me a gift that I shall ask you. Sir, said King Mark, I will give you whatsoever ye desire an it be in my power. Sir, gramercy, said Arthur. This I will ask you, that ye will be good lord unto Sir Tristram, for he is a man of great honour; and that ye will take him with you into Cornwall, and let him see his friends, and there cherish him for my sake. Sir, said King Mark, I promise you by the faith of my body, and by the faith that I owe to God and to you, I shall worship him for your sake in all that I can or may. Sir, said Arthur, and I will forgive you all the evil will that ever I ought you, an so be that you swear that upon a book before me. With a good will, said King Mark; and so he there sware upon a book afore him and all his knights, and therewith King Mark and Sir Tristram took either other by the hands hard knit together. But for all this King Mark thought falsely, as it proved after, for he put Sir Tristram in prison, and cowardly would have slain him.

Then soon after King Mark took his leave to ride into Cornwall, and Sir Tristram made him ready to ride with him, whereof the most part of the Round Table were wroth and heavy, and in especial Sir Launcelot, and Sir Lamorak, and Sir Dinadan, were wroth out of measure For well they wist King Mark would slay or destroy Sir Tristram. Alas, said Dinadan, that my lord, Sir Tristram, shall depart. And Sir Tristram took such sorrow that he was amazed like a fool. Alas, said Sir Launcelot unto King Arthur, what have ye done, for ye shall lose the most man of worship that ever came into your court. It was his own desire, said Arthur, and therefore I might not do withal, for I have done all that I can and made them at accord. Accord, said Sir Launcelot, fie upon that accord, for ye shall hear that he shall slay Sir Tristram, or put him in a prison, for he is the most coward and the villainest king and knight that is now living.

And therewith Sir Launcelot departed, and came to King Mark, and said to him thus: Sir king, wit thou well the good knight Sir Tristram shall go with thee. Beware, I rede thee, of treason, for an thou mischief that knight by any manner

of falsehood or treason, by the faith I owe to God and to the order of knighthood, I shall slay thee with mine own hands. Sir Launcelot, said the king, overmuch have ye said to me, and I have sworn and said over largely afore King Arthur in hearing of all his knights, that I shall not slay nor betray him. It were to me overmuch shame to break my promise. Ye say well, said Sir Launcelot, but ye are called so false and full of treason that no man may believe you. Forsooth it is known well wherefore ye came into this country, and for none other cause but for to slay Sir Tristram. So with great dole King Mark and Sir Tristram rode together, for it was by Sir Tristram's will and his means to go with King Mark, and all was for the intent to see La Beale Isoud, for without the sight of her Sir Tristram might not endure.

### **CHAPTER XXIII. How Sir Percivale was made knight of King Arthur, and how a dumb maid spake, and brought him to the Round Table.**

NOW turn we again unto Sir Lamorak, and speak we of his brethren, Sir Tor, which was King Pellinore's first son and begotten of Aryes, wife of the cowherd, for he was a bastard; and Sir Aglovale was his first son begotten in wedlock; Sir Lamorak, Dornar, Percivale, these were his sons too in wedlock. So when King Mark and Sir Tristram were departed from the court there was made great dole and sorrow for the departing of Sir Tristram. Then the king and his knights made no manner of joys eight days after. And at the eight days' end there came to the court a knight with a young squire with him. And when this knight was unarmed, he went to the king and required him to make the young squire a knight. Of what lineage is he come? said King Arthur. Sir, said the knight, he is the son of King Pellinore, that did you some time good service, and he is a brother unto Sir Lamorak de Galis, the good knight. Well, said the king, for what cause desire ye that of me that I should make him knight? Wit you well, my lord the king, that this young squire is brother to me as well as to Sir Lamorak, and my name is Aglavale. Sir Aglavale, said Arthur, for the love of Sir Lamorak, and for his father's love, he shall be made knight to-morrow. Now tell me, said Arthur, what is his name? Sir, said the knight, his name is Percivale de Galis. So on the morn the king made him knight in Camelot. But the king and all the knights thought it would be long or that he proved a good knight.

Then at the dinner, when the king was set at the table, and every knight after he was of prowess, the king commanded him to be set among mean knights; and so was Sir Percivale set as the king commanded. Then was there a maiden in the queen's court that was come of high blood, and she was dumb and never spake word. Right so she came straight into the hall, and went unto Sir Percivale, and took him by the hand and said aloud, that the king and all the knights might hear

it: Arise, Sir Percivale, the noble knight and God's knight, and go with me; and so he did. And there she brought him to the right side of the Siege Perilous, and said, Fair knight, take here thy siege, for that siege appertaineth to thee and to none other. Right so she departed and asked a priest. And as she was confessed and houselled then she died. Then the king and all the court made great joy of Sir Percivale.

#### **CHAPTER XXIV. How Sir Lamorak visited King Lot's wife, and how Sir Gaheris slew her which was his own mother.**

NOW turn we unto Sir Lamorak, that much was there praised. Then, by the mean of Sir Gawaine and his brethren, they sent for their mother there besides, fast by a castle beside Camelot; and all was to that intent to slay Sir Lamorak. The Queen of Orkney was there but a while, but Sir Lamorak wist of their being, and was full fain; and for to make an end of this matter, he sent unto her, and there betwixt them was a night assigned that Sir Lamorak should come to her. Thereof was ware Sir Gaheris, and there he rode afore the same night, and waited upon Sir Lamorak, and then he saw where he came all armed. And where Sir Lamorak alighted he tied his horse to a privy postern, and so he went into a parlour and unarmed him; and then he went unto the queen's bed, and she made of him passing great joy, and he of her again, for either loved other passing sore. So when the knight, Sir Gaheris, saw his time, he came to their bedside all armed, with his sword naked, and suddenly gat his mother by the hair and struck off her head.

When Sir Lamorak saw the blood dash upon him all hot, the which he loved passing well, wit you well he was sore abashed and dismayed of that dolorous knight. And therewithal, Sir Lamorak leapt out of the bed in his shirt as a knight dismayed, saying thus: Ah, Sir Gaheris, knight of the Table Round, foul and evil have ye done, and to you great shame. Alas, why have ye slain your mother that bare you? with more right ye should have slain me. The offence hast thou done, said Gaheris, notwithstanding a man is born to offer his service; but yet shouldst thou beware with whom thou meddlest, for thou hast put me and my brethren to a shame, and thy father slew our father; and thou to lie by our mother is too much shame for us to suffer. And as for thy father, King Pellinore my brother Sir Gawaine and I slew him. Ye did him the more wrong, said Sir Lamorak, for my father slew not your father, it was Balin le Savage: and as yet my father's death is not revenged. Leave those words, said Sir Gaheris, for an thou speak feloniously I will slay thee. But because thou art naked I am ashamed to slay thee. But wit thou well, in what place I may get thee I shall slay thee; and now my mother is quit of thee; and withdraw thee and take thine armour, that thou

were gone. Sir Lamorak saw there was none other bote, but fast armed him, and took his horse and rode his way making great sorrow. But for the shame and dolour he would not ride to King Arthur's court, but rode another way.

But when it was known that Gaheris had slain his mother the king was passing wroth, and commanded him to go out of his court. Wit ye well Sir Gawaine was wroth that Gaheris had slain his mother and let Sir Lamorak escape. And for this matter was the king passing wroth, and so was Sir Launcelot, and many other knights. Sir, said Sir Launcelot, here is a great mischief befallen by felony, and by forecast treason, that your sister is thus shamefully slain. And I dare say that it was wrought by treason, and I dare say ye shall lose that good knight, Sir Lamorak the which is great pity. I wot well and am sure, an Sir Tristram wist it, he would never more come within your court, the which should grieve you much more and all your knights. God defend, said the noble King Arthur, that I should lose Sir Lamorak or Sir Tristram, for then twain of my chief knights of the Table Round were gone. Sir, said Sir Launcelot, I am sure ye shall lose Sir Lamorak, for Sir Gawaine and his brethren will slay him by one mean or other; for they among them have concluded and sworn to slay him an ever they may see their time. That shall I let, said Arthur.

#### **CHAPTER XXV. How Sir Agravaine and Sir Mordred met with a knight fleeing, and how they both were overthrown, and of Sir Dinadan.**

NOW leave we of Sir Lamorak, and speak of Sir Gawaine's brethren, and specially of Sir Agravaine and Sir Mordred. As they rode on their adventures they met with a knight fleeing, sore wounded; and they asked him what tidings. Fair knights, said he, here cometh a knight after me that will slay me. With that came Sir Dinadan riding to them by adventure, but he would promise them no help. But Sir Agravaine and Sir Mordred promised him to rescue him. Therewithal came that knight straight unto them, and anon he proffered to joust. That saw Sir Mordred and rode to him, but he struck Mordred over his horse's tail. That saw Sir Agravaine, and straight he rode toward that knight, and right so as he served Mordred so he served Agravaine, and said to them: Sirs, wit ye well both that I am Breuse Saunce PitÃ©, that hath done this to you. And yet he rode over Agravaine five or six times. When Dinadan saw this, he must needs joust with him for shame. And so Dinadan and he encountered together, that with pure strength Sir Dinadan smote him over his horse's tail Then he took his horse and fled, for he was on foot one of the valiantest knights in Arthur's days, and a great destroyer of all good knights.

Then rode Sir Dinadan unto Sir Mordred and unto Sir Agravaine. Sir knight, said they all, well have ye done, and well have ye revenged us, wherefore we

pray you tell us your name. Fair sirs, ye ought to know my name, the which is called Sir Dinadan. When they understood that it was Dinadan they were more wroth than they were before, for they hated him out of measure because of Sir Lamorak. For Dinadan had such a custom that he loved all good knights that were valiant, and he hated all those that were destroyers of good knights. And there were none that hated Dinadan but those that ever were called murderers. Then spake the hurt knight that Breuse Saunce PitÃ© had chased, his name was Dalan, and said: If thou be Dinadan thou slewest my father. It may well be so, said Dinadan, but then it was in my defence and at his request. By my head, said Dalan, thou shalt die therefore, and therewith he dressed his spear and his shield. And to make the shorter tale, Sir Dinadan smote him down off his horse, that his neck was nigh broken. And in the same wise he smote Sir Mordred and Sir Agravaire. And after, in the quest of the Sangreal, cowardly and feloniously they slew Dinadan, the which was great damage, for he was a great bourder and a passing good knight.

And so Sir Dinadan rode to a castle that hight Beale-Valet. And there he found Sir Palomides that was not yet whole of the wound that Sir Lamorak gave him. And there Dinadan told Palomides all the tidings that he heard and saw of Sir Tristram, and how he was gone with King Mark, and with him he hath all his will and desire. Therewith Sir Palomides waxed wroth, for he loved La Beale Isoud. And then he wist well that Sir Tristram enjoyed her.

#### **CHAPTER XXVI. How King Arthur, the Queen, and Launcelot received letters out of Cornwall, and of the answer again.**

NOW leave we Sir Palomides and Sir Dinadan in the Castle of Beale-Valet, and turn we again unto King Arthur. There came a knight out of Cornwall, his name was Fergus, a fellow of the Round Table. And there he told the king and Sir Launcelot good tidings of Sir Tristram, and there were brought goodly letters, and how he left him in the castle of Tintagil. Then came the damosel that brought goodly letters unto King Arthur and unto Sir Launcelot, and there she had passing good cheer of the king, and of the Queen Guenever, and of Sir Launcelot. Then they wrote goodly letters again. But Sir Launcelot bade ever Sir Tristram beware of King Mark, for ever he called him in his letters King Fox, as who saith, he fareth all with wiles and treason. Whereof Sir Tristram in his heart thanked Sir Launcelot. Then the damosel went unto La Beale Isoud, and bare her letters from the king and from Sir Launcelot, whereof she was in passing great joy. Fair damosel, said La Beale Isoud, how fareth my Lord Arthur, and the Queen Guenever, and the noble knight, Sir Launcelot? She answered, and to make short tale: Much the better that ye and Sir Tristram be in joy. God reward

them, said La Beale Isoud, for Sir Tristram suffereth great pain for me, and I for him.

So the damosel departed, and brought letters to King Mark. And when he had read them, and understood them, he was wroth with Sir Tristram, for he deemed that he had sent the damosel unto King Arthur. For Arthur and Launcelot in a manner threated King Mark. And as King Mark read these letters he deemed treason by Sir Tristram. Damosel, said King Mark, will ye ride again and bear letters from me unto King Arthur? Sir, she said, I will be at your commandment to ride when ye will. Ye say well, said the king; come again, said the king, to-morn, and fetch your letters. Then she departed and told them how she should ride again with letters unto Arthur. Then we pray you, said La Beale Isoud and Sir Tristram, that when ye have received your letters, that ye would come by us that we may see the privy of your letters. All that I may do, madam, ye wot well I must do for Sir Tristram, for I have been long his own maiden.

So on the morn the damosel went to King Mark to have had his letters and to depart. I am not avised, said King Mark, as at this time to send my letters. Then privily and secretly he sent letters unto King Arthur, and unto Queen Guenever, and unto Sir Launcelot. So the varlet departed, and found the king and the queen in Wales, at Carlion. And as the king and the queen were at mass the varlet came with the letters. And when mass was done the king and the queen opened the letters privily by themselves. And the beginning of the king's letters spake wonderly short unto King Arthur, and bade him entermete with himself and with his wife, and of his knights; for he was able enough to rule and keep his wife.

#### **CHAPTER XXVII. How Sir Launcelot was wroth with the letter that he received from King Mark, and of Dinadan which made a lay of King Mark.**

WHEN King Arthur understood the letter, he mused of many things, and thought on his sister's words, Queen Morgan le Fay, that she had said betwixt Queen Guenever and Sir Launcelot. And in this thought he studied a great while. Then he bethought him again how his sister was his own enemy, and that she hated the queen and Sir Launcelot, and so he put all that out of his thought. Then King Arthur read the letter again, and the latter clause said that King Mark took Sir Tristram for his mortal enemy; wherefore he put Arthur out of doubt he would be revenged of Sir Tristram. Then was King Arthur wroth with King Mark. And when Queen Guenever read her letter and understood it, she was wroth out of measure, for the letter spake shame by her and by Sir Launcelot. And so privily she sent the letter unto Sir Launcelot. And when he wist the intent of the letter he was so wroth that he laid him down on his bed to sleep, whereof Sir Dinadan was ware, for it was his manner to be privy with all good knights.

And as Sir Launcelot slept he stole the letter out of his hand, and read it word by word. And then he made great sorrow for anger. And so Sir Launcelot awaked, and went to a window, and read the letter again, the which made him angry.

Sir, said Dinadan, wherefore be ye angry? discover your heart to me: forsooth ye wot well I owe you good will, howbeit I am a poor knight and a servitor unto you and to all good knights. For though I be not of worship myself I love all those that be of worship. It is truth, said Sir Launcelot, ye are a trusty knight, and for great trust I will shew you my counsel. And when Dinadan understood all, he said: This is my counsel: set you right nought by these threats, for King Mark is so villainous, that by fair speech shall never man get of him. But ye shall see what I shall do; I will make a lay for him, and when it is made I shall make an harper to sing it afore him. So anon he went and made it, and taught it an harper that hight Eliot. And when he could it, he taught it to many harpers. And so by the will of Sir Launcelot, and of Arthur, the harpers went straight into Wales, and into Cornwall, to sing the lay that Sir Dinadan made by King Mark, the which was the worst lay that ever harper sang with harp or with any other instruments.

#### **CHAPTER XXVIII. How Sir Tristram was hurt, and of a war made to King Mark; and of Sir Tristram how he promised to rescue him.**

NOW turn we again unto Sir Tristram and to King Mark. As Sir Tristram was at jousts and at tournament it fortun'd he was sore hurt both with a spear and with a sword, but yet he won always the degree. And for to repose him he went to a good knight that dwelled in Cornwall, in a castle, whose name was Sir Dinas le Seneschal. Then by misfortune there came out of Sessoin a great number of men of arms, and an hideous host, and they entered nigh the Castle of Tintagil; and their captain's name was Elias, a good man of arms. When King Mark understood his enemies were entered into his land he made great dole and sorrow, for in no wise by his will King Mark would not send for Sir Tristram, for he hated him deadly.

So when his council was come they devised and cast many perils of the strength of their enemies. And then they concluded all at once, and said thus unto King Mark: Sir, wit ye well ye must send for Sir Tristram, the good knight, or else they will never be overcome. For by Sir Tristram they must be foughten withal, or else we row against the stream. Well, said King Mark, I will do by your counsel; but yet he was full loath thereto, but need constrained him to send for him. Then was he sent for in all haste that might be, that he should come to King Mark. And when he understood that King Mark had sent for him, he mounted upon a soft ambler and rode to King Mark. And when he was come the

king said thus: Fair nephew Sir Tristram, this is all. Here be come our enemies of Sessoin, that are here nigh hand, and without tarrying they must be met with shortly, or else they will destroy this country. Sir, said Sir Tristram, wit ye well all my power is at your commandment. And wit ye well, sir, these eight days I may bear none arms, for my wounds be not yet whole. And by that day I shall do what I may. Ye say well, said King Mark; then go ye again and repose you and make you fresh, and I shall go and meet the Sessoins with all my power.

So the king departed unto Tintagil, and Sir Tristram went to repose him. And the king made a great host and departed them in three; the first part led Sir Dinas the Seneschal, and Sir Andred led the second part, and Sir Argius led the third part; and he was of the blood of King Mark. And the Sessoins had three great battles, and many good men of arms. And so King Mark by the advice of his knights issued out of the Castle of Tintagil upon his enemies. And Dinas, the good knight, rode out afore, and slew two knights with his own hands, and then began the battles. And there was marvellous breaking of spears and smiting of swords, and slew down many good knights. And ever was Sir Dinas the Seneschal the best of King Mark's party. And thus the battle endured long with great mortality. But at the last King Mark and Sir Dinas, were they never so loath, they withdrew them to the Castle of Tintagil with great slaughter of people; and the Sessoins followed on fast, that ten of them were put within the gates and four slain with the portcullis.

Then King Mark sent for Sir Tristram by a varlet, that told him all the mortality. Then he sent the varlet again, and bade him: Tell King Mark that I will come as soon as I am whole, for erst I may do him no good. Then King Mark had his answer. Therewith came Elias and bade the king yield up the castle: For ye may not hold it no while. Sir Elias, said the king, so will I yield up the castle if I be not soon rescued. Anon King Mark sent again for rescue to Sir Tristram. By then Sir Tristram was whole, and he had gotten him ten good knights of Arthur's; and with them he rode unto Tintagil. And when he saw the great host of Sessoins he marvelled wonder greatly. And then Sir Tristram rode by the woods and by the ditches as secretly as he might, till he came nigh the gates. And there dressed a knight to him when he saw that Sir Tristram would enter; and Sir Tristram smote him down dead, and so he served three more. And everych of these ten knights slew a man of arms. So Sir Tristram entered into the Castle of Tintagil. And when King Mark wist that Sir Tristram was come he was glad of his coming, and so was all the fellowship, and of him they made great joy.

## **CHAPTER XXIX. How Sir Tristram overcame the battle, and how Elias**



**desired a man to fight body for body.**

SO on the morn Elias the captain came, and bade King Mark: Come out and do battle; for now the good knight Sir Tristram is entered it will be shame to thee, said Elias, for to keep thy walls. When King Mark understood this he was wroth and said no word, but went unto Sir Tristram and asked him his counsel. Sir, said Sir Tristram, will ye that I give him his answer? I will well, said King Mark. Then Sir Tristram said thus to the messenger: Bear thy lord word from the king and me, that we will do battle with him to-morn in the plain field. What is your name? said the messenger. Wit thou well my name is Sir Tristram de Liones. Therewithal the messenger departed and told his lord Elias all that he had heard. Sir, said Sir Tristram unto King Mark, I pray you give me leave to have the rule of the battle. I pray you take the rule, said King Mark. Then Sir Tristram let devise the battle in what manner that it should be. He let depart his host in six parties, and ordained Sir Dinas the Seneschal to have the foreward, and other knights to rule the remnant. And the same night Sir Tristram burnt all the Sessoins' ships unto the cold water. Anon, as Elias wist that, he said it was of Sir Tristram's doing: For he casteth that we shall never escape, mother son of us. Therefore, fair fellows, fight freely to-morrow, and miscomfort you nought; for any knight, though he be the best knight in the world, he may not have ado with us all.

Then they ordained their battle in four parties, wonderly well apparelled and garnished with men of arms. Thus they within issued, and they without set freely upon them; and there Sir Dinas did great deeds of arms. Not for then Sir Dinas and his fellowship were put to the worse. With that came Sir Tristram and slew two knights with one spear; then he slew on the right hand and on the left hand, that men marvelled that ever he might do such deeds of arms. And then he might see sometime the battle was driven a bow-draught from the castle, and sometime it was at the gates of the castle. Then came Elias the captain rushing here and there, and hit King Mark so sore upon the helm that he made him to avoid the saddle. And then Sir Dinas gat King Mark again to horseback. Therewithal came in Sir Tristram like a lion, and there he met with Elias, and he smote him so sore upon the helm that he avoided his saddle. And thus they fought till it was night, and for great slaughter and for wounded people everych party drew to their rest.

And when King Mark was come within the Castle of Tintagil he lacked of his knights an hundred, and they without lacked two hundred; and they searched the wounded men on both parties. And then they went to council; and wit you well either party were loath to fight more, so that either might escape with their worship. When Elias the captain understood the death of his men he made great dole; and when he wist that they were loath to go to battle again he was wroth

out of measure. Then Elias sent word unto King Mark, in great despite, whether he would find a knight that would fight for him body for body. And if that he might slay King Mark's knight, he to have the truage of Cornwall yearly. And if that his knight slay mine, I fully release my claim forever. Then the messenger departed unto King Mark, and told him how that his lord Elias had sent him word to find a knight to do battle with him body for body. When King Mark understood the messenger, he bade him abide and he should have his answer. Then called he all the baronage together to wit what was the best counsel. They said all at once: To fight in a field we have no lust, for had not been Sir Tristram's prowess it had been likely that we never should have escaped; and therefore, sir, as we deem, it were well done to find a knight that would do battle with him, for he knightly proffereth.

### **CHAPTER XXI. How Sir Elias and Sir Tristram fought together for the truage, and how Sir Tristram slew Elias in the field.**

NOT for then when all this was said, they could find no knight that would do battle with him. Sir king, said they all, here is no knight that dare fight with Elias. Alas, said King Mark, then am I utterly ashamed and utterly destroyed, unless that my nephew Sir Tristram will take the battle upon him. Wit you well, they said all, he had yesterday overmuch on hand, and he is weary for travail, and sore wounded. Where is he? said King Mark. Sir, said they, he is in his bed to repose him. Alas, said King Mark, but I have the succour of my nephew Sir Tristram, I am utterly destroyed for ever.

Therewith one went to Sir Tristram where he lay, and told him what King Mark had said. And therewith Sir Tristram arose lightly, and put on him a long gown, and came afore the king and all the lords. And when he saw them all so dismayed he asked the king and the lords what tidings were with them. Never worse, said the king. And therewith he told him all, how he had word of Elias to find a knight to fight for the truage of Cornwall, and none can I find. And as for you, said the king and all the lords, we may ask no more of you for shame; for through your hardiness yesterday ye saved all our lives. Sir, said Sir Tristram, now I understand ye would have my succour, reason would that I should do all that lieth in my power to do, saving my worship and my life, howbeit I am sore bruised and hurt. And sithen Sir Elias proffereth so largely, I shall fight with him, or else I will be slain in the field, or else I will deliver Cornwall from the old truage. And therefore lightly call his messenger and he shall be answered, for as yet my wounds be green, and they will be sorer a seven night after than they be now; and therefore he shall have his answer that I will do battle to-morn with him.

Then was the messenger departed brought before King Mark. Hark, my fellow, said Sir Tristram, go fast unto thy lord, and bid him make true assurance on his part for the truage, as the king here shall make on his part; and then tell thy lord, Sir Elias, that I, Sir Tristram, King Arthur's knight, and knight of the Table Round, will as to-morn meet with thy lord on horseback, to do battle as long as my horse may endure, and after that to do battle with him on foot to the utterance. The messenger beheld Sir Tristram from the top to the toe; and therewithal he departed and came to his lord, and told him how he was answered of Sir Tristram. And therewithal was made hostage on both parties, and made it as sure as it might be, that whether party had the victory, so to end. And then were both hosts assembled on both parts of the field, without the Castle of Tintagil, and there was none but Sir Tristram and Sir Elias armed.

So when the appointment was made, they departed in-sunder, and they came together with all the might that their horses might run. And either knight smote other so hard that both horses and knights went to the earth. Not for then they both lightly arose and dressed their shields on their shoulders, with naked swords in their hands, and they dashed together that it seemed a flaming fire about them. Thus they traced, and traversed, and hewed on helms and hauberks, and cut away many cantels of their shields, and either wounded other passing sore, so that the hot blood fell freshly upon the earth. And by then they had foughten the mountenance of an hour Sir Tristram waxed faint and for-bled, and gave sore aback. That saw Sir Elias, and followed fiercely upon him, and wounded him in many places. And ever Sir Tristram traced and traversed, and went froward him here and there, and covered him with his shield as he might all weakly, that all men said he was overcome; for Sir Elias had given him twenty strokes against one.

Then was there laughing of the Sessoins' party, and great dole on King Mark's party. Alas, said the king, we are ashamed and destroyed all for ever: for as the book saith, Sir Tristram was never so matched, but if it were Sir Launcelot. Thus as they stood and beheld both parties, that one party laughing and the other party weeping, Sir Tristram remembered him of his lady, La Beale Isoud, that looked upon him, and how he was likely never to come in her presence. Then he pulled up his shield that erst hung full low. And then he dressed up his shield unto Elias, and gave him many sad strokes, twenty against one, and all to-brake his shield and his hauberk, that the hot blood ran down to the earth. Then began King Mark to laugh, and all Cornish men, and that other party to weep. And ever Sir Tristram said to Sir Elias: Yield thee.

Then when Sir Tristram saw him so staggering on the ground, he said: Sir Elias, I am right sorry for thee, for thou art a passing good knight as ever I met

withal, except Sir Launcelot. Therewithal Sir Elias fell to the earth, and there died. What shall I do, said Sir Tristram unto King Mark, for this battle is at an end? Then they of Elias' party departed, and King Mark took of them many prisoners, to redress the harms and the scathes that he had of them; and the remnant he sent into their country to borrow out their fellows. Then was Sir Tristram searched and well healed. Yet for all this King Mark would fain have slain Sir Tristram. But for all that ever Sir Tristram saw or heard by King Mark, yet would he never beware of his treason, but ever he would be thereas La Beale Isoud was.

**CHAPTER XXXI. How at a great feast that King Mark made an harper came and sang the lay that Dinadan had made.**

NOW will we pass of this matter, and speak we of the harpers that Sir Launcelot and Sir Dinadan had sent into Cornwall. And at the great feast that King Mark made for joy that the Sessoins were put out of his country, then came Eliot the harper with the lay that Dinadan had made and secretly brought it unto Sir Tristram, and told him the lay that Dinadan had made by King Mark. And when Sir Tristram heard it, he said: O Lord Jesu, that Dinadan can make wonderly well and ill, thereas it shall be. Sir, said Eliot, dare I sing this song afore King Mark? Yea, on my peril, said Sir Tristram, for I shall be thy warrant. Then at the meat came in Eliot the harper, and because he was a curious harper men heard him sing the same lay that Dinadan had made, the which spake the most villainy by King Mark of his treason that ever man heard.

When the harper had sung his song to the end King Mark was wonderly wroth, and said: Thou harper, how durst thou be so bold on thy head to sing this song afore me. Sir, said Eliot, wit you well I am a minstrel, and I must do as I am commanded of these lords that I bear the arms of. And sir, wit ye well that Sir Dinadan, a knight of the Table Round, made this song, and made me to sing it afore you. Thou sayest well, said King Mark, and because thou art a minstrel thou shalt go quit, but I charge thee hie thee fast out of my sight. So the harper departed and went to Sir Tristram, and told him how he had sped. Then Sir Tristram let make letters as goodly as he could to Launcelot and to Sir Dinadan. And so he let conduct the harper out of the country. But to say that King Mark was wonderly wroth, he was, for he deemed that the lay that was sung afore him was made by Sir Tristram's counsel, wherefore he thought to slay him and all his well-willers in that country.

**CHAPTER XXXII. How King Mark slew by treason his brother Boudwin, for good service that he had done to him.**

NOW turn we to another matter that fell between King Mark and his brother, that was called the good Prince Boudwin, that all the people of the country loved passing well. So it befell on a time that the miscreant Saracens landed in the country of Cornwall soon after these Sessoins were gone. And then the good Prince Boudwin, at the landing, he raised the country privily and hastily. And or it were day he let put wildfire in three of his own ships, and suddenly he pulled up the sail, and with the wind he made those ships to be driven among the navy of the Saracens. And to make short tale, those three ships set on fire all the ships, that none were saved. And at point of the day the good Prince Boudwin with all his fellowship set on the miscreants with shouts and cries, and slew to the number of forty thousand, and left none alive.

When King Mark wist this he was wonderly wroth that his brother should win such worship. And because this prince was better beloved than he in all that country, and that also Boudwin loved well Sir Tristram, therefore he thought to slay him. And thus, hastily, as a man out of his wit, he sent for Prince Boudwin and Anglides his wife, and bade them bring their young son with them, that he might see him. All this he did to the intent to slay the child as well as his father, for he was the falsest traitor that ever was born. Alas, for his goodness and for his good deeds this gentle Prince Boudwin was slain. So when he came with his wife Anglides, the king made them fair semblant till they had dined. And when they had dined King Mark sent for his brother and said thus: Brother, how sped you when the miscreants arrived by you? meseemeth it had been your part to have sent me word, that I might have been at that journey, for it had been reason that I had had the honour and not you. Sir, said the Prince Boudwin, it was so that an I had tarried till that I had sent for you those miscreants had destroyed my country. Thou liest, false traitor, said King Mark, for thou art ever about for to win worship from me, and put me to dishonour, and thou cherishest that I hate. And therewith he struck him to the heart with a dagger, that he never after spake word. Then the Lady Anglides made great dole, and swooned, for she saw her lord slain afore her face. Then was there no more to do but Prince Boudwin was despoiled and brought to burial. But Anglides privily gat her husband's doublet and his shirt, and that she kept secretly.

Then was there much sorrow and crying, and great dole made Sir Tristram, Sir Dinas, Sir Fergus, and so did all knights that were there; for that prince was passingly well beloved. So La Beale Isoud sent unto Anglides, the Prince Boudwin's wife, and bade her avoid lightly or else her young son, Alisander le Orphelin, should be slain. When she heard this, she took her horse and her child; and rode with such poor men as durst ride with her.

**CHAPTER XXXIII. How Anglides, Boudwin's wife, escaped with her young son, Alisander le Orphelin, and came to the Castle of Arundel.**

NOTWITHSTANDING, when King Mark had done this deed, yet he thought to do more vengeance; and with his sword in his hand, he sought from chamber to chamber, to seek Anglides and her young son. And when she was missed he called a good knight that hight Sadok, and charged him by pain of death to fetch Anglides again and her young son. So Sir Sadok departed and rode after Anglides. And within ten mile he overtook her, and bade her turn again and ride with him to King Mark. Alas, fair knight, she said, what shall ye win by my son's death or by mine? I have had overmuch harm and too great a loss. Madam, said Sadok, of your loss is dole and pity; but madam, said Sadok, would ye depart out of this country with your son, and keep him till he be of age, that he may revenge his father's death, then would I suffer you to depart from me, so you promise me to revenge the death of Prince Boudwin. Ah, gentle knight, Jesu thank thee, and if ever my son, Alisander le Orphelin, live to be a knight, he shall have his father's doublet and his shirt with the bloody marks, and I shall give him such a charge that he shall remember it while he liveth. And therewithal Sadok departed from her, and either betook other to God. And when Sadok came to King Mark he told him faithfully that he had drowned young Alisander her son; and thereof King Mark was full glad.

Now turn we unto Anglides, that rode both night and day by adventure out of Cornwall, and little and in few places she rested; but ever she drew southward to the seaside, till by fortune she came to a castle that is called Magouns, and now it is called Arundel, in Sussex. And the Constable of the castle welcomed her, and said she was welcome to her own castle; and there was Anglides 2t worshipfully received, for the Constable's wife was nigh her cousin, and the Constable's name was Bellangere; and that same Constable told Anglides that the same castle was hers by right inheritance. Thus Anglides endured years and winters, till Alisander was big and strong; there was none so wight in all that country, neither there was none that might do no manner of mastery afore him.

**CHAPTER XXXIV. How Anglides gave the bloody doublet to Alisander, her son, the same day that he was made knight, and the charge withal.**

THEN upon a day Bellangere the Constable came to Anglides and said: Madam, it were time my lord Alisander were made knight, for he is a passing strong young man. Sir, said she, I would he were made knight; but then must I give him the most charge that ever sinful mother gave to her child. Do as ye list, said Bellangere, and I shall give him warning that he shall be made knight. Now

it will be well done that he may be made knight at our Lady Day in Lent. Be it so, said Anglides, and I pray you make ready therefore. So came the Constable to Alisander, and told him that he should at our Lady Day in Lent be made knight. I thank God, said Alisander; these are the best tidings that ever came to me. Then the Constable ordained twenty of the greatest gentlemen's sons, and the best born men of the country, that should be made knights that same day that Alisander was made knight. So on the same day that Alisander and his twenty fellows were made knights, at the offering of the mass there came Anglides unto her son and said thus: O fair sweet son, I charge thee upon my blessing, and of the high order of chivalry that thou takest here this day, that thou understand what I shall say and charge thee withal. Therewithal she pulled out a bloody doublet and a bloody shirt, that were be-bled with old blood. When Alisander saw this he stert aback and waxed pale, and said: Fair mother, what may this mean? I shall tell thee, fair son: this was thine own father's doublet and shirt, that he wore upon him that same day that he was slain. And there she told him why and wherefore, and how for his goodness King Mark slew him with his dagger afore mine own eyen. And therefore this shall be your charge that I shall give thee.

#### **CHAPTER XXXV. How it was told to King Mark of Sir Alisander, and how he would have slain Sir Sadok for saving his life.**

NOW I require thee, and charge thee upon my blessing, and upon the high order of knighthood, that thou be revenged upon King Mark for the death of thy father. And therewithal she swooned. Then Alisander leapt to his mother, and took her up in his arms, and said: Fair mother, ye have given me a great charge, and here I promise you I shall be avenged upon King Mark when that I may; and that I promise to God and to you. So this feast was ended, and the Constable, by the advice of Anglides, let purvey that Alisander was well horsed and harnessed. Then he jousted with his twenty fellows that were made knights with him, but for to make a short tale, he overthrew all those twenty, that none might withstand him a buffet.

Then one of those knights departed unto King Mark, and told him all, how Alisander was made knight, and all the charge that his mother gave him, as ye have heard afore time. Alas, false treason, said King Mark, I weened that young traitor had been dead. Alas, whom may I trust? And therewithal King Mark took a sword in his hand; and sought Sir Sadok from chamber to chamber to slay him. When Sir Sadok saw King Mark come with his sword in his hand he said thus: Beware, King Mark, and come not nigh me; for wit thou well that I saved Alisander his life, of which I never repent me, for thou falsely and cowardly

slew his father Boudwin, traitorly for his good deeds; wherefore I pray Almighty Jesu send Alisander might and strength to be revenged upon thee. And now beware King Mark of young Alisander, for he is made a knight. Alas, said King Mark, that ever I should hear a traitor say so afore me. And therewith four knights of King Mark's drew their swords to slay Sir Sadok, but anon Sir Sadok slew them all in King Mark's presence. And then Sir Sadok passed forth into his chamber, and took his horse and his harness, and rode on his way a good pace. For there was neither Sir Tristram, neither Sir Dinas, nor Sir Fergus, that would Sir Sadok any evil will. Then was King Mark wroth, and thought to destroy Sir Alisander and Sir Sadok that had saved him; for King Mark dreaded and hated Alisander most of any man living.

When Sir Tristram understood that Alisander was made knight, anon forthwithal he sent him a letter, praying him and charging him that he would draw him to the court of King Arthur, and that he put him in the rule and in the hands of Sir Launcelot. So this letter was sent to Alisander from his cousin, Sir Tristram. And at that time he thought to do after his commandment. Then King Mark called a knight that brought him the tidings from Alisander, and bade him abide still in that country. Sir, said that knight, so must I do, for in my own country I dare not come. No force, said King Mark, I shall give thee here double as much lands as ever thou hadst of thine own. But within short space Sir Sadok met with that false knight, and slew him. Then was King Mark wood wroth out of measure. Then he sent unto Queen Morgan le Fay, and to the Queen of Northgalis, praying them in his letters that they two sorceresses would set all the country in fire with ladies that were enchantresses, and by such that were dangerous knights, as Malgrin, Breuse Saunce PitÃ©, that by no mean Alisander le Orphelin should escape, but either he should be taken or slain. This ordinance made King Mark for to destroy Alisander.

### **CHAPTER XXXVI. How Sir Alisander won the prize at a tournament, and of Morgan le Fay: and how he fought with Sir Malgrin, and slew him.**

NOW turn we again unto Sir Alisander, that at his departing his mother took with him his father's bloody shirt. So that he bare with him always till his death day, in tokening to think of his father's death. So was Alisander purposed to ride to London, by the counsel of Sir Tristram, to Sir Launcelot. And by fortune he went by the seaside, and rode wrong. And there he won at a tournament the gree that King Carados made. And there he smote down King Carados and twenty of his knights, and also Sir Safere, a good knight that was Sir Palomides' brother, the good knight. All this saw a damosel, and saw the best knight joust that ever she saw. And ever as he smote down knights he made them to swear to wear



none harness in a twelvemonth and a day. This is well said, said Morgan le Fay, this is the knight that I would fain see. And so she took her palfrey, and rode a great while, and then she rested her in her pavilion. So there came four knights, two were armed, and two were unarmed, and they told Morgan le Fay their names: the first was Elias de Gomeret, the second was Cari de Gomeret, those were armed; that other twain were of Camiliard, cousins unto Queen Guenever, and that one hight Guy, and that other hight Garaunt, those were unarmed. There these four knights told Morgan le Fay how a young knight had smitten them down before a castle For the maiden of that castle said that he was but late made knight, and young. But as we suppose, but if it were Sir Tristram, or Sir Launcelot, or Sir Lamorak, the good knight, there is none that might sit him a buffet with a spear. Well, said Morgan le Fay, I shall meet that knight or it be long time, an he dwell in that country.

So turn we to the damosel of the castle, that when Alisander le Orphelin had forjousted the four knights, she called him to her, and said thus: Sir knight, wilt thou for my sake joust and fight with a knight, for my sake, of this country, that is and hath been long time an evil neighbour to me? His name is Malgrin, and he will not suffer me to be married in no manner wise for all that I can do, or any knight for my sake. Damosel, said Alisander, an he come whiles I am here I will fight with him, and my poor body for your sake I will jeopard. And therewithal she sent for him, for he was at her commandment. And when either had a sight of other, they made them ready for to joust, and they came together eagerly, and Malgrin brised his spear upon Alisander, and Alisander smote him again so hard that he bare him quite from his saddle to the earth. But this Malgrin arose lightly, and dressed his shield and drew his sword, and bade him alight, saying: Though thou have the better of me on horseback, thou shalt find that I shall endure like a knight on foot. It is well said, said Alisander; and so lightly he avoided his horse and betook him to his varlet. And then they rushed together like two boars, and laid on their helms and shields long time, by the space of three hours, that never man could say which was the better knight.

And in the meanwhile came Morgan le Fay to the damosel of the castle, and they beheld the battle. But this Malgrin was an old roted knight, and he was called one of the dangerous knights of the world to do battle on foot, but on horseback there were many better. And ever this Malgrin awaited to slay Alisander, and so wounded him wonderly sore, that it was marvel that ever he might stand, for he had bled so much blood; for Alisander fought wildly, and not wittily. And that other was a felonious knight, and awaited him, and smote him sore. And sometime they rushed together with their shields, like two boars or rams, and fell grovelling both to the earth. Now knight, said Malgrin, hold thy

hand a while, and tell me what thou art. I will not, said Alisander, but if me list: but tell me thy name, and why thou keepest this country, or else thou shalt die of my hands. Wit thou well, said Malgrin, that for this maiden's love, of this castle, I have slain ten good knights by mishap; and by outrage and orgulitÃ© of myself I have slain ten other knights. So God me help, said Alisander, this is the foulest confession that ever I heard knight make, nor never heard I speak of other men of such a shameful confession; wherefore it were great pity and great shame unto me that I should let thee live any longer; therefore keep thee as well as ever thou mayest, for as I am true knight, either thou shalt slay me or else I shall slay thee, I promise thee faithfully.

Then they lashed together fiercely, and at the last Alisander smote Malgrin to the earth. And then he raced off his helm, and smote off his head lightly. And when he had done and ended this battle, anon he called to him his varlet, the which brought him his horse. And then he, weening to be strong enough, would have mounted. And so she laid Sir Alisander in an horse litter, and led him into the castle, for he had no foot nor might to stand upon the earth; for he had sixteen great wounds, and in especial one of them was like to be his death.

#### **CHAPTER XXXVII. How Queen Morgan le Fay had Alisander in her castle, and how she healed his wounds.**

THEN Queen Morgan le Fay searched his wounds, and gave such an ointment unto him that he should have died. And on the morn when she came to him he complained him sore; and then she put other ointments upon him, and then he was out of his pain. Then came the damosel of the castle, and said unto Morgan le Fay: I pray you help me that this knight might wed me, for he hath won me with his hands. Ye shall see, said Morgan le Fay, what I shall say. Then Morgan le Fay went unto Alisander, and bade in anywise that he should refuse this lady, an she desire to wed you, for she is not for you. So the damosel came and desired of him marriage. Damosel, said Orphelin, I thank you, but as yet I cast me not to marry in this country. Sir, she said, sithen ye will not marry me, I pray you insomuch as ye have won me, that ye will give me to a knight of this country that hath been my friend, and loved me many years. With all my heart, said Alisander, I will assent thereto. Then was the knight sent for, his name was Gerine le Grose. And anon he made them handfast, and wedded them.

Then came Queen Morgan le Fay to Alisander, and bade him arise, and put him in an horse litter, and gave him such a drink that in three days and three nights he waked never, but slept; and so she brought him to her own castle that at that time was called La Beale Regard. Then Morgan le Fay came to Alisander, and asked him if he would fain be whole. Who would be sick, said Alisander, an

he might be whole? Well, said Morgan le Fay, then shall ye promise me by your knighthood that this day twelvemonth and a day ye shall not pass the compass of this castle, and without doubt ye shall lightly be whole. I assent, said Sir Alisander. And there he made her a promise: then was he soon whole. And when Alisander was whole, then he repented him of his oath, for he might not be revenged upon King Mark. Right so there came a damosel that was cousin to the Earl of Pase, and she was cousin to Morgan le Fay. And by right that castle of La Beale Regard should have been hers by true inheritance. So this damosel entered into this castle where lay Alisander, and there she found him upon his bed, passing heavy and all sad.

**CHAPTER XXXVIII. How Alisander was delivered from Queen  
Morgan le Fay by the means of a damosel.**

SIR knight, said the damosel, an ye would be merry I could tell you good tidings. Well were me, said Alisander, an I might hear of good tidings, for now I stand as a prisoner by my promise. Sir, she said, wit you well that ye be a prisoner, and worse than ye ween; for my lady, my cousin Queen Morgan le Fay, keepeth you here for none other intent but for to do her pleasure with you when it liketh her. O Jesu defend me, said Alisander, from such pleasure; for I had liefer cut away my hangers than I would do her such pleasure. As Jesu help me, said the damosel, an ye would love me and be ruled by me, I shall make your deliverance with your worship. Tell me, said Alisander, by what means, and ye shall have my love. Fair knight, said she, this castle of right ought to be mine, and I have an uncle the which is a mighty earl, he is Earl of Pase, and of all folks he hateth most Morgan le Fay; and I shall send unto him and pray him for my sake to destroy this castle for the evil customs that be used therein; and then will he come and set wildfire on every part of the castle, and I shall get you out at a privy postern, and there shall ye have your horse and your harness. Ye say well, damosel, said Alisander. And then she said: Ye may keep the room of this castle this twelvemonth and a day, then break ye not your oath. Truly, fair damosel, said Alisander, ye say sooth. And then he kissed her, and did to her pleasaunce as it pleased them both at times and leisures.

So anon she sent unto her uncle and bade him come and destroy that castle, for as the book saith, he would have destroyed that castle afore time had not that damosel been. When the earl understood her letters he sent her word again that on such a day he would come and destroy that castle. So when that day came she showed Alisander a postern wherethrough he should flee into a garden, and there he should find his armour and his horse. When the day came that was set, thither came the Earl of Pase with four hundred knights, and set on fire all the parts of

the castle, that or they ceased they left not a stone standing. And all this while that the fire was in the castle he abode in the garden. And when the fire was done he let make a cry that he would keep that piece of earth thereas the castle of La Beale Regard was a twelvemonth and a day, from all manner knights that would come

So it happed there was a duke that hight Ansirus, and he was of the kin of Sir Launcelot. And this knight was a great pilgrim, for every third year he would be at Jerusalem. And because he used all his life to go in pilgrimage men called him Duke Ansirus the Pilgrim. And this duke had a daughter that hight Alice, that was a passing fair woman, and because of her father she was called Alice la Beale Pilgrim. And anon as she heard of this cry she went unto Arthur's court, and said openly in hearing of many knights, that what knight may overcome that knight that keepeth that piece of earth shall have me and all my lands.

When the knights of the Round Table heard her say thus many were glad, for she was passing fair and of great rents. Right so she let cry in castles and towns as fast on her side as Alisander did on his side. Then she dressed her pavilion straight by the piece of the earth that Alisander kept. So she was not so soon there but there came a knight of Arthur's court that hight Sagramore le Desirous, and he proffered to joust with Alisander; and they encountered, and Sagramore le Desirous brised his spear upon Sir Alisander, but Sir Alisander smote him so hard that he avoided his saddle. And when La Beale Alice saw him joust so well, she thought him a passing goodly knight on horseback. And then she leapt out of her pavilion, and took Sir Alisander by the bridle, and thus she said: Fair knight, I require thee of thy knighthood show me thy visage. I dare well, said Alisander, show my visage. And then he put off his helm; and she saw his visage, she said: O sweet Jesu, thee I must love, and never other. Then show me your visage, said he.

#### **CHAPTER XXXIX. How Alisander met with Alice la Beale Pilgrim, and how he jousted with two knights; and after of him and of Sir Mordred.**

Then she unwimpled her visage. And when he saw her he said: Here have I found my love and my lady. Truly, fair lady, said he, I promise you to be your knight, and none other that beareth the life. Now, gentle knight, said she, tell me your name. My name is, said he, Alisander le Orphelin. Now, damosel, tell me your name, said he. My name is, said she, Alice la Beale Pilgrim. And when we be more at our heart's ease, both ye and I shall tell other of what blood we be come. So there was great love betwixt them. And as they thus talked there came a knight that hight Harsouse le Berbuse, and asked part of Sir Alisander's spears. Then Sir Alisander encountered with him, and at the first Sir Alisander smote

him over his horse's croup. And then there came another knight that hight Sir Hewgon, and Sir Alisander smote him down as he did that other. Then Sir Hewgon proffered to do battle on foot. Sir Alisander overcame him with three strokes, and there would have slain him had he not yielded him. So then Alisander made both those knights to swear to wear none armour in a twelvemonth and a day.

Then Sir Alisander alighted down, and went to rest him and repose him. Then the damosel that helped Sir Alisander out of the castle, in her play told Alice all together how he was prisoner in the castle of La Beale Regard, and there she told her how she got him out of prison. Sir, said Alice la Beale Pilgrim, meseemeth ye are much beholding to this maiden. That is truth, said Sir Alisander. And there Alice told him of what blood she was come. Sir, wit ye well, she said, that I am of the blood of King Ban, that was father unto Sir Launcelot. Y-wis, fair lady, said Alisander, my mother told me that my father was brother unto a king, and I nigh cousin unto Sir Tristram.

Then this while came there three knights, that one hight Vains, and the other hight Harvis de les Marches, and the third hight Perin de la Montaine. And with one spear Sir Alisander smote them down all three, and gave them such falls that they had no list to fight upon foot. So he made them to swear to wear none arms in a twelvemonth. So when they were departed Sir Alisander beheld his lady Alice on horseback as he stood in her pavilion. And then was he so enamoured upon her that he wist not whether he were on horseback or on foot.

Right so came the false knight Sir Mordred, and saw Sir Alisander was assotted upon his lady; and therewithal he took his horse by the bridle, and led him here and there, and had cast to have led him out of that place to have shamed him. When the damosel that helped him out of that castle saw how shamefully he was led, anon she let arm her, and set a shield upon her shoulder; and therewith she mounted upon his horse, and gat a naked sword in her hand, and she thrust unto Alisander with all her might, and she gave him such a buffet that he thought the fire flew out of his eyen. And when Alisander felt that stroke he looked about him, and drew his sword. And when she saw that, she fled, and so did Mordred into the forest, and the damosel fled into the pavilion. So when Alisander understood himself how the false knight would have shamed him had not the damosel been then was he wroth with himself that Sir Mordred was so escaped his hands. But then Sir Alisander and Alice had good game at the damosel, how sadly she hit him upon the helm.

Then Sir Alisander jousted thus day by day, and on foot he did many battles with many knights of King Arthur's court, and with many knights strangers. Therefore to tell all the battles that he did it were overmuch to rehearse, for

every day within that twelvemonth he had ado with one knight or with other, and some day he had ado with three or with four; and there was never knight that put him to the worse. And at the twelvemonth's end he departed with his lady, Alice la Beale Pilgrim. And the damosel would never go from him, and so they went into their country of Benoye, and lived there in great joy.

**CHAPTER XL. How Sir Galahalt did do cry a jousts in Surluse, and Queen Guenever's knights should joust against all that would come.**

BUT as the book saith, King Mark would never stint till he had slain him by treason. And by Alice he gat a child that hight Bellengerus le Beuse. And by good fortune he came to the court of King Arthur, and proved a passing good knight; and he revenged his father's death, for the false King Mark slew both Sir Tristram and Alisander falsely and feloniously. And it happed so that Alisander had never grace nor fortune to come to King Arthur's court. For an he had come to Sir Launcelot, all knights said that knew him, he was one of the strongest knights that was in Arthur's days, and great dole was made for him. So let we of him pass, and turn we to another tale.

So it befell that Sir Galahalt, the haut prince, was lord of the country of Surluse, whereof came many good knights. And this noble prince was a passing good man of arms, and ever he held a noble fellowship together. And then he came to Arthur's court and told him his intent, how this was his will, how he would let cry a jousts in the country of Surluse, the which country was within the lands of King Arthur, and there he asked leave to let cry a jousts. I will give you leave, said King Arthur; but wit thou well, said King Arthur, I may not be there. Sir, said Queen Guenever, please it you to give me leave to be at that jousts. With right good will, said Arthur; for Sir Galahalt, the haut prince, shall have you in governance. Sir, said Galahalt, I will as ye will. Sir, then the queen, I will take with me [Sir Launcelot] and such knights as please me best. Do as ye list, said King Arthur. So anon she commanded Sir Launcelot to make him ready with such knights as he thought best.

So in every good town and castle of this land was made a cry, that in the country of Surluse Sir Galahalt should make a joust that should last eight days, and how the haut prince, with the help of Queen Guenever's knights, should joust against all manner of men that would come. When this cry was known, kings and princes, dukes and earls, barons and noble knights, made them ready to be at that jousts. And at the day of jousting there came in Sir Dinadan disguised, and did many great deeds of arms.

**CHAPTER XLI. How Sir Launcelot fought in the tournament, and how**

### **Sir Palomides did arms there for a damosel.**

THEN at the request of Queen Guenever and of King Bagdemagus Sir Launcelot came into the range, but he was disguised, and that was the cause that few folk knew him; and there met with him Sir Ector de Maris, his own brother, and either brake their spears upon other to their hands. And then either gat another spear. And then Sir Launcelot smote down Sir Ector de Maris, his own brother. That saw Sir Bleoberis, and he smote Sir Launcelot such a buffet upon the helm that he wist not well where he was. Then Sir Launcelot was wrothy and smote Sir Bleoberis so sore upon the helm that his head bowed down backward. And he smote eft another buffet, that he avoided his saddle; and so he rode by, and thrust forth to the thickest. When the King of Northgalis saw Sir Ector and Bleoberis lie on the ground then was he wroth, for they came on his party against them of Surluse. So the King of Northgalis ran to Sir Launcelot, and brake a spear upon him all to pieces. Therewith Sir Launcelot overtook the King of Northgalis, and smote him such a buffet on the helm with his sword that he made him to avoid his horse; and anon the king was horsed again. So both the King Bagdemagus' and the King of Northgalis' party hurled to other; and then began a strong medley, but they of Northgalis were far bigger.

When Sir Launcelot saw his party go to the worst he thrang into the thickest press with a sword in his hand; and there he smote down on the right hand and on the left hand, and pulled down knights and raced off their helms, that all men had wonder that ever one knight might do such deeds of arms. When Sir Meliagaunce, that was son unto King Bagdemagus, saw how Sir Launcelot fared he marvelled greatly. And when he understood that it was he, he wist well that he was disguised for his sake. Then Sir Meliagaunce prayed a knight to slay Sir Launcelot's horse, either with sword or with spear. At that time King Bagdemagus met with a knight that hight Sauseise, a good knight, to whom he said: Now fair Sauseise, encounter with my son Meliagaunce and give him large payment, for I would he were well beaten of thy hands, that he might depart out of this field. And then Sir Sauseise encountered with Sir Meliagaunce, and either smote other down. And then they fought on foot, and there Sauseise had won Sir Meliagaunce, had there not come rescues. So then the haut prince blew to lodging, and every knight unarmed him and went to the great feast.

Then in the meanwhile there came a damosel to the haut prince, and complained that there was a knight that hight Goneris that withheld her all her lands. Then the knight was there present, and cast his glove to her or to any that would fight in her name. So the damosel took up the glove all heavily for default of a champion. Then there came a varlet to her and said: Damosel, will ye do after me? Full fain, said the damosel. Then go you unto such a knight that lieth

here beside in an hermitage, and that followeth the Questing Beast, and pray him to take the battle upon him, and anon I wot well he will grant you.

So anon she took her palfrey, and within a while she found that knight, that was Sir Palomides. And when she required him he armed him and rode with her, and made her to go to the haut prince, and to ask leave for her knight to do battle. I will well, said the haut prince. Then the knights were ready in the field to joust on horseback; and either gat a spear in their hands, and met so fiercely together that their spears all to-shivered. Then they flang out swords, and Sir Palomides smote Sir Gonerius down to the earth. And then he raced off his helm and smote off his head. Then they went to supper, and the damosel loved Palomides as paramour, but the book saith she was of his kin. So then Palomides disguised himself in this manner, in his shield he bare the Questing Beast, and in all his trappings. And when he was thus ready, he sent to the haut prince to give him leave to joust with other knights, but he was adoubted of Sir Launcelot. The haut prince sent him word again that he should be welcome, and that Sir Launcelot should not joust with him. Then Sir Galahalt, the haut prince, let cry what knight somever he were that smote down Sir Palomides should have his damosel to himself.

#### **CHAPTER XLII. How Sir Galahalt and Palomides fought together, and of Sir Dinadan and Sir Galahalt.**

HERE beginneth the second day. Anon as Sir Palomides came into the field, Sir Galahalt, the haut prince, was at the range end, and met with Sir Palomides, and he with him, with great spears. And then they came so hard together that their spears all to-shivered, but Sir Galahalt smote him so hard that he bare him backward over his horse, but yet he lost not his stirrups. Then they drew their swords and lashed together many sad strokes, that many worshipful knights left their business to behold them. But at the last Sir Galahalt, the haut prince, smote a stroke of might unto Palomides, sore upon the helm; but the helm was so hard that the sword might not bite, but slipped and smote off the head of the horse of Sir Palomides. When the haut prince wist and saw the good knight fall unto the earth he was ashamed of that stroke. And therewith he alighted down off his own horse, and prayed the good knight, Palomides, to take that horse of his gift, and to forgive him that deed. Sir, said Palomides, I thank you of your great goodness, for ever of a man of worship a knight shall never have disworship; and so he mounted upon that horse, and the haut prince had another anon. Now, said the haut prince, I release to you that maiden, for ye have won her. Ah, said Palomides, the damosel and I be at your commandment.

So they departed, and Sir Galahalt did great deeds of arms. And right so



came Dinadan and encountered with Sir Galahalt, and either came to other so fast with their spears that their spears brake to their hands. But Dinadan had weened the haut prince had been more weary than he was. And then he smote many sad strokes at the haut prince; but when Dinadan saw he might not get him to the earth he said: My lord, I pray you leave me, and take another. The haut prince knew not Dinadan, and left goodly for his fair words. And so they departed; but soon there came another and told the haut prince that it was Dinadan. Forsooth, said the prince, therefore am I heavy that he is so escaped from me, for with his mocks and japes now shall I never have done with him. And then Galahalt rode fast after him, and bade him: Abide, Dinadan, for King Arthur's sake. Nay, said Dinadan, so God me help, we meet no more together this day. Then in that wrath the haut prince met with Meliagaunce, and he smote him in the throat that an he had fallen his neck had broken; and with the same spear he smote down another knight. Then came in they of Northgalis and many strangers, and were like to have put them of Surluse to the worse, for Sir Galahalt, the haut prince, had ever much in hand. So there came the good knight, Semound the Valiant, with forty knights, and he beat them all aback. Then the Queen Guenever and Sir Launcelot let blow to lodging, and every knight unarmed him, and dressed him to the feast.

### **CHAPTER XLIII. How Sir Archade appealed Sir Palomides of treason, and how Sir Palomides slew him.**

WHEN Palomides was unarmed he asked lodging for himself and the damosel. Anon the haut prince commanded them to lodging. And he was not so soon in his lodging but there came a knight that hight Archade, he was brother unto Goneris that Palomides slew afore in the damosel's quarrel. And this knight, Archade, called Sir Palomides traitor, and appealed him for the death of his brother. By the leave of the haut prince, said Palomides, I shall answer thee. When Sir Galahalt understood their quarrel he bade them go to dinner: And as soon as ye have dined look that either knight be ready in the field. So when they had dined they were armed both, and took their horses, and the queen, and the prince, and Sir Launcelot, were set to behold them; and so they let run their horses, and there Sir Palomides bare Archade on his spear over his horse's tail. And then Palomides alighted and drew his sword, but Sir Archade might not arise; and there Sir Palomides raced off his helm, and smote off his head. Then the haut prince and Queen Guenever went unto supper. Then King Bagdemagus sent away his son Meliagaunce because Sir Launcelot should not meet with him, for he hated Sir Launcelot, and that knew he not.

#### **CHAPTER XLIV. Of the third day, and how Sir Palomides jousted with Sir Lamorak, and other things.**

NOW beginneth the third day of jousting; and at that day King Bagdemagus made him ready; and there came against him King Marsil, that had in gift an island of Sir Galahalt the haut prince; and this island had the name Pomitain. Then it befell that King Bagdemagus and King Marsil of Pomitain met together with spears, and King Marsil had such a buffet that he fell over his horse's croup. Then came there in a knight of King Marsil to revenge his lord, and King Bagdemagus smote him down, horse and man, to the earth. So there came an earl that hight Arrouse, and Sir Breuse, and an hundred knights with them of Pomitain, and the King of Northgalis was with them; and all these were against them of Surluse. And then there began great battle, and many knights were cast under horses' feet. And ever King Bagdemagus did best, for he first began, and ever he held on. Gaheris, Gawaine's brother, smote ever at the face of King Bagdemagus; and at the last King Bagdemagus hurtled down Gaheris, horse and man.

Then by adventure Sir Palomides, the good knight, met with Sir Blamore de Ganis, Sir Bleoberis' brother. And either smote other with great spears, that both their horses and knights fell to the earth. But Sir Blamore had such a fall that he had almost broken his neck, for the blood brast out at nose, mouth, and his ears, but at the last he recovered well by good surgeons. Then there came in the Duke Chaleins of Clarence; and in his governance there came a knight that hight Elis la Noire; and there encountered with him King Bagdemagus, and he smote Elis that he made him to avoid his saddle. So the Duke Chaleins of Clarence did there great deeds of arms, and of so late as he came in the third day there was no man did so well except King Bagdemagus and Sir Palomides, that the prize was given that day to King Bagdemagus. And then they blew unto lodging, and unarmed them, and went to the feast. Right so came Dinadan, and mocked and japed with King Bagdemagus that all knights laughed at him, for he was a fine japer, and well loving all good knights.

So anon as they had dined there came a varlet bearing four spears on his back; and he came to Palomides, and said thus: Here is a knight by hath sent you the choice of four spears, and requireth you for your lady's sake to take that one half of these spears, and joust with him in the field. Tell him, said Palomides, I will not fail him. When Sir Galahalt wist of this, he bade Palomides make him ready. So the Queen Guenever, the haut prince, and Sir Launcelot, they were set upon scaffolds to give the judgment of these two knights. Then Sir Palomides and the strange knight ran so eagerly together that their spears brake to their hands. Anon withal either of them took a great spear in his hand and all to-

shivered them in pieces. And then either took a greater spear, and then the knight smote down Sir Palomides, horse and man, to the earth. And as he would have passed over him the strange knight's horse stumbled and fell down upon Palomides. Then they drew their swords and lashed together wonderly sore a great while.

Then the haut prince and Sir Launcelot said they saw never two knights fight better than they did; but ever the strange knight doubled his strokes, and put Palomides aback; therewithal the haut prince cried: Ho: and then they went to lodging. And when they were unarmed they knew it was the noble knight Sir Lamorak. When Sir Launcelot knew that it was Sir Lamorak he made much of him, for above all earthly men he loved him best except Sir Tristram. Then Queen Guenever commended him, and so did all other good knights make much of him, except Sir Gawaine's brethren. Then Queen Guenever said unto Sir Launcelot: Sir, I require you that an ye joust any more, that ye joust with none of the blood of my lord Arthur. So he promised he would not as at that time.

#### **CHAPTER XLV. Of the fourth day, and of many great feats of arms.**

HERE beginneth the fourth day. Then came into the field the King with the Hundred Knights, and all they of Northgalis, and the Duke Chaleins of Clarence, and King Marsil of Pomitain, and there came Safere, Palomides' brother, and there he told him tidings of his mother. And his name was called the Earl, and so he appealed him afore King Arthur: For he made war upon our father and mother, and there I slew him in plain battle. So they went into the field, and the damosel with them; and there came to encounter again them Sir Bleoberis de Ganis, and Sir Ector de Maris. Sir Palomides encountered with Sir Bleoberis, and either smote other down. And in the same wise did Sir Safere and Sir Ector, and the two couples did battle on foot. Then came in Sir Lamorak, and he encountered with the King with the Hundred Knights, and smote him quite over his horse's tail. And in the same wise he served the King of Northgalis, and also he smote down King Marsil. And so or ever he stint he smote down with his spear and with his sword thirty knights. When Duke Chaleins saw Lamorak do so great prowess he would not meddle with him for shame; and then he charged all his knights in pain of death that none of you touch him; for it were shame to all good knights an that knight were shamed.

Then the two kings gathered them together, and all they set upon Sir Lamorak; and he failed them not, but rushed here and there, smiting on the right hand and on the left, and raced off many helms, so that the haut prince and Queen Guenever said they saw never knight do such deeds of arms on horseback. Alas, said Launcelot to King Bagdemagus, I will arm me and help Sir

Lamorak. And I will ride with you, said King Bagdemagus. And when they two were horsed they came to Sir Lamorak that stood among thirty knights; and well was him that might reach him a buffet, and ever he smote again mightily. Then came there into the press Sir Launcelot, and he threw down Sir Mador de la Porte. And with the truncheon of that spear he threw down many knights. And King Bagdemagus smote on the left hand and on the right hand marvellously well. And then the three kings fled aback. Therewithal then Sir Galahalt let blow to lodging, and all the heralds gave Sir Lamorak the prize. And all this while fought Palomides, Sir Bleoberis, Sir Safere, Sir Ector on foot; never were there four knights evener matched. And then they were departed, and had unto their lodging, and unarmed them, and so they went to the great feast.

But when Sir Lamorak was come into the court Queen Guenever took him in her arms and said: Sir, well have ye done this day. Then came the haut prince, and he made of him great joy, and so did Dinadan, for he wept for joy; but the joy that Sir Launcelot made of Sir Lamorak there might no man tell. Then they went unto rest, and on the morn the haut prince let blow unto the field.

#### **CHAPTER XLVI. Of the Fifth day, and how Sir Lamorak behaved him.**

HERE beginneth the fifth day. So it befell that Sir Palomides came in the morntide, and proffered to joust thereas King Arthur was in a castle there besides Surluse; and there encountered with him a worshipful duke, and there Sir Palomides smote him over his horse's croup. And this duke was uncle unto King Arthur. Then Sir Elise's son rode unto Palomides, and Palomides served Elise in the same wise. When Sir Uwayne saw this he was wroth. Then he took his horse and encountered with Sir Palomides, and Palomides smote him so hard that he went to the earth, horse and man. And for to make a short tale, he smote down three brethren of Sir Gawaine, that is for to say Mordred, Gaheris, and Agravaine. O Jesu, said Arthur, this is a great despite of a Saracen that he shall smite down my blood. And therewithal King Arthur was wood wroth, and thought to have made him ready to joust.

That espied Sir Lamorak, that Arthur and his blood were discomfit; and anon he was ready, and asked Palomides if he would any more joust. Why should I not? said Palomides. Then they hurtled together, and brake their spears, and all to-shivered them, that all the castle rang of their dints. Then either gat a greater spear in his hand, and they came so fiercely together; but Sir Palomides' spear all to-brast and Sir Lamorak's did hold. Therewithal Sir Palomides lost his stirrups and lay upright on his horse's back. And then Sir Palomides returned again and took his damosel, and Sir Safere returned his way.

So, when he was departed, King Arthur came to Sir Lamorak and thanked

him of his goodness, and prayed him to tell him his name. Sir, said Lamorak, wit thou well, I owe you my service, but as at this time I will not abide here, for I see of mine enemies many about me. Alas, said Arthur, now wot I well it is Sir Lamorak de Galis. O Lamorak, abide with me, and by my crown I shall never fail thee: and not so hardy in Gawaine's head, nor none of his brethren, to do thee any wrong. Sir, said Sir Lamorak, wrong have they done me, and to you both. That is truth, said the king, for they slew their own mother and my sister, the which me sore grieveth: it had been much fairer and better that ye had wedded her, for ye are a king's son as well as they. O Jesu, said the noble knight Sir Lamorak unto Arthur, her death shall I never forget. I promise you, and make mine avow unto God, I shall revenge her death as soon as I see time convenable. And if it were not at the reverence of your highness I should now have been revenged upon Sir Gawaine and his brethren. Truly, said Arthur, I will make you at accord. Sir, said Lamorak, as at this time I may not abide with you, for I must to the jousts, where is Sir Launcelot, and the haut prince Sir Galahalt.

Then there was a damosel that was daughter to King Bandes. And there was a Saracen knight that hight Corsabrin, and he loved the damosel, and in no wise he would suffer her to be married; for ever this Corsabrin noised her, and named her that she was out of her mind; and thus he let her that she might not be married.

#### **CHAPTER XLVII. How Sir Palomides fought with Corsabrin for a lady, and how Palomides slew Corsabrin.**

SO by fortune this damosel heard tell that Palomides did much for damosels' sake; so she sent to him a pensel, and prayed him to fight with Sir Corsabrin for her love, and he should have her and her lands of her father's that should fall to her. Then the damosel sent unto Corsabrin, and bade him go unto Sir Palomides that was a paynim as well as he, and she gave him warning that she had sent him her pensel, and if he might overcome Palomides she would wed him. When Corsabrin wist of her deeds then was he wood wroth and angry, and rode unto Surluse where the haut prince was, and there he found Sir Palomides ready, the which had the pensel. So there they waged battle either with other afore Galahalt. Well, said the haut prince, this day must noble knights joust, and at-after dinner we shall see how ye can speed.

Then they blew to jousts; and in came Dinadan, and met with Sir Gerin, a good knight, and he threw him down over his horse's croup; and Sir Dinadan overthrew four knights more; and there he did great deeds of arms, for he was a good knight, but he was a scoffer and a japer, and the merriest knight among fellowship that was that time living. And he had such a custom that he loved

every good knight, and every good knight loved him again. So then when the haut prince saw Dinadan do so well, he sent unto Sir Launcelot and bade him strike down Sir Dinadan: And when that ye have done so bring him afore me and the noble Queen Guenever. Then Sir Launcelot did as he was required. Then Sir Lamorak and he smote down many knights, and raced off helms, and drove all the knights afore them. And so Sir Launcelot smote down Sir Dinadan, and made his men to unarm him, and so brought him to the queen and the haut prince, and they laughed at Dinadan so sore that they might not stand. Well, said Sir Dinadan, yet have I no shame, for the old shrew, Sir Launcelot, smote me down. So they went to dinner, [and] all the court had good sport at Dinadan.

Then when the dinner was done they blew to the field to behold Sir Palomides and Corsabrin. Sir Palomides pight his pensel in midst of the field; and then they hurtled together with their spears as it were thunder, and either smote other to the earth. And then they pulled out their swords, and dressed their shields, and lashed together mightily as mighty knights, that well-nigh there was no piece of harness would hold them, for this Corsabrin was a passing felonious knight. Corsabrin, said Palomides, wilt thou release me yonder damosel and the pensel? Then was Corsabrin wroth out of measure, and gave Palomides such a buffet that he kneeled on his knee. Then Palomides arose lightly, and smote him upon the helm that he fell down right to the earth. And therewith he raced off his helm and said: Corsabrin, yield thee or else thou shalt die of my hands. Fie on thee, said Corsabrin, do thy worst. Then he smote off his head. And therewithal came a stink of his body when the soul departed, that there might nobody abide the savour. So was the corpse had away and buried in a wood, because he was a paynim. Then they blew unto lodging, and Palomides was unarmed.

Then he went unto Queen Guenever, to the haut prince, and to Sir Launcelot. Sir, said the haut prince, here have ye seen this day a great miracle by Corsabrin, what savour there was when the soul departed from the body. Therefore, sir, we will require you to take the baptism upon you, and I promise you all knights will set the more by you, and say more worship by you. Sir, said Palomides, I will that ye all know that into this land I came to be christened, and in my heart I am christened and christened will I be. But I have made such an avow that I may not be christened till I have done seven true battles for Jesu's sake, and then will I be christened; and I trust God will take mine intent, for I mean truly. Then Sir Palomides prayed Queen Guenever and the haut prince to sup with him. And so they did, both Sir Launcelot and Sir Lamorak, and many other good knights. So on the morn they heard their mass, and blew the field, and then knights made them ready.

## **CHAPTER XLVIII. Of the sixth day, and what then was done.**

HERE beginneth the sixth day. Then came therein Sir Gaheris, and there encountered with him Sir Ossaie of Surluse, and Sir Gaheris smote him over his horse's croup. And then either party encountered with other, and there were many spears broken, and many knights cast under feet. So there came in Sir Dornard and Sir Aglovale, that were brethren unto Sir Lamorak, and they met with other two knights, and either smote other so hard that all four knights and horses fell to the earth. When Sir Lamorak saw his two brethren down he was wroth out of measure, and then he gat a great spear in his hand, and therewithal he smote down four good knights, and then his spear brake. Then he pulled out his sword, and smote about him on the right hand and on the left hand, and raced off helms and pulled down knights, that all men marvelled of such deeds of arms as he did, for he fared so that many knights fled. Then he horsed his brethren again, and said: Brethren, ye ought to be ashamed to fall so off your horses! what is a knight but when he is on horseback? I set not by a knight when he is on foot, for all battles on foot are but pillers' battles. For there should no knight fight on foot but if it were for treason, or else he were driven thereto by force; therefore, brethren, sit fast on your horses, or else fight never more afore me.

With that came in the Duke Chaleins of Clarence, and there encountered with him the Earl Ulbawes of Surluse, and either of them smote other down. Then the knights of both parties horsed their lords again, for Sir Ector and Bleoberis were on foot, waiting on the Duke Chaleins. And the King with the Hundred Knights was with the Earl of Ulbawes. With that came Gaheris and lashed to the King with the Hundred Knights, and he to him again. Then came the Duke Chaleins and departed them.

Then they blew to lodging, and the knights unarmed them and drew them to their dinner; and at the midst of their dinner in came Dinadan and began to rail. Then he beheld the haut prince, that seemed wroth with some fault that he saw; for he had a custom he loved no fish, and because he was served with fish, the which he hated, therefore he was not merry. When Sir Dinadan had espied the haut prince, he espied where was a fish with a great head, and that he gat betwixt two dishes, and served the haut prince with that fish. And then he said thus: Sir Galahalt, well may I liken you to a wolf, for he will never eat fish, but flesh; then the haut prince laughed at his words. Well, well, said Dinadan to Launcelot, what devil do ye in this country, for here may no mean knights win no worship for thee. Sir Dinadan, said Launcelot, I ensure thee I shall no more meet with thee nor with thy great spear, for I may not sit in my saddle when that spear hitteth me. And if I be happy I shall beware of that boistous body that thou bearest. Well, said Launcelot, make good watch ever: God forbid that ever we

meet but if it be at a dish of meat. Then laughed the queen and the haut prince, that they might not sit at their table; thus they made great joy till on the morn, and then they heard mass, and blew to field. And Queen Guenever and all the estates were set, and judges armed clean with their shields to keep the right.

**CHAPTER XLIX. Of the seventh battle, and how Sir Launcelot, being disguised like a maid, smote down Sir Dinadan.**

NOW beginneth the seventh battle. There came in the Duke Cambines, and there encountered with him Sir Aristance, that was counted a good knight, and they met so hard that either bare other down, horse and man. Then came there the Earl of Lambaile and helped the duke again to horse. Then came there Sir Ossaise of Surluse, and he smote the Earl Lambaile down from his horse. Then began they to do great deeds of arms, and many spears were broken, and many knights were cast to the earth. Then the King of Northgalis and the Earl Ulbawes smote together that all the judges thought it was like mortal death. This meanwhile Queen Guenever, and the haut prince, and Sir Launcelot, made there Sir Dinadan make him ready to joust. I would, said Dinadan, ride into the field, but then one of you twain will meet with me. Per dieu, said the haut prince, ye may see how we sit here as judges with our shields, and always mayest thou behold whether we sit here or not.

So Sir Dinadan departed and took his horse, and met with many knights, and did passing well. And as he was departed, Sir Launcelot disguised himself, and put upon his armour a maiden's garment freshly attired. Then Sir Launcelot made Sir Galihodin to lead him through the range, and all men had wonder what damosel it was. And so as Sir Dinadan came into the range, Sir Launcelot, that was in the damosel's array, gat Galihodin's spear, and ran unto Sir Dinadan. And always Sir Dinadan looked up thereas Sir Launcelot was, and then he saw one sit in the stead of Sir Launcelot, armed. But when Dinadan saw a manner of a damosel he dread perils that it was Sir Launcelot disguised, but Sir Launcelot came on him so fast that he smote him over his horse's croup; and then with great scorns they gat Sir Dinadan into the forest there beside, and there they dispoiled him unto his shirt, and put upon him a woman's garment, and so brought him into the field: and so they blew unto lodging. And every knight went and unarmed them. Then was Sir Dinadan brought in among them all. And when Queen Guenever saw Sir Dinadan brought so among them all, then she laughed that she fell down, and so did all that there were. Well, said Dinadan to Launcelot, thou art so false that I can never beware of thee. Then by all the assent they gave Sir Launcelot the prize, the next was Sir Lamorak de Galis, the third was Sir Palomides, the fourth was King Bagdemagus; so these four knights



had the prize, and there was great joy, and great nobley in all the court.

And on the morn Queen Guenever and Sir Launcelot departed unto King Arthur, but in no wise Sir Lamorak would not go with them. I shall undertake, said Sir Launcelot, that an ye will go with us King Arthur shall charge Sir Gawaine and his brethren never to do you hurt. As for that, said Sir Lamorak, I will not trust Sir Gawaine nor none of his brethren; and wit ye well, Sir Launcelot, an it were not for my lord King Arthur's sake, I should match Sir Gawaine and his brethren well enough. But to say that I should trust them, that shall I never, and therefore I pray you recommend me unto my lord Arthur, and unto all my lords of the Round Table. And in what place that ever I come I shall do you service to my power: and sir, it is but late that I revenged that, when my lord Arthur's kin were put to the worse by Sir Palomides. Then Sir Lamorak departed from Sir Launcelot, and either wept at their departing.

#### **CHAPTER L. How by treason Sir Tristram was brought to a tournament for to have been slain, and how he was put in prison.**

NOW turn we from this matter, and speak we of Sir Tristram, of whom this book is principally of, and leave we the king and the queen, Sir Launcelot, and Sir Lamorak, and here beginneth the treason of King Mark, that he ordained against Sir Tristram. There was cried by the coasts of Cornwall a great tournament and jousts, and all was done by Sir Galahalt the haut prince and King Bagdemagus, to the intent to slay Launcelot, or else utterly destroy him and shame him, because Sir Launcelot had always the higher degree, therefore this prince and this king made this jousts against Sir Launcelot. And thus their counsel was discovered unto King Mark, whereof he was full glad.

Then King Mark bethought him that he would have Sir Tristram unto that tournament disguised that no man should know him, to that intent that the haut prince should ween that Sir Tristram were Sir Launcelot. So at these jousts came in Sir Tristram. And at that time Sir Launcelot was not there, but when they saw a knight disguised do such deeds of arms, they weened it had been Sir Launcelot. And in especial King Mark said it was Sir Launcelot plainly. Then they set upon him, both King Bagdemagus, and the haut prince, and their knights, that it was wonder that ever Sir Tristram might endure that pain. Notwithstanding for all the pain that he had, Sir Tristram won the degree at that tournament, and there he hurt many knights and bruised them, and they hurt him and bruised him wonderly sore. So when the jousts were all done they knew well that it was Sir Tristram de Liones; and all that were on King Mark's party were glad that Sir Tristram was hurt, and the remnant were sorry of his hurt; for Sir Tristram was not so behated as was Sir Launcelot within the realm of England.

Then came King Mark unto Sir Tristram and said: Fair nephew, I am sorry of your hurts. Gramercy my lord, said Sir Tristram. Then King Mark made Sir Tristram to be put in an horse bier in great sign of love, and said: Fair cousin, I shall be your leech myself. And so he rode forth with Sir Tristram, and brought him to a castle by daylight. And then King Mark made Sir Tristram to eat. And then after he gave him a drink, the which as soon as he had drunk he fell asleep. And when it was night he made him to be carried to another castle, and there he put him in a strong prison, and there he ordained a man and a woman to give him his meat and drink. So there he was a great while.

Then was Sir Tristram missed, and no creature wist where he was become. When La Beale Isoud heard how he was missed, privily she went unto Sir Sadok, and prayed him to espy where was Sir Tristram. Then when Sadok wist how Sir Tristram was missed, and anon espied that he was put in prison by King Mark and the traitors of Magouns, then Sadok and two of his cousins laid them in an ambushment, fast by the Castle of Tintagil, in arms. And as by fortune, there came riding King Mark and four of his nephews, and a certain of the traitors of Magouns. When Sir Sadok espied them he brake out of the bushment, and set there upon them. And when King Mark espied Sir Sadok he fled as fast as he might, and there Sir Sadok slew all the four nephews unto King Mark. But these traitors of Magouns slew one of Sadok's cousins with a great wound in the neck, but Sadok smote the other to the death. Then Sir Sadok rode upon his way unto a castle that was called Liones, and there he espied of the treason and felony of King Mark. So they of that castle rode with Sir Sadok till that they came to a castle that hight Arbray, and there in the town they found Sir Dinas the Seneschal, that was a good knight. But when Sir Sadok had told Sir Dinas of all the treason of King Mark he defied such a king, and said he would give up his lands that he held of him. And when he said these words all manner knights said as Sir Dinas said. Then by his advice and of Sir Sadok's, he let stuff all the towns and castles within the country of Liones, and assembled all the people that they might make.

#### **CHAPTER LI. How King Mark let do counterfeit letters from the Pope, and how Sir Percivale delivered Sir Tristram out of prison.**

NOW turn we unto King Mark, that when he was escaped from Sir Sadok he rode unto the Castle of Tintagil, and there he made great cry and noise, and cried unto harness all that might bear arms. Then they sought and found where were dead four cousins of King Mark's, and the traitor of Magouns. Then the king let inter them in a chapel. Then the king let cry in all the country that held of him, to go unto arms, for he understood to the war he must needs. When King Mark

heard and understood how Sir Sadok and Sir Dinas were arisen in the country of Liones he remembered of wiles and treason. Lo thus he did: he let make and counterfeit letters from the Pope, and did make a strange clerk to bear them unto King Mark; the which letters specified that King Mark should make him ready, upon pain of cursing, with his host to come to the Pope, to help to go to Jerusalem, for to make war upon the Saracens.

When this clerk was come by the mean of the king, anon withal King Mark sent these letters unto Sir Tristram and bade him say thus: that an he would go war upon the miscreants, he should be had out of prison, and to have all his power. When Sir Tristram understood this letter, then he said thus to the clerk: Ah, King Mark, ever hast thou been a traitor, and ever will be; but, Clerk, said Sir Tristram, say thou thus unto King Mark: Since the Apostle Pope hath sent for him, bid him go thither himself; for tell him, traitor king as he is, I will not go at his commandment, get I out of prison as I may, for I see I am well rewarded for my true service. Then the clerk returned unto King Mark, and told him of the answer of Sir Tristram. Well, said King Mark, yet shall he be beguiled. So he went into his chamber, and counterfeit letters; and the letters specified that the Pope desired Sir Tristram to come himself, to make war upon the miscreants. When the clerk was come again to Sir Tristram and took him these letters, then Sir Tristram beheld these letters, and anon espied they were of King Mark's counterfeiting. Ah, said Sir Tristram, false hast thou been ever, King Mark, and so wilt thou end. Then the clerk departed from Sir Tristram and came to King Mark again.

By then there were come four wounded knights within the Castle of Tintagil, and one of them his neck was nigh broken in twain. Another had his arm stricken away, the third was borne through with a spear, the fourth had his teeth stricken in twain. And when they came afore King Mark they cried and said: King, why fleest thou not, for all this country is arisen clearly against thee? Then was King Mark wroth out of measure.

And in the meanwhile there came into the country Sir Percivale de Galis to seek Sir Tristram. And when he heard that Sir Tristram was in prison, Sir Percivale made clearly the deliverance of Sir Tristram by his knightly means. And when he was so delivered he made great joy of Sir Percivale, and so each one of other. Sir Tristram said unto Sir Percivale: An ye will abide in these marches I will ride with you. Nay, said Percivale, in this country I may not tarry, for I must needs into Wales. So Sir Percivale departed from Sir Tristram, and rode straight unto King Mark, and told him how he had delivered Sir Tristram; and also he told the king that he had done himself great shame for to put Sir Tristram in prison, for he is now the knight of most renown in this world living.

And wit thou well the noblest knights of the world love Sir Tristram, and if he will make war upon you ye may not abide it. That is truth, said King Mark, but I may not love Sir Tristram because he loveth my queen and my wife, La Beale Isoud. Ah, fie for shame, said Sir Percivale, say ye never so more. Are ye not uncle unto Sir Tristram, and he your nephew? Ye should never think that so noble a knight as Sir Tristram is, that he would do himself so great a villainy to hold his uncle's wife; howbeit, said Sir Percivale, he may love your queen sinless, because she is called one of the fairest ladies of the world.

Then Sir Percivale departed from King Mark. So when he was departed King Mark bethought him of more treason: notwithstanding King Mark granted Sir Percivale never by no manner of means to hurt Sir Tristram. So anon King Mark sent unto Sir Dinas the Seneschal that he should put down all the people that he had raised, for he sent him an oath that he would go himself unto the Pope of Rome to war upon the miscreants; and this is a fairer war than thus to arise the people against your king. When Sir Dinas understood that King Mark would go upon the miscreants, then Sir Dinas in all the haste put down all the people; and when the people were departed every man to his home, then King Mark espied where was Sir Tristram with La Beale Isoud; and there by treason King Mark let take him and put him in prison, contrary to his promise that he made unto Sir Percivale.

When Queen Isoud understood that Sir Tristram was in prison she made as great sorrow as ever made lady or gentlewoman. Then Sir Tristram sent a letter unto La Beale Isoud, and prayed her to be his good lady; and if it pleased her to make a vessel ready for her and him, he would go with her unto the realm of Logris, that is this land. When La Beale Isoud understood Sir Tristram's letters and his intent, she sent him another, and bade him be of good comfort, for she would do make the vessel ready, and all thing to purpose.

Then La Beale Isoud sent unto Sir Dinas, and to Sadok, and prayed them in anywise to take King Mark, and put him in prison, unto the time that she and Sir Tristram were departed unto the realm of Logris. When Sir Dinas the Seneschal understood the treason of King Mark he promised her again, and sent her word that King Mark should be put in prison. And as they devised it so it was done. And then Sir Tristram was delivered out of prison; and anon in all the haste Queen Isoud and Sir Tristram went and took their counsel with that they would have with them when they departed.

## **CHAPTER LII. How Sir Tristram and La Beale Isoud came unto England, and how Sir Launcelot brought them to Joyous Gard.**

THEN La Beale Isoud and Sir Tristram took their vessel, and came by water

into this land. And so they were not in this land four days but there came a cry of a jousts and tournament that King Arthur let make. When Sir Tristram heard tell of that tournament he disguised himself, and La Beale Isoud, and rode unto that tournament. And when he came there he saw many knights joust and tourney; and so Sir Tristram dressed him to the range, and to make short conclusion, he overthrew fourteen knights of the Round Table. When Sir Launcelot saw these knights thus overthrown, Sir Launcelot dressed him to Sir Tristram. That saw La Beale Isoud how Sir Launcelot was come into the field. Then La Beale Isoud sent unto Sir Launcelot a ring, and bade him wit that it was Sir Tristram de Lionnes. When Sir Launcelot under stood that there was Sir Tristram he was full glad, and would not joust. Then Sir Launcelot espied whither Sir Tristram yede, and after him he rode; and then either made of other great joy. And so Sir Launcelot brought Sir Tristram and La Beale Isoud unto Joyous Gard, that was his own castle, that he had won with his own hands. And there Sir Launcelot put them in to wield for their own. And wit ye well that castle was garnished and furnished for a king and a queen royal there to have sojourned. And Sir Launcelot charged all his people to honour them and love them as they would do himself.

So Sir Launcelot departed unto King Arthur; and then he told Queen Guenever how he that jousted so well at the last tournament was Sir Tristram. And there he told her how he had with him La Beale Isoud maugre King Mark, and so Queen Guenever told all this unto King Arthur. When King Arthur wist that Sir Tristram was escaped and come from King Mark, and had brought La Beale Isoud with him, then was he passing glad. So because of Sir Tristram King Arthur let make a cry, that on May Day should be a jousts before the castle of Lonazep; and that castle was fast by Joyous Gard. And thus Arthur devised, that all the knights of this land, and of Cornwall, and of North Wales, should joust against all these countries, Ireland, Scotland, and the remnant of Wales, and the country of Gore, and Surluse, and of Listinoise, and they of Northumberland, and all they that held lands of Arthur on this half the sea. When this cry was made many knights were glad and many were unglad. Sir, said Launcelot unto Arthur, by this cry that ye have made ye will put us that be about you in great jeopardy, for there be many knights that have great envy to us; therefore when we shall meet at the day of jousts there will be hard shift among us. As for that, said Arthur, I care not; there shall we prove who shall be best of his hands. So when Sir Launcelot understood wherefore King Arthur made this jousting, then he made such purveyance that La Beale Isoud should behold the jousts in a secret place that was honest for her estate.

Now turn we unto Sir Tristram and to La Beale Isoud, how they made great

joy daily together with all manner of mirths that they could devise; and every day Sir Tristram would go ride a-hunting, for Sir Tristram was that time called the best chaser of the world, and the noblest blower of an horn of all manner of measures; for as books report, of Sir Tristram came all the good terms of venery and hunting, and all the sizes and measures of blowing of an horn; and of him we had first all the terms of hawking, and which were beasts of chase and beasts of venery, and which were vermins, and all the blasts that long to all manner of games. First to the uncoupling, to the seeking, to the rechate, to the flight, to the death, and to strake, and many other blasts and terms, that all manner of gentlemen have cause to the world's end to praise Sir Tristram, and to pray for his soul.

### **CHAPTER LIII. How by the counsel of La Beale Isoud Sir Tristram rode armed, and how he met with Sir Palomides.**

SO on a day La Beale Isoud said unto Sir Tristram: I marvel me much, said she, that ye remember not yourself, how ye be here in a strange country, and here be many perilous knights; and well ye wot that King Mark is full of treason; and that ye will ride thus to chase and to hunt unarmed ye might be destroyed. My fair lady and my love, I cry you mercy, I will no more do so. So then Sir Tristram rode daily a-hunting armed, and his men bearing his shield and his spear. So on a day a little afore the month of May, Sir Tristram chased an hart passing eagerly, and so the hart passed by a fair well. And then Sir Tristram alighted and put off his helm to drink of that bubbly water. Right so he heard and saw the Questing Beast come to the well. When Sir Tristram saw that beast he put on his helm, for he deemed he should hear of Sir Palomides, for that beast was his quest. Right so Sir Tristram saw where came a knight armed, upon a noble courser, and he saluted him, and they spake of many things; and this knight's name was Breuse Saunce PitÃ©. And right so withal there came unto them the noble knight Sir Palomides, and either saluted other, and spake fair to other.

Fair knights, said Sir Palomides, I can tell you tidings. What is that? said those knights. Sirs, wit ye well that King Mark is put in prison by his own knights, and all was for love of Sir Tristram; for King Mark had put Sir Tristram twice in prison, and once Sir Percivale delivered the noble knight Sir Tristram out of prison. And at the last time Queen La Beale Isoud delivered him, and went clearly away with him into this realm; and all this while King Mark, the false traitor, is in prison. Is this truth? said Palomides; then shall we hastily hear of Sir Tristram. And as for to say that I love La Beale Isoud paramours, I dare make good that I do, and that she hath my service above all other ladies, and

shall have the term of my life.

And right so as they stood talking they saw afore them where came a knight all armed, on a great horse, and one of his men bare his shield, and the other his spear. And anon as that knight espied them he gat his shield and his spear and dressed him to joust. Fair fellows, said Sir Tristram, yonder is a knight will joust with us, let see which of us shall encounter with him, for I see well he is of the court of King Arthur. It shall not be long or he be met withal, said Sir Palomides, for I found never no knight in my quest of this glasting beast, but an he would joust I never refused him. As well may I, said Breuse Saunce Pitã©, follow that beast as ye. Then shall ye do battle with me, said Palomides.

So Sir Palomides dressed him unto that other knight, Sir Bleoberis, that was a full noble knight, nigh kin unto Sir Launcelot. And so they met so hard that Sir Palomides fell to the earth, horse and all. Then Sir Bleoberis cried aloud and said thus: Make thee ready thou false traitor knight, Breuse Saunce Pitã©, for wit thou certainly I will have ado with thee to the utterance for the noble knights and ladies that thou hast falsely betrayed. When this false knight and traitor, Breuse Saunce Pitã©, heard him say so, he took his horse by the bridle and fled his way as fast as ever his horse might run, for sore he was of him afeard. When Sir Bleoberis saw him flee he followed fast after, through thick and through thin. And by fortune as Sir Breuse fled, he saw even afore him three knights of the Table Round, of the which the one hight Sir Ector de Maris, the other hight Sir Percivale de Galis, the third hight Sir Harry le Fise Lake, a good knight and an hardy. And as for Sir Percivale, he was called that time of his time one of the best knights of the world, and the best assured. When Breuse saw these knights he rode straight unto them, and cried unto them and prayed them of rescues. What need have ye? said Sir Ector. Ah, fair knights, said Sir Breuse, here followeth me the most traitor knight, and most coward, and most of villainy; his name is Breuse Saunce Pitã©, and if he may get me he will slay me without mercy and pity. Abide with us, said Sir Percivale, and we shall warrant you.

Then were they ware of Sir Bleoberis that came riding all that he might. Then Sir Ector put himself forth to joust afore them all. When Sir Bleoberis saw that they were four knights and he but himself, he stood in a doubt whether he would turn or hold his way. Then he said to himself: I am a knight of the Table Round, and rather than I should shame mine oath and my blood I will hold my way whatsoever fall thereof. And then Sir Ector dressed his spear, and smote either other passing sore, but Sir Ector fell to the earth. That saw Sir Percivale, and he dressed his horse toward him all that he might drive, but Sir Percivale had such a stroke that horse and man fell to the earth. When Sir Harry saw that they were both to the earth then he said to himself: Never was Breuse of such

prohess. So Sir Harry dressed his horse, and they met together so strongly that both the horses and knights fell to the earth, but Sir Bleoberis' horse began to recover again. That saw Breuse and he came hurtling, and smote him over and over, and would have slain him as he lay on the ground. Then Sir Harry le Fise Lake arose lightly, and took the bridle of Sir Breuse's horse, and said: Fie for shame! strike never a knight when he is at the earth, for this knight may be called no shameful knight of his deeds, for yet as men may see thereas he lieth on the ground he hath done worshipfully, and put to the worse passing good knights. Therefore will I not let, said Sir Breuse. Thou shalt not choose, said Sir Harry, as at this time. Then when Sir Breuse saw that he might not choose nor have his will he spake fair. Then Sir Harry let him go. And then anon he made his horse to run over Sir Bleoberis, and rashed him to the earth like if he would have slain him. When Sir Harry saw him do so villainously he cried: Traitor knight, leave off for shame. And as Sir Harry would have taken his horse to fight with Sir Breuse, then Sir Breuse ran upon him as he was half upon his horse, and smote him down, horse and man, to the earth, and had near slain Sir Harry, the good knight. That saw Sir Percivale, and then he cried: Traitor knight what dost thou? And when Sir Percivale was upon his horse Sir Breuse took his horse and fled all that ever he might, and Sir Percivale and Sir Harry followed after him fast, but ever the longer they chased the farther were they behind.

Then they turned again and came to Sir Ector de Maris and to Sir Bleoberis. Ah, fair knights, said Bleoberis, why have ye succoured that false knight and traitor? Why said Sir Harry, what knight is he? for well I wot it is a false knight, said Sir Harry, and a coward and a felonious knight. Sir, said Bleoberis, he is the most coward knight, and a devourer of ladies and a destroyer of good knights and especially of Arthur's. What is your name? said Sir Ector. My name is Sir Bleoberis de Ganis. Alas, fair cousin, said Ector, forgive it me, for I am Sir Ector de Maris. Then Sir Percivale and Sir Harry made great joy that they met with Bleoberis, but all they were heavy that Sir Breuse was escaped them, whereof they made great dole.

#### **CHAPTER LIV. Of Sir Palomides, and how he met with Sir Bleoberis and with Sir Ector, and of Sir Pervivale.**

RIGHT so as they stood thus there came Sir Palomides, and when he saw the shield of Bleoberis lie on the earth, then said Palomides: He that oweth that shield let him dress him to me, for he smote me down here fast by at a fountain, and therefore I will fight for him on foot. I am ready, said Bleoberis, here to answer thee, for wit thou well, sir knight, it was I, and my name is Bleoberis de Ganis. Well art thou met, said Palomides, and wit thou well my name is



Palomides the Saracen; and either of them hated other to the death. Sir Palomides, said Ector, wit thou well there is neither thou nor none knight that beareth the life that slayeth any of our blood but he shall die for it; therefore an thou list to fight go seek Sir Launcelot or Sir Tristram, and there shall ye find your match. With them have I met, said Palomides, but I had never no worship of them. Was there never no manner of knight, said Sir Ector, but they that ever matched with you? Yes, said Palomides, there was the third, a good knight as any of them, and of his age he was the best that ever I found; for an he might have lived till he had been an hardier man there liveth no knight now such, and his name was Sir Lamorak de Galis. And as he had jousted at a tournament there he overthrew me and thirty knights more, and there he won the degree. And at his departing there met him Sir Gawaine and his brethren, and with great pain they slew him feloniously, unto all good knights' great damage. Anon as Sir Percivale heard that his brother was dead, Sir Lamorak, he fell over his horse's mane swooning, and there he made the greatest dole that ever made knight. And when Sir Percivale arose he said: Alas, my good and noble brother Sir Lamorak, now shall we never meet, and I trow in all the wide world a man may not find such a knight as he was of his age; and it is too much to suffer the death of our father King Pellinore, and now the death of our good brother Sir Lamorak.

Then in the meanwhile there came a varlet from the court of King Arthur, and told them of the great tournament that should be at Lonazep, and how these lands, Cornwall and Northgalis, should be against all them that would come.

#### **CHAPTER LV. How Sir Tristram met with Sir Dinadan, and of their devices, and what he said to Sir Gawaine's brethren.**

NOW turn we unto Sir Tristram, that as he rode a-hunting he met with Sir Dinadan, that was come into that country to seek Sir Tristram. Then Sir Dinadan told Sir Tristram his name, but Sir Tristram would not tell him his name, wherefore Sir Dinadan was wroth. For such a foolish knight as ye are, said Sir Dinadan, I saw but late this day lying by a well, and he fared as he slept; and there he lay like a fool grinning, and would not speak, and his shield lay by him, and his horse stood by him; and well I wot he was a lover. Ah, fair sir, said Sir Tristram are ye not a lover? Mary, fie on that craft! said Sir Dinadan. That is evil said, said Sir Tristram, for a knight may never be of prowess but if he be a lover. It is well said, said Sir Dinadan; now tell me your name, sith ye be a lover, or else I shall do battle with you. As for that, said Sir Tristram, it is no reason to fight with me but I tell you my name; and as for that my name shall ye not wit as at this time. Fie for shame, said Dinadan, art thou a knight and durst not tell thy name to me? therefore I will fight with thee. As for that, said Sir Tristram, I will

be advised, for I will not do battle but if me list. And if I do battle, said Sir Tristram, ye are not able to withstand me. Fie on thee, coward, said Sir Dinadan.

And thus as they hoved still, they saw a knight come riding against them. Lo, said Sir Tristram, see where cometh a knight riding, will joust with you. Anon, as Sir Dinadan beheld him he said: That is the same doted knight that I saw lie by the well, neither sleeping nor waking. Well, said Sir Tristram, I know that knight well with the covered shield of azure, he is the king's son of Northumberland, his name is Epinegris; and he is as great a lover as I know, and he loveth the king's daughter of Wales, a full fair lady. And now I suppose, said Sir Tristram, an ye require him he will joust with you, and then shall ye prove whether a lover be a better knight, or ye that will not love no lady. Well, said Dinadan, now shalt thou see what I shall do. Therewithal Sir Dinadan spake on high and said: Sir knight, make thee ready to joust with me, for it is the custom of errant knights one to joust with other. Sir, said Epinegris, is that the rule of you errant knights for to make a knight to joust, will he or nill? As for that, said Dinadan, make thee ready, for here is for me. And therewithal they spurred their horses and met together so hard that Epinegris smote down Sir Dinadan. Then Sir Tristram rode to Sir Dinadan and said: How now, meseemeth the lover hath well sped. Fie on thee, coward, said Sir Dinadan, and if thou be a good knight revenge me. Nay, said Sir Tristram, I will not joust as at this time, but take your horse and let us go hence. God defend me, said Sir Dinadan, from thy fellowship, for I never sped well since I met with thee: and so they departed. Well, said Sir Tristram, peradventure I could tell you tidings of Sir Tristram. God defend me, said Dinadan, from thy fellowship, for Sir Tristram were mickle the worse an he were in thy company; and then they departed. Sir, said Sir Tristram, yet it may happen I shall meet with you in other places.

So rode Sir Tristram unto Joyous Gard, and there he heard in that town great noise and cry. What is this noise? said Sir Tristram. Sir, said they, here is a knight of this castle that hath been long among us, and right now he is slain with two knights, and for none other cause but that our knight said that Sir Launcelot were a better knight than Sir Gawaine. That was a simple cause, said Sir Tristram, for to slay a good knight for to say well by his master. That is little remedy to us, said the men of the town. For an Sir Launcelot had been here soon we should have been revenged upon the false knights.

When Sir Tristram heard them say so he sent for his shield and for his spear, and lightly within a while he had overtaken them, and bade them turn and amend that they had misdome. What amends wouldst thou have? said the one knight. And therewith they took their course, and either met other so hard that Sir Tristram smote down that knight over his horse's tail. Then the other knight

dressed him to Sir Tristram, and in the same wise he served the other knight. And then they gat off their horses as well as they might, and dressed their shields and swords to do their battle to the utterance. Knights, said Sir Tristram, ye shall tell me of whence ye are, and what be your names, for such men ye might be ye should hard escape my hands; and ye might be such men of such a country that for all your evil deeds ye should pass quit. Wit thou well, sir knight, said they, we fear not to tell thee our names, for my name is Sir Agravaine, and my name is Gaheris, brethren unto the good knight Sir Gawaine, and we be nephews unto King Arthur. Well, said Sir Tristram, for King Arthur's sake I shall let you pass as at this time. But it is shame, said Sir Tristram, that Sir Gawaine and ye be come of so great a blood that ye four brethren are so named as ye be, for ye be called the greatest destroyers and murderers of good knights that be now in this realm; for it is but as I heard say that Sir Gawaine and ye slew among you a better knight than ever ye were, that was the noble knight Sir Lamorak de Galis. An it had pleased God, said Sir Tristram, I would I had been by Sir Lamorak at his death. Then shouldst thou have gone the same way, said Sir Gaheris. Fair knight, said Sir Tristram, there must have been many more knights than ye are. And therewithal Sir Tristram departed from them toward Joyous Gard. And when he was departed they took their horses, and the one said to the other: We will overtake him and be revenged upon him in the despite of Sir Lamorak.

#### **CHAPTER LVI. How Sir Tristram smote down Sir Agravaine and Sir Gaheris, and how Sir Dinadan was sent for by La Beale Isoud.**

SO when they had overtaken Sir Tristram, Sir Agravaine bade him: Turn, traitor knight. That is evil said, said Sir Tristram; and therewith he pulled out his sword, and smote Sir Agravaine such a buffet upon the helm that he tumbled down off his horse in a swoon, and he had a grievous wound. And then he turned to Gaheris, and Sir Tristram smote his sword and his helm together with such a might that Gaheris fell out of his saddle: and so Sir Tristram rode unto Joyous Gard, and there he alighted and unarmed him. So Sir Tristram told La Beale Isoud of all his adventure, as ye have heard to-fore. And when she heard him tell of Sir Dinadan: Sir, said she, is not that he that made the song by King Mark? That same is he, said Sir Tristram, for he is the best bourder and japer, and a noble knight of his hands, and the best fellow that I know, and all good knights love his fellowship. Alas, sir, said she, why brought ye not him with you? Have ye no care, said Sir Tristram, for he rideth to seek me in this country; and therefore he will not away till he have met with me. And there Sir Tristram told La Beale Isoud how Sir Dinadan held against all lovers. Right so there came in a varlet and told Sir Tristram how there was come an errant knight into the town,

with such colours upon his shield. That is Sir Dinadan, said Sir Tristram; wit ye what ye shall do, said Sir Tristram: send ye for him, my Lady Isoud, and I will not be seen, and ye shall hear the merriest knight that ever ye spake withal, and the maddest talker; and I pray you heartily that ye make him good cheer.

Then anon La Beale Isoud sent into the town, and prayed Sir Dinadan that he would come into the castle and repose him there with a lady. With a good will, said Sir Dinadan; and so he mounted upon his horse and rode into the castle; and there he alighted, and was unarmed, and brought into the castle. Anon La Beale Isoud came unto him, and either saluted other; then she asked him of whence that he was. Madam, said Dinadan, I am of the court of King Arthur, and knight of the Table Round, and my name is Sir Dinadan. What do ye in this country? said La Beale Isoud. Madam, said he, I seek Sir Tristram the good knight, for it was told me that he was in this country. It may well be, said La Beale Isoud, but I am not ware of him. Madam, said Dinadan, I marvel of Sir Tristram and mo other lovers, what aileth them to be so mad and so sotted upon women. Why, said La Beale Isoud, are ye a knight and be no lover? it is shame to you: wherefore ye may not be called a good knight [but] if ye make a quarrel for a lady. God defend me, said Dinadan, for the joy of love is too short, and the sorrow thereof, and what cometh thereof, dureth over long. Ah, said La Beale Isoud, say ye not so, for here fast by was the good knight Sir Bleoberis, that fought with three knights at once for a damosel's sake, and he won her afore the King of Northumberland. It was so, said Sir Dinadan, for I know him well for a good knight and a noble, and come of noble blood; for all be noble knights of whom he is come of, that is Sir Launcelot du Lake.

Now I pray you, said La Beale Isoud, tell me will you fight for my love with three knights that do me great wrong? and insomuch as ye be a knight of King Arthur's I require you to do battle for me. Then Sir Dinadan said: I shall say you ye be as fair a lady as ever I saw any, and much fairer than is my lady Queen Guenever, but wit ye well at one word, I will not fight for you with three knights, Jesu defend me. Then Isoud laughed, and had good game at him. So he had all the cheer that she might make him, and there he lay all that night. And on the morn early Sir Tristram armed him, and La Beale Isoud gave him a good helm; and then he promised her that he would meet with Sir Dinadan, and they two would ride together into Lonazep, where the tournament should be: And there shall I make ready for you where ye shall see the tournament. Then departed Sir Tristram with two squires that bare his shield and his spears that were great and long.

## **CHAPTER LVII. How Sir Dinadan met with Sir Tristram, and with**

### **jousting with Sir Palomides, Sir Dinadan knew him.**

THEN after that Sir Dinadan departed, and rode his way a great pace until he had overtaken Sir Tristram. And when Sir Dinadan had overtaken him he knew him anon, and he hated the fellowship of him above all other knights. Ah, said Sir Dinadan, art thou that coward knight that I met with yesterday? keep thee, for thou shalt joust with me maugre thy head. Well, said Sir Tristram, and I am loath to joust. And so they let their horses run, and Sir Tristram missed of him a-purpose, and Sir Dinadan brake a spear upon Sir Tristram, and therewith Sir Dinadan dressed him to draw out his sword. Not so, said Sir Tristram, why are ye so wroth? I will not fight. Fie on thee, coward, said Dinadan, thou shamest all knights. As for that, said Sir Tristram, I care not, for I will wait upon you and be under your protection; for because ye are so good a knight ye may save me. The devil deliver me of thee, said Sir Dinadan, for thou art as goodly a man of arms and of thy person as ever I saw, and the most coward that ever I saw. What wilt thou do with those great spears that thou carriest with thee? I shall give them, said Sir Tristram, to some good knight when I come to the tournament; and if I see you do best, I shall give them to you.

So thus as they rode talking they saw where came an errant knight afore them, that dressed him to joust. Lo, said Sir Tristram, yonder is one will joust; now dress thee to him. Ah, shame betide thee, said Sir Dinadan. Nay, not so, said Tristram, for that knight beseemeth a shrew. Then shall I, said Sir Dinadan. And so they dressed their shields and their spears, and they met together so hard that the other knight smote down Sir Dinadan from his horse. Lo, said Sir Tristram, it had been better ye had left. Fie on thee, coward, said Sir Dinadan. Then Sir Dinadan started up and gat his sword in his hand, and proffered to do battle on foot. Whether in love or in wrath? said the other knight. Let us do battle in love, said Sir Dinadan. What is your name, said that knight, I pray you tell me. Wit ye well my name is Sir Dinadan. Ah, Dinadan, said that knight, and my name is Gareth, the youngest brother unto Sir Gawaine. Then either made of other great cheer, for this Gareth was the best knight of all the brethren, and he proved a good knight. Then they took their horses, and there they spake of Sir Tristram, how such a coward he was; and every word Sir Tristram heard and laughed them to scorn.

Then were they ware where came a knight afore them well horsed and well armed, and he made him ready to joust. Fair knights, said Sir Tristram, look betwixt you who shall joust with yonder knight, for I warn you I will not have ado with him. Then shall I, said Sir Gareth. And so they encountered together, and there that knight smote down Sir Gareth over his horse's croup. How now, said Sir Tristram unto Sir Dinadan, dress thee now and revenge the good knight

Gareth. That shall I not, said Sir Dinadan, for he hath stricken down a much bigger knight than I am. Ah, said Sir Tristram, now Sir Dinadan, I see and feel well your heart faileth you, therefore now shall ye see what I shall do. And then Sir Tristram hurtled unto that knight, and smote him quite from his horse. And when Sir Dinadan saw that, he marvelled greatly; and then he deemed that it was Sir Tristram.

Then this knight that was on foot pulled out his sword to do battle. What is your name? said Sir Tristram. Wit ye well, said that knight, my name is Sir Palomides. What knight hate ye most? said Sir Tristram. Sir knight, said he, I hate Sir Tristram to the death, for an I may meet with him the one of us shall die. Ye say well, said Sir Tristram, and wit ye well that I am Sir Tristram de Liones, and now do your worst. When Sir Palomides heard him say so he was astonished. And then he said thus: I pray you, Sir Tristram, forgive me all mine evil will, and if I live I shall do you service above all other knights that be living; and whereas I have owed you evil will me sore repenteth. I wot not what aileth me, for meseemeth that ye are a good knight, and none other knight that named himself a good knight should not hate you; therefore I require you, Sir Tristram, take no displeasure at mine unkind words. Sir Palomides, said Sir Tristram, ye say well, and well I wot ye are a good knight, for I have seen ye proved; and many great enterprises have ye taken upon you, and well achieved them; therefore, said Sir Tristram, an ye have any evil will to me, now may ye right it, for I am ready at your hand. Not so, my lord Sir Tristram, I will do you knightly service in all thing as ye will command. And right so I will take you, said Sir Tristram. And so they rode forth on their ways talking of many things. O my lord Sir Tristram, said Dinadan, foul have ye mocked me, for God knoweth I came into this country for your sake, and by the advice of my lord Sir Launcelot; and yet would not Sir Launcelot tell me the certainty of you, where I should find you. Truly, said Sir Tristram, Sir Launcelot wist well where I was, for I abode within his own castle.

#### **CHAPTER LVIII. How they approached the Castle Lonazep, and of other devices of the death of Sir Lamorak.**

THUS they rode until they were ware of the Castle Lonazep. And then were they ware of four hundred tents and pavilions, and marvellous great ordinance. So God me help, said Sir Tristram, yonder I see the greatest ordinance that ever I saw. Sir, said Palomides, meseemeth that there was as great an ordinance at the Castle of Maidens upon the rock, where ye won the prize, for I saw myself where ye forjousted thirty knights. Sir, said Dinadan, and in Surluse, at that tournament that Galahalt of the Long Isles made, the which there dured seven

days, was as great a gathering as is here, for there were many nations. Who was the best? said Sir Tristram. Sir, it was Sir Launcelot du Lake and the noble knight, Sir Lamorak de Galis, and Sir Launcelot won the degree. I doubt not, said Sir Tristram, but he won the degree, so he had not been overmatched with many knights; and of the death of Sir Lamorak, said Sir Tristram, it was over great pity, for I dare say he was the cleanest mighted man and the best winded of his age that was alive; for I knew him that he was the biggest knight that ever I met withal, but if it were Sir Launcelot. Alas, said Sir Tristram, full woe is me for his death. And if they were not the cousins of my lord Arthur that slew him, they should die for it, and all those that were consenting to his death. And for such things, said Sir Tristram, I fear to draw unto the court of my lord Arthur; I will that ye wit it, said Sir Tristram unto Gareth.

Sir, I blame you not, said Gareth, for well I understand the vengeance of my brethren Sir Gawaine, Agravaine, Gaheris, and Mordred. But as for me, said Sir Gareth, I meddle not of their matters, therefore there is none of them that loveth me. And for I understand they be murderers of good knights I left their company; and God would I had been by, said Gareth, when the noble knight, Sir Lamorak, was slain. Now as Jesu be my help, said Sir Tristram, it is well said of you, for I had liefer than all the gold betwixt this and Rome I had been there. Y-wis, (1) said Palomides, and so would I had been there, and yet had I never the degree at no jousts nor tournament thereas he was, but he put me to the worse, or on foot or on horseback; and that day that he was slain he did the most deeds of arms that ever I saw knight do in all my life days. And when him was given the degree by my lord Arthur, Sir Gawaine and his three brethren, Agravaine, Gaheris, and Sir Mordred, set upon Sir Lamorak in a privy place, and there they slew his horse. And so they fought with him on foot more than three hours, both before him and behind him; and Sir Mordred gave him his death wound behind him at his back, and all to-hew him: for one of his squires told me that saw it. Fie upon treason, said Sir Tristram, for it killeth my heart to hear this tale. So it doth mine, said Gareth; brethren as they be mine I shall never love them, nor draw in their fellowship for that deed.

Now speak we of other deeds, said Palomides, and let him be, for his life ye may not get again. That is the more pity, said Dinadan, for Sir Gawaine and his brethren, except you Sir Gareth, hate all the good knights of the Round Table for the most part; for well I wot an they might privily, they hate my lord Sir Launcelot and all his kin, and great privy despite they have at him; and that is my lord Sir Launcelot well ware of, and that causeth him to have the good knights of his kin about him.

(1) "Y-wis" (certainly); Caxton, "ye wis"; W. de Worde, "truly."

**CHAPTER LIX. How they came to Humber bank, and how they found a ship there, wherein lay the body of King Hermance.**

SIR, said Palomides, let us leave of this matter, and let us see how we shall do at this tournament. By mine advice, said Palomides, let us four hold together against all that will come. Not by my counsel, said Sir Tristram, for I see by their pavilions there will be four hundred knights, and doubt ye not, said Sir Tristram, but there will be many good knights; and be a man never so valiant nor so big, yet he may be overmatched. And so have I seen knights done many times; and when they weened best to have won worship they lost it, for manhood is not worth but if it be medled with wisdom. And as for me, said Sir Tristram, it may happen I shall keep mine own head as well as another.

So thus they rode until that they came to Humber bank, where they heard a cry and a doleful noise. Then were they ware in the wind where came a rich vessel hilled over with red silk, and the vessel landed fast by them. Therewith Sir Tristram alighted and his knights. And so Sir Tristram went afore and entered into that vessel. And when he came within he saw a fair bed richly covered, and thereupon lay a dead seemly knight, all armed save the head, was all be-bled with deadly wounds upon him, the which seemed to be a passing good knight. How may this be, said Sir Tristram, that this knight is thus slain? Then Sir Tristram was ware of a letter in the dead knight's hand. Master mariners, said Sir Tristram, what meaneth that letter? Sir, said they, in that letter ye shall hear and know how he was slain, and for what cause, and what was his name. But sir, said the mariners, wit ye well that no man shall take that letter and read it but if he be a good knight, and that he will faithfully promise to revenge his death, else shall there be no knight see that letter open. Wit ye well, said Sir Tristram, that some of us may revenge his death as well as other, and if it be so as ye mariners say his death shall be revenged. And therewith Sir Tristram took the letter out of the knight's hand, and it said thus: Hermance, king and lord of the Red City, I send unto all knights errant, recommending unto you noble knights of Arthur's court. I beseech them all among them to find one knight that will fight for my sake with two brethren that I brought up of nought, and feloniously and traitorly they have slain me; wherefore I beseech one good knight to revenge my death. And he that revengeth my death I will that he have my Red City and all my castles.

Sir, said the mariners, wit ye well this king and knight that here lieth was a full worshipful man and of full great prowess, and full well he loved all manner knights errants. So God me help, said Sir Tristram, here is a piteous case, and



full fain would I take this enterprise upon me; but I have made such a promise that needs I must be at this great tournament, or else I am shamed. For well I wot for my sake in especial my lord Arthur let make this jousts and tournament in this country; and well I wot that many worshipful people will be there at that tournament for to see me; therefore I fear me to take this enterprise upon me that I shall not come again by time to this jousts. Sir, said Palomides, I pray you give me this enterprise, and ye shall see me achieve it worshipfully, other else I shall die in this quarrel. Well, said Sir Tristram, and this enterprise I give you, with this, that ye be with me at this tournament that shall be as this day seven night. Sir, said Palomides, I promise you that I shall be with you by that day if I be unslain or unmaimed.

**CHAPTER LX. How Sir Tristram with his fellowship came and were with an host which after fought with Sir Tristram; and other matters.**

THEN departed Sir Tristram, Gareth, and Sir Dinadan, and left Sir Palomides in the vessel; and so Sir Tristram beheld the mariners how they sailed overlong Humber. And when Sir Palomides was out of their sight they took their horses and beheld about them. And then were they ware of a knight that came riding against them unarmed, and nothing about him but a sword. And when this knight came nigh them he saluted them, and they him again. Fair knights, said that knight, I pray you insomuch as ye be knights errant, that ye will come and see my castle, and take such as ye find there; I pray you heartily. And so they rode with him until his castle, and there they were brought into the hall, that was well apparelled; and so they were there unarmed, and set at a board; and when this knight saw Sir Tristram, anon he knew him. And then this knight waxed pale and wroth at Sir Tristram. When Sir Tristram saw his host make such cheer he marvelled and said: Sir, mine host, what cheer make you? Wit thou well, said he, I fare the worse for thee, for I know thee, Sir Tristram de Liones, thou slewest my brother; and therefore I give thee summons I will slay thee an ever I may get thee at large. Sir knight, said Sir Tristram, I am never advised that ever I slew any brother of yours; and if ye say that I did I will make amends unto my power. I will none amends, said the knight, but keep thee from me.

So when he had dined Sir Tristram asked his arms, and departed. And so they rode on their ways, and within a while Sir Dinadan saw where came a knight well armed and well horsed, without shield. Sir Tristram, said Sir Dinadan, take keep to yourself, for I dare undertake yonder cometh your host that will have ado with you. Let him come, said Sir Tristram, I shall abide him as well as I may. Anon the knight, when he came nigh Sir Tristram, he cried and bade him abide and keep him. So they hurtled together, but Sir Tristram smote

the other knight so sore that he bare him over his horse's croup. That knight arose lightly and took his horse again, and so rode fiercely to Sir Tristram, and smote him twice hard upon the helm. Sir knight, said Sir Tristram, I pray you leave off and smite me no more, for I would be loath to deal with you an I might choose, for I have your meat and your drink within my body. For all that he would not leave; and then Sir Tristram gave him such a buffet upon the helm that he fell up-so-down from his horse, that the blood brast out at the ventails of his helm, and so he lay still likely to be dead. Then Sir Tristram said: Me repenteth of this buffet that I smote so sore, for as I suppose he is dead. And so they left him and rode on their ways.

So they had not ridden but a while, but they saw riding against them two full likely knights, well armed and well horsed, and goodly servants about them. The one was Berrant le Apres, and he was called the King with the Hundred Knights; and the other was Sir Segwarides, which were renowned two noble knights. So as they came either by other the king looked upon Sir Dinadan, that at that time he had Sir Tristram's helm upon his shoulder, the which helm the king had seen to-fore with the Queen of Northgalis, and that queen the king loved as paramour; and that helm the Queen of Northgalis had given to La Beale Isoud, and the queen La Beale Isoud gave it to Sir Tristram. Sir knight, said Berrant, where had ye that helm? What would ye? said Sir Dinadan. For I will have ado with thee, said the king, for the love of her that owed that helm, and therefore keep you. So they departed and came together with all their mights of their horses, and there the King with the Hundred Knights smote Sir Dinadan, horse and all, to the earth; and then he commanded his servant: Go and take thou his helm off, and keep it. So the varlet went to unbuckle his helm. What helm, what wilt thou do? said Sir Tristram, leave that helm. To what intent, said the king, will ye, sir knight, meddle with that helm? Wit you well, said Sir Tristram, that helm shall not depart from me or it be dearer bought. Then make you ready, said Sir Berrant unto Sir Tristram. So they hurtled together, and there Sir Tristram smote him down over his horse's tail; and then the king arose lightly, and gat his horse lightly again. And then he struck fiercely at Sir Tristram many great strokes. And then Sir Tristram gave Sir Berrant such a buffet upon the helm that he fell down over his horse sore stoned. Lo, said Dinadan, that helm is unhappy to us twain, for I had a fall for it, and now, sir king, have ye another fall.

Then Segwarides asked: Who shall joust with me? I pray thee, said Sir Gareth unto Dinadan, let me have this jousts. Sir, said Dinadan, I pray you take it as for me. That is no reason, said Tristram, for this jousts should be yours. At a word, said Dinadan, I will not thereof. Then Gareth dressed him to Sir Segwarides, and there Sir Segwarides smote Gareth and his horse to the earth.

Now, said Sir Tristram to Dinadan, joust with yonder knight. I will not thereof, said Dinadan. Then will I, said Sir Tristram. And then Sir Tristram ran to him, and gave him a fall; and so they left them on foot, and Sir Tristram rode unto Joyous Gard, and there Sir Gareth would not of his courtesy have gone into this castle, but Sir Tristram would not suffer him to depart. And so they alighted and unarmed them, and had great cheer. But when Dinadan came afore La Beale Isoud he cursed the time that ever he bare Sir Tristram's helm, and there he told her how Sir Tristram had mocked him. Then was there laughing and japing at Sir Dinadan, that they wist not what to do with him.

### **CHAPTER LXI. How Palomides went for to fight with two brethren for the death of King Hermance.**

NOW will we leave them merry within Joyous Gard, and speak we of Sir Palomides. Then Sir Palomides sailed evenlong Humber to the coasts of the sea, where was a fair castle. And at that time it was early in the morning, afore day. Then the mariners went unto Sir Palomides that slept fast. Sir knight, said the mariners, ye must arise, for here is a castle there ye must go into. I assent me, said Sir Palomides; and therewithal he arrived. And then he blew his horn that the mariners had given him. And when they within the castle heard that horn they put forth many knights; and there they stood upon the walls, and said with one voice: Welcome be ye to this castle. And then it waxed clear day, and Sir Palomides entered into the castle. And within a while he was served with many divers meats. Then Sir Palomides heard about him much weeping and great dole. What may this mean? said Sir Palomides; I love not to hear such a sorrow, and fain I would know what it meaneth. Then there came afore him one whose name was Sir Ebel, that said thus: Wit ye well, sir knight, this dole and sorrow is here made every day, and for this cause: we had a king that hight Hermance, and he was King of the Red City, and this king that was lord was a noble knight, large and liberal of his expense; and in the world he loved nothing so much as he did errant knights of King Arthur's court, and all jousting, hunting, and all manner of knightly games; for so kind a king and knight had never the rule of poor people as he was; and because of his goodness and gentle ness we bemoan him, and ever shall. And all kings and estates may beware by our lord, for he was destroyed in his own default; for had he cherished them of his blood he had yet lived with great riches and rest: but all estates may beware by our king. But alas, said Ebel, that we shall give all other warning by his death.

Tell me, said Palomides, and in what manner was your lord slain, and by whom. Sir, said Sir Ebel, our king brought up of children two men that now are perilous knights; and these two knights our king had so in charity, that he loved

no man nor trusted no man of his blood, nor none other that was about him. And by these two knights our king was governed, and so they ruled him peaceably and his lands, and never would they suffer none of his blood to have no rule with our king. And also he was so free and so gentle, and they so false and deceivable, that they ruled him peaceably; and that espied the lords of our king's blood, and departed from him unto their own livelihood. Then when these two traitors understood that they had driven all the lords of his blood from him, they were not pleased with that rule, but then they thought to have more, as ever it is an old saw: Give a churl rule and thereby he will not be sufficed; for whatsomever he be that is ruled by a villain born, and the lord of the soil to be a gentleman born, the same villain shall destroy all the gentlemen about him: therefore all estates and lords, beware whom ye take about you. And if ye be a knight of King Arthur's court remember this tale, for this is the end and conclusion. My lord and king rode unto the forest hereby by the advice of these traitors, and there he chased at the red deer, armed at all pieces full like a good knight; and so for labour he waxed dry, and then he alighted, and drank at a well. And when he was alighted, by the assent of these two traitors, that one that hight Helius he suddenly smote our king through the body with a spear, and so they left him there. And when they were departed, then by fortune I came to the well, and found my lord and king wounded to the death. And when I heard his complaint, I let bring him to the water side, and in that same ship I put him alive; and when my lord King Hermance was in that vessel, he required me for the true faith I owed unto him for to write a letter in this manner.

**CHAPTER LXII. The copy of the letter written for to revenge the king's death, and how Sir Palomides fought for to have the battle.**

RECOMMENDING unto King Arthur and to all his knights errant, beseeching them all that insomuch as I, King Hermance, King of the Red City, thus am slain by felony and treason, through two knights of mine own, and of mine own bringing up and of mine own making, that some worshipful knight will revenge my death, insomuch I have been ever to my power well willing unto Arthur's court. And who that will adventure his life with these two traitors for my sake in one battle, I, King Hermance, King of the Red City, freely give him all my lands and rents that ever I wielded in my life. This letter, said Ebel, I wrote by my lord's commandment, and then he received his Creator; and when he was dead, he commanded me or ever he were cold to put that letter fast in his hand. And then he commanded me to put forth that same vessel down Humber, and I should give these mariners in commandment never to stint until that they came unto Logris, where all the noble knights shall assemble at this time. And

there shall some good knight have pity on me to revenge my death, for there was never king nor lord falslier nor traitorlier slain than I am here to my death. Thus was the complaint of our King Hermance. Now, said Sir Ebel, ye know all how our lord was betrayed, we require you for God's sake have pity upon his death, and worshipfully revenge his death, and then may ye wield all these lands. For we all wit well that an ye may slay these two traitors, the Red City and all those that be therein will take you for their lord.

Truly, said Sir Palomides, it grieveth my heart for to hear you tell this doleful tale; and to say the truth I saw the same letter that ye speak of, and one of the best knights on the earth read that letter to me, and by his commandment I came hither to revenge your king's death; and therefore have done, and let me wit where I shall find those traitors, for I shall never be at ease in my heart till I be in hands with them. Sir, said Sir Ebel, then take your ship again, and that ship must bring you unto the Delectable Isle, fast by the Red City, and we in this castle shall pray for you, and abide your again-coming. For this same castle, an ye speed well, must needs be yours; for our King Hermance let make this castle for the love of the two traitors, and so we kept it with strong hand, and therefore full sore are we threated. Wot ye what ye shall do, said Sir Palomides; whatsoever come of me, look ye keep well this castle. For an it misfortune me so to be slain in this quest I am sure there will come one of the best knights of the world for to revenge my death, and that is Sir Tristram de Lioness, or else Sir Launcelot du Lake.

Then Sir Palomides departed from that castle. And as he came nigh the city, there came out of a ship a goodly knight armed against him, with his shield on his shoulder, and his hand upon his sword. And anon as he came nigh Sir Palomides he said: Sir knight, what seek ye here? leave this quest for it is mine, and mine it was or ever it was yours, and therefore I will have it. Sir knight, said Palomides, it may well be that this quest was yours or it was mine, but when the letter was taken out of the dead king's hand, at that time by likelihood there was no knight had undertaken to revenge the death of the king. And so at that time I promised to revenge his death, and so I shall or else I am ashamed. Ye say well, said the knight, but wit ye well then will I fight with you, and who be the better knight of us both, let him take the battle upon hand. I assent me, said Sir Palomides. And then they dressed their shields, and pulled out their swords, and lashed together many sad strokes as men of might; and this fighting was more than an hour, but at the last Sir Palomides waxed big and better winded, so that then he smote that knight such a stroke that he made him to kneel upon his knees. Then that knight spake on high and said: Gentle knight, hold thy hand. Sir Palomides was goodly and withdrew his hand. Then this knight said: Wit ye

well, knight, that thou art better worthy to have this battle than I, and require thee of knighthood tell me thy name. Sir, my name is Palomides, a knight of King Arthur's, and of the Table Round, that hither I came to revenge the death of this dead king.

### **CHAPTER LXIII. Of the preparation of Sir Palomides and the two brethren that should fight with him.**

WELL be ye found, said the knight to Palomides, for of all knights that be alive, except three, I had liefest have you. The first is Sir Launcelot du Lake, and Sir Tristram de Liones, the third is my nigh cousin, Sir Lamorak de Galis. And I am brother unto King Hermance that is dead, and my name is Sir Hermind. Ye say well, said Sir Palomides, and ye shall see how I shall speed; and if I be there slain go ye to my lord Sir Launcelot, or else to my lord Sir Tristram, and pray them to revenge my death, for as for Sir Lamorak him shall ye never see in this world. Alas, said Sir Hermind, how may that be? He is slain, said Sir Palomides, by Sir Gawaine and his brethren. So God me help, said Hermind, there was not one for one that slew him. That is truth, said Sir Palomides, for they were four dangerous knights that slew him, as Sir Gawaine, Sir Agravaine, Sir Gaheris, and Sir Mordred, but Sir Gareth, the fifth brother was away, the best knight of them all. And so Sir Palomides told Hermind all the manner, and how they slew Sir Lamorak all only by treason.

So Sir Palomides took his ship, and arrived up at the Delectable Isle. And in the meanwhile Sir Hermind that was the king's brother, he arrived up at the Red City, and there he told them how there was come a knight of King Arthur's to avenge King Hermance's death: And his name is Sir Palomides, the good knight, that for the most part he followeth the beast Glatissant. Then all the city made great joy, for mickle had they heard of Sir Palomides, and of his noble prowess. So let they ordain a messenger, and sent unto the two brethren, and bade them to make them ready, for there was a knight come that would fight with them both. So the messenger went unto them where they were at a castle there beside; and there he told them how there was a knight come of King Arthur's court to fight with them both at once. He is welcome, said they; but tell us, we pray you, if it be Sir Launcelot or any of his blood? He is none of that blood, said the messenger. Then we care the less, said the two brethren, for with none of the blood of Sir Launcelot we keep not to have ado withal. Wit ye well, said the messenger, that his name is Sir Palomides, that yet is unchristened, a noble knight. Well, said they, an he be now unchristened he shall never be christened. So they appointed to be at the city within two days.

And when Sir Palomides was come to the city they made passing great joy of

him, and then they beheld him, and saw that he was well made, cleanly and bigly, and unmaimed of his limbs, and neither too young nor too old. And so all the people praised him; and though he was not christened yet he believed in the best manner, and was full faithful and true of his promise, and well conditioned; and because he made his avow that he would never be christened unto the time that he had achieved the beast Glatisant, the which was a full wonderful beast, and a great signification; for Merlin prophesied much of that beast. And also Sir Palomides avowed never to take full christendom unto the time that he had done seven battles within the lists.

So within the third day there came to the city these two brethren, the one hight Helius, the other hight Helake, the which were men of great prowess; howbeit that they were false and full of treason, and but poor men born, yet were they noble knights of their hands. And with them they brought forty knights, to that intent that they should be big enough for the Red City. Thus came the two brethren with great bobaunce and pride, for they had put the Red City in fear and damage. Then they were brought to the lists, and Sir Palomides came into the place and said thus: Be ye the two brethren, Helius and Helake, that slew your king and lord, Sir Hermance, by felony and treason, for whom that I am come hither to revenge his death? Wit thou well, said Sir Helius and Sir Helake, that we are the same knights that slew King Hermance; and wit thou well, Sir Palomides Saracen, that we shall handle thee so or thou depart that thou shalt wish that thou wert christened. It may well be, said Sir Palomides, for yet I would not die or I were christened; and yet so am I not afeard of you both, but I trust to God that I shall die a better christian man than any of you both; and doubt ye not, said Sir Palomides, either ye or I shall be left dead in this place.

#### **CHAPTER LXIV. Of the battle between Sir Palomides and the two brethren, and how the two brethren were slain.**

THEN they departed, and the two brethren came against Sir Palomides, and he against them, as fast as their horses might run. And by fortune Sir Palomides smote Helake through his shield and through the breast more than a fathom. All this while Sir Helius held up his spear, and for pride and orgulit<sup>©</sup> he would not smite Sir Palomides with his spear; but when he saw his brother lie on the earth, and saw he might not help himself, then he said unto Sir Palomides: Help thyself. And therewith he came hurtling unto Sir Palomides with his spear, and smote him quite from his saddle. Then Sir Helius rode over Sir Palomides twice or thrice. And therewith Sir Palomides was ashamed, and gat the horse of Sir Helius by the bridle, and therewithal the horse areared, and Sir Palomides halp after, and so they fell both to the earth; but anon Sir Helius stert up lightly, and

there he smote Sir Palomides a great stroke upon the helm, that he kneeled upon his own knee. Then they lashed together many sad strokes, and traced and traversed now backward, now sideling, hurtling together like two boars, and that same time they fell both grovelling to the earth.

Thus they fought still without any reposing two hours, and never breathed; and then Sir Palomides waxed faint and weary, and Sir Helius waxed passing strong, and doubled his strokes, and drove Sir Palomides overthwart and endlong all the field, that they of the city when they saw Sir Palomides in this case they wept and cried, and made great dole, and the other party made as great joy. Alas, said the men of the city, that this noble knight should thus be slain for our king's sake. And as they were thus weeping and crying, Sir Palomides that had suffered an hundred strokes, that it was wonder that he stood on his feet, at the last Sir Palomides beheld as he might the common people, how they wept for him; and then he said to himself: Ah, fie for shame, Sir Palomides, why hangest thou thy head so low; and therewith he bare up his shield, and looked Sir Helius in the visage, and he smote him a great stroke upon the helm, and after that another and another. And then he smote Sir Helius with such a might that he fell to the earth grovelling; and then he raced off his helm from his head, and there he smote him such a buffet that he departed his head from the body. And then were the people of the city the joyfulest people that might be. So they brought him to his lodging with great solemnity, and there all the people became his men. And then Sir Palomides prayed them all to take keep unto all the lordship of King Hermance: For, fair sirs, wit ye well I may not as at this time abide with you, for I must in all haste be with my lord King Arthur at the Castle of Lonazep, the which I have promised. Then was the people full heavy at his departing, for all that city proffered Sir Palomides the third part of their goods so that he would abide with them; but in no wise as at that time he would not abide.

And so Sir Palomides departed, and so he came unto the castle thereas Sir Ebel was lieutenant. And when they in the castle wist how Sir Palomides had sped, there was a joyful meiny; and so Sir Palomides departed, and came to the castle of Lonazep. And when he wist that Sir Tristram was not there he took his way over Humber, and came unto Joyous Gard, whereas Sir Tristram was and La Beale Isoud. Sir Tristram had commanded that what knight errant came within the Joyous Gard, as in the town, that they should warn Sir Tristram. So there came a man of the town, and told Sir Tristram how there was a knight in the town, a passing goodly man. What manner of man is he, said Sir Tristram, and what sign beareth he? So the man told Sir Tristram all the tokens of him. That is Palomides, said Dinadan. It may well be, said Sir Tristram. Go ye to him, said Sir Tristram unto Dinadan. So Dinadan went unto Sir Palomides, and there



either made other great joy, and so they lay together that night. And on the morn early came Sir Tristram and Sir Gareth, and took them in their beds, and so they arose and brake their fast.

**CHAPTER LXV. How Sir Tristram and Sir Palomides met Breuse  
Saunce PitÃ©, and how Sir Tristram and La Beale Isoud went unto  
Lonazep.**

AND then Sir Tristram desired Sir Palomides to ride into the fields and woods. So they were accorded to repose them in the forest. And when they had played them a great while they rode unto a fair well; and anon they were ware of an armed knight that came riding against them, and there either saluted other. Then this armed knight spake to Sir Tristram, and asked what were these knights that were lodged in Joyous Gard. I wot not what they are, said Sir Tristram. What knights be ye? said that knight, for meseemeth ye be no knights errant, because ye ride unarmed. Whether we be knights or not we list not to tell thee our name. Wilt thou not tell me thy name? said that knight; then keep thee, for thou shalt die of my hands. And therewith he got his spear in his hands, and would have run Sir Tristram through. That saw Sir Palomides, and smote his horse traverse in midst of the side, that man and horse fell to the earth. And therewith Sir Palomides alighted and pulled out his sword to have slain him. Let be, said Sir Tristram, slay him not, the knight is but a fool, it were shame to slay him. But take away his spear, said Sir Tristram, and let him take his horse and go where that he will.

So when this knight arose he groaned sore of the fall, and so he took his horse, and when he was up he turned then his horse, and required Sir Tristram and Sir Palomides to tell him what knights they were. Now wit ye well, said Sir Tristram, that my name is Sir Tristram de Lioness, and this knight's name is Sir Palomides. When he wist what they were he took his horse with the spurs, because they should not ask him his name, and so rode fast away through thick and thin. Then came there by them a knight with a bended shield of azure, whose name was Epinogris, and he came toward them a great wallop. Whither are ye riding? said Sir Tristram. My fair lords, said Epinogris, I follow the falsest knight that beareth the life; wherefore I require you tell me whether ye saw him, for he beareth a shield with a case of red over it. So God me help, said Tristram, such a knight departed from us not a quarter of an hour ago; we pray you tell us his name. Alas, said Epinogris, why let ye him escape from you? and he is so great a foe unto all errant knights: his name is Breuse Saunce PitÃ©. Ah, fie for shame, said Sir Palomides, alas that ever he escaped mine hands, for he is the man in the world that I hate most. Then every knight made great sorrow to other;

and so Epinogris departed and followed the chase after him.

Then Sir Tristram and his three fellows rode unto Joyous Gard; and there Sir Tristram talked unto Sir Palomides of his battle, how he sped at the Red City, and as ye have heard afore so was it ended. Truly, said Sir Tristram, I am glad ye have well sped, for ye have done worshipfully. Well, said Sir Tristram, we must forward to-morn. And then he devised how it should be; and Sir Tristram devised to send his two pavilions to set them fast by the well of Lonazep, and therein shall be the queen La Beale Isoud. It is well said, said Sir Dinadan, but when Sir Palomides heard of that his heart was ravished out of measure: notwithstanding he said but little. So when they came to Joyous Gard Sir Palomides would not have gone into the castle, but as Sir Tristram took him by the finger, and led him into the castle. And when Sir Palomides saw La Beale Isoud he was ravished so that he might unnethe speak. So they went unto meat, but Palomides might not eat, and there was all the cheer that might be had. And on the morn they were apparelled to ride toward Lonazep.

So Sir Tristram had three squires, and La Beale Isoud had three gentlewomen, and both the queen and they were richly apparelled; and other people had they none with them, but varlets to bear their shields and their spears. And thus they rode forth. So as they rode they saw afore them a rout of knights; it was the knight Galihodin with twenty knights with him. Fair fellows, said Galihodin, yonder come four knights, and a rich and a well fair lady: I am in will to take that lady from them. That is not of the best counsel, said one of Galihodin's men, but send ye to them and wit what they will say; and so it was done. There came a squire unto Sir Tristram, and asked them whether they would joust or else to lose their lady. Not so, said Sir Tristram, tell your lord I bid him come as many as we be, and win her and take her. Sir, said Palomides, an it please you let me have this deed, and I shall undertake them all four. I will that ye have it, said Sir Tristram, at your pleasure. Now go and tell your lord Galihodin, that this same knight will encounter with him and his fellows.

#### **CHAPTER LXVI. How Sir Palomides josted with Sir Galihodin, and after with Sir Gawaine, and smote them down.**

THEN this squire departed and told Galihodin; and then he dressed his shield, and put forth a spear, and Sir Palomides another; and there Sir Palomides smote Galihodin so hard that he smote both horse and man to the earth. And there he had an horrible fall. And then came there another knight, and in the same wise he served him; and so he served the third and the fourth, that he smote them over their horses' croups, and always Sir Palomides' spear was whole. Then came six knights more of Galihodin's men, and would have been avenged upon

Sir Palomides. Let be, said Sir Galihodin, not so hardy, none of you all meddle with this knight, for he is a man of great bount<sup>©</sup> and honour, and if he would ye were not able to meddle with him. And right so they held them still. And ever Sir Palomides was ready to joust; and when he saw they would no more he rode unto Sir Tristram. Right well have ye done, said Sir Tristram, and worshipfully have ye done as a good knight should. This Galihodin was nigh cousin unto Galahalt, the haut prince; and this Galihodin was a king within the country of Surluse.

So as Sir Tristram, Sir Palomides, and La Beale Isoud rode together they saw afore them four knights, and every man had his spear in his hand: the first was Sir Gawaine, the second Sir Uwaine, the third Sir Sagramore le Desirous, and the fourth was Dodinas le Savage. When Sir Palomides beheld them, that the four knights were ready to joust, he prayed Sir Tristram to give him leave to have ado with them all so long as he might hold him on horseback. And if that I be smitten down I pray you revenge me. Well, said Sir Tristram, I will as ye will, and ye are not so fain to have worship but I would as fain increase your worship. And therewithal Sir Gawaine put forth his spear, and Sir Palomides another; and so they came so eagerly together that Sir Palomides smote Sir Gawaine to the earth, horse and all; and in the same wise he served Uwaine, Sir Dodinas, and Sagramore. All these four knights Sir Palomides smote down with divers spears. And then Sir Tristram departed toward Lonazep.

And when they were departed then came thither Galihodin with his ten knights unto Sir Gawaine, and there he told him all how he had sped. I marvel, said Sir Gawaine, what knights they be, that are so arrayed in green. And that knight upon the white horse smote me down, said Galihodin, and my three fellows. And so he did to me, said Gawaine; and well I wot, said Sir Gawaine, that either he upon the white horse is Sir Tristram or else Sir Palomides, and that gay beseen lady is Queen Isoud. Thus they talked of one thing and of other.

And in the meanwhile Sir Tristram passed on till that he came to the well where his two pavilions were set; and there they alighted, and there they saw many pavilions and great array. Then Sir Tristram left there Sir Palomides and Sir Gareth with La Beale Isoud, and Sir Tristram and Sir Dinadan rode to Lonazep to hearken tidings; and Sir Tristram rode upon Sir Palomides' white horse. And when he came into the castle Sir Dinadan heard a great horn blow, and to the horn drew many knights. Then Sir Tristram asked a knight: What meaneth the blast of that horn? Sir, said that knight, it is all those that shall hold against King Arthur at this tournament. The first is the King of Ireland, and the King of Surluse, the King of Listinoise, the King of Northumberland, and the King of the best part of Wales, with many other countries. And these draw them

to a council, to understand what governance they shall be of; but the King of Ireland, whose name was Marhalt, and father to the good knight Sir Marhaus that Sir Tristram slew, had all the speech that Sir Tristram might hear it. He said: Lords and fellows, let us look to ourself, for wit ye well King Arthur is sure of many good knights, or else he would not with so few knights have ado with us; therefore by my counsel let every king have a standard and a cognisance by himself, that every knight draw to their natural lord, and then may every king and captain help his knights if they have need. When Sir Tristram had heard all their counsel he rode unto King Arthur for to hear of his counsel.

### **CHAPTER LXVII. How Sir Tristram and his fellowship came into the tournament of Lonazep; and of divers jousts and matters.**

BUT Sir Tristram was not so soon come into the place, but Sir Gawaine and Sir Galihodin went to King Arthur, and told him: That same green knight in the green harness with the white horse smote us two down, and six of our fellows this same day. Well, said Arthur. And then he called Sir Tristram and asked him what was his name. Sir, said Sir Tristram, ye shall hold me excused as at this time, for ye shall not wit my name. And there Sir Tristram returned and rode his way. I have marvel, said Arthur, that yonder knight will not tell me his name, but go thou, Griflet le Fise de Dieu, and pray him to speak with me betwixt us. Then Sir Griflet rode after him and overtook him, and said him that King Arthur prayed him for to speak with him secretly apart. Upon this covenant, said Sir Tristram, I will speak with him; that I will turn again so that ye will ensure me not to desire to hear my name. I shall undertake, said Sir Griflet, that he will not greatly desire it of you. So they rode together until they came to King Arthur. Fair sir, said King Arthur, what is the cause ye will not tell me your name? Sir, said Sir Tristram, without a cause I will not hide my name. Upon what party will ye hold? said King Arthur. Truly, my lord, said Sir Tristram, I wot not yet on what party I will be on, until I come to the field, and there as my heart giveth me, there will I hold; but to-morrow ye shall see and prove on what party I shall come. And therewithal he returned and went to his pavilions.

And upon the morn they armed them all in green, and came into the field; and there young knights began to joust, and did many worshipful deeds. Then spake Gareth unto Sir Tristram, and prayed him to give him leave to break his spear, for him thought shame to bear his spear whole again. When Sir Tristram heard him say so he laughed, and said: I pray you do your best. Then Sir Gareth gat a spear and proffered to joust. That saw a knight that was nephew unto the King of the Hundred Knights; his name was Selises, and a good man of arms. So this knight Selises then dressed him unto Sir Gareth, and they two met together

so hard that either smote other down, his horse and all, to the earth, so they were both bruised and hurt; and there they lay till the King with the Hundred Knights halp Selises up, and Sir Tristram and Sir Palomides halp up Gareth again. And so they rode with Sir Gareth unto their pavilions, and then they pulled off his helm.

And when La Beale Isoud saw Sir Gareth bruised in the face she asked him what ailed him. Madam, said Sir Gareth, I had a great buffet, and as I suppose I gave another, but none of my fellows, God thank them, would not rescue me. Forsooth, said Palomides, it longed not to none of us as this day to joust, for there have not this day jousted no proved knights, and needly ye would joust. And when the other party saw ye proffered yourself to joust they sent one to you, a passing good knight of his age, for I know him well, his name is Selises; and worshipfully ye met with him, and neither of you are dishonoured, and therefore refresh yourself that ye may be ready and whole to joust to-morrow. As for that, said Gareth, I shall not fail you an I may bestride mine horse.

#### **CHAPTER LXVIII. How Sir Tristram and his fellowship jousted, and of the noble feats that they did in that tourneying.**

NOW upon what party, said Tristram, is it best we be withal as to-morn? Sir, said Palomides, ye shall have mine advice to be against King Arthur as to-morn, for on his party will be Sir Launcelot and many good knights of his blood with him. And the more men of worship that they be, the more worship we shall win. That is full knightly spoken, said Sir Tristram; and right so as ye counsel me, so will we do. In the name of God, said they all. So that night they were lodged with the best. And on the morn when it was day they were arrayed all in green trappings, shields and spears, and La Beale Isoud in the same colour, and her three damosels. And right so these four knights came into the field endlong and through. And so they led La Beale Isoud thither as she should stand and behold all the jousts in a bay window; but always she was wimpled that no man might see her visage. And then these three knights rode straight unto the party of the King of Scots.

When King Arthur had seen them do all this he asked Sir Launcelot what were these knights and that queen. Sir, said Launcelot, I cannot say you in certain, but if Sir Tristram be in this country, or Sir Palomides, wit ye well it be they m certain, and La Beale Isoud. Then Arthur called to him Sir Kay and said: Go lightly and wit how many knights there be here lacking of the Table Round, for by the sieges thou mayst know. So went Sir Kay and saw by the writings in the sieges that there lacked ten knights. And these be their names that be not here. Sir Tristram, Sir Palomides, Sir Percivale, Sir Gaheris, Sir Epinogris, Sir

Mordred, Sir Dinadan, Sir La Cote Male Taile, and Sir Pelleas the noble knight. Well, said Arthur, some of these I dare undertake are here this day against us.

Then came therein two brethren, cousins unto Sir Gawaine, the one hight Sir Edward, that other hight Sir Sadok, the which were two good knights; and they asked of King Arthur that they might have the first jousts, for they were of Orkney. I am pleased, said King Arthur. Then Sir Edward encountered with the King of Scots, in whose party was Sir Tristram and Sir Palomides; and Sir Edward smote the King of Scots quite from his horse, and Sir Sadok smote down the King of North Wales, and gave him a wonder great fall, that there was a great cry on King Arthur's party, and that made Sir Palomides passing wroth. And so Sir Palomides dressed his shield and his spear, and with all his might he met with Sir Edward of Orkney, that he smote him so hard that his horse might not stand on his feet, and so they hurtled to the earth; and then with the same spear Sir Palomides smote down Sir Sadok over his horse's croup. O Jesu, said Arthur, what knight is that arrayed all in green? he jousteth mightily. Wit you well, said Sir Gawaine, he is a good knight, and yet shall ye see him joust better or he depart. And yet shall ye see, said Sir Gawaine, another bigger knight, in the same colour, than he is; for that same knight, said Sir Gawaine, that smote down right now my four cousins, he smote me down within these two days, and seven fellows more.

This meanwhile as they stood thus talking there came into the place Sir Tristram upon a black horse, and or ever he stint he smote down with one spear four good knights of Orkney that were of the kin of Sir Gawaine; and Sir Gareth and Sir Dinadan everych of them smote down a good knight. Jesu, said Arthur, yonder knight upon the black horse doth mightily and marvellously well. Abide you, said Sir Gawaine; that knight with the black horse began not yet. Then Sir Tristram made to horse again the two kings that Edward and Sadok had unhorsed at the beginning. And then Sir Tristram drew his sword and rode into the thickest of the press against them of Orkney; and there he smote down knights, and rashed off helms, and pulled away their shields, and hurtled down many knights: he fared so that Sir Arthur and all knights had great marvel when they saw one knight do so great deeds of arms. And Sir Palomides failed not upon the other side, but did so marvellously well that all men had wonder. For there King Arthur likened Sir Tristram that was on the black horse like to a wood lion, and likened Sir Palomides upon the white horse unto a wood leopard, and Sir Gareth and Sir Dinadan unto eager wolves. But the custom was such among them that none of the kings would help other, but all the fellowship of every standard to help other as they might; but ever Sir Tristram did so much deeds of arms that they of Orkney waxed weary of him, and so withdrew them

unto Lonazep

**CHAPTER LXIX. How Sir Tristram was unhorsed and smitten down by Sir Launcelot, and after that Sir Tristram smote down King Arthur.**

THEN was the cry of heralds and all manner of common people: The Green Knight hath done marvellously, and beaten all them of Orkney. And there the heralds numbered that Sir Tristram that sat upon the black horse had smitten down with spears and swords thirty knights; and Sir Palomides had smitten down twenty knights, and the most part of these fifty knights were of the house of King Arthur, and proved knights. So God me help, said Arthur unto Sir Launcelot, this is a great shame to us to see four knights beat so many knights of mine; and therefore make you ready, for we will have ado with them. Sir, said Launcelot, wit ye well that there are two passing good knights, and great worship were it not to us now to have ado with them, for they have this day sore travailed. As for that, said Arthur, I will be avenged; and therefore take with you Sir Bleoberis and Sir Ector, and I will be the fourth, said Arthur. Sir, said Launcelot, ye shall find me ready, and my brother Sir Ector, and my cousin Sir Bleoberis. And so when they were ready and on horseback: Now choose, said Sir Arthur unto Sir Launcelot, with whom that ye will encounter withal. Sir, said Launcelot, I will meet with the green knight upon the black horse, that was Sir Tristram; and my cousin Sir Bleoberis shall match the green knight upon the white horse, that was Sir Palomides; and my brother Sir Ector shall match with the green knight upon the white horse, that was Sir Gareth. Then must I, said Sir Arthur, have ado with the green knight upon the grisled horse, and that was Sir Dinadan. Now every man take heed to his fellow, said Sir Launcelot. And so they trotted on together, and there encountered Sir Launcelot against Sir Tristram. So Sir Launcelot smote Sir Tristram so sore upon the shield that he bare horse and man to the earth; but Sir Launcelot weened that it had been Sir Palomides, and so he passed forth. And then Sir Bleoberis encountered with Sir Palomides, and he smote him so hard upon the shield that Sir Palomides and his white horse rustled to the earth. Then Sir Ector de Maris smote Sir Gareth so hard that down he fell off his horse. And the noble King Arthur encountered with Sir Dinadan, and he smote him quite from his saddle. And then the noise turned awhile how the green knights were slain down.

When the King of Northgalis saw that Sir Tristram had a fall, then he remembered him how great deeds of arms Sir Tristram had done. Then he made ready many knights, for the custom and cry was such, that what knight were smitten down, and might not be horsed again by his fellows, outhur by his own strength, that as that day he should be prisoner unto the party that had smitten

him down. So came in the King of Northgalis, and he rode straight unto Sir Tristram; and when he came nigh him he alighted down suddenly and betook Sir Tristram his horse, and said thus: Noble knight, I know thee not of what country that thou art, but for the noble deeds that thou hast done this day take there my horse, and let me do as well I may; for, as Jesu me help, thou art better worthy to have mine horse than I myself. Gramercy, said Sir Tristram, and if I may I shall quite you: look that ye go not far from us, and as I suppose, I shall win you another horse. And therewith Sir Tristram mounted upon his horse, and there he met with King Arthur, and he gave him such a buffet upon the helm with his sword that King Arthur had no power to keep his saddle. And then Sir Tristram gave the King of Northgalis King Arthur's horse: then was there great press about King Arthur for to horse him again; but Sir Palomides would not suffer King Arthur to be horsed again, but ever Sir Palomides smote on the right hand and on the left hand mightily as a noble knight. And this meanwhile Sir Tristram rode through the thickest of the press, and smote down knights on the right hand and on the left hand, and raced off helms, and so passed forth unto his pavilions, and left Sir Palomides on foot; and Sir Tristram changed his horse and disguised himself all in red, horse and harness.

**CHAPTER LXX. How Sir Tristram changed his harness and it was all red, and how he demeaned him, and how Sir Palomides slew Launcelot's horse.**

AND when the queen La Beale Isoud saw that Sir Tristram was unhorsed, and she wist not where he was, then she wept greatly. But Sir Tristram, when he was ready, came dashing lightly into the field, and then La Beale Isoud espied him. And so he did great deeds of arms; with one spear, that was great, Sir Tristram smote down five knights or ever he stint. Then Sir Launcelot espied him readily, that it was Sir Tristram, and then he repented him that he had smitten him down; and so Sir Launcelot went out of the press to repose him and lightly he came again. And now when Sir Tristram came into the press, through his great force he put Sir Palomides upon his horse, and Sir Gareth, and Sir Dinadan, and then they began to do marvellously; but Sir Palomides nor none of his two fellows knew not who had holpen them on horseback again. But ever Sir Tristram was nigh them and succoured them, and they [knew] not him, because he was changed into red armour: and all this while Sir Launcelot was away.

So when La Beale Isoud knew Sir Tristram again upon his horseback she was passing glad, and then she laughed and made good cheer. And as it happened, Sir Palomides looked up toward her where she lay in the window, and he espied how she laughed; and therewith he took such a rejoicing that he smote



down, what with his spear and with his sword, all that ever he met; for through the sight of her he was so enamoured in her love that he seemed at that time, that an both Sir Tristram and Sir Launcelot had been both against him they should have won no worship of him; and in his heart, as the book saith, Sir Palomides wished that with his worship he might have ado with Sir Tristram before all men, because of La Beale Isoud. Then Sir Palomides began to double his strength, and he did so marvellously that all men had wonder of him, and ever he cast up his eye unto La Beale Isoud. And when he saw her make such cheer he fared like a lion, that there might no man withstand him; and then Sir Tristram beheld him, how that Sir Palomides bestirred him; and then he said unto Sir Dinadan: So God me help, Sir Palomides is a passing good knight and a well enduring, but such deeds saw I him never do, nor never heard I tell that ever he did so much in one day. It is his day, said Dinadan; and he would say no more unto Sir Tristram; but to himself he said: An if ye knew for whose love he doth all those deeds of arms, soon would Sir Tristram abate his courage. Alas, said Sir Tristram, that Sir Palomides is not christened. So said King Arthur, and so said all those that beheld him. Then all people gave him the prize, as for the best knight that day, that he passed Sir Launcelot outhir Sir Tristram. Well, said Dinadan to himself, all this worship that Sir Palomides hath here this day he may thank the Queen Isoud, for had she been away this day Sir Palomides had not gotten the prize this day.

Right so came into the field Sir Launcelot du Lake, and saw and heard the noise and cry and the great worship that Sir Palomides had. He dressed him against Sir Palomides, with a great mighty spear and a long, and thought to smite him down. And when Sir Palomides saw Sir Launcelot come upon him so fast, he ran upon Sir Launcelot as fast with his sword as he might; and as Sir Launcelot should have stricken him he smote his spear aside, and smote it a-two with his sword. And Sir Palomides rushed unto Sir Launcelot, and thought to have put him to a shame; and with his sword he smote his horse's neck that Sir Launcelot rode upon, and then Sir Launcelot fell to the earth. Then was the cry huge and great: See how Sir Palomides the Saracen hath smitten down Sir Launcelot's horse. Right then were there many knights wroth with Sir Palomides because he had done that deed; therefore many knights held there against that it was unknightly done in a tournament to kill an horse wilfully, but that it had been done in plain battle, life for life.

#### **CHAPTER LXXI. How Sir Launcelot said to Sir Palomides, and how the prize of that day was given unto Sir Palomides.**

WHEN Sir Ector de Maris saw Sir Launcelot his brother have such a despite,

and so set on foot, then he gat a spear eagerly, and ran against Sir Palomides, and he smote him so hard that he bare him quite from his horse. That saw Sir Tristram, that was in red harness, and he smote down Sir Ector de Maris quite from his horse. Then Sir Launcelot dressed his shield upon his shoulder, and with his sword naked in his hand, and so came straight upon Sir Palomides fiercely and said: Wit thou well thou hast done me this day the greatest despite that ever any worshipful knight did to me in tournament or in jousts, and therefore I will be avenged upon thee, therefore take keep to yourself. Ah, mercy, noble knight, said Palomides, and forgive me mine unkindly deeds, for I have no power nor might to withstand you, and I have done so much this day that well I wot I did never so much, nor never shall in my life-days; and therefore, most noble knight, I require thee spare me as at this day, and I promise you I shall ever be your knight while I live: an ye put me from my worship now, ye put me from the greatest worship that ever I had or ever shall have in my life-days. Well, said Sir Launcelot, I see, for to say thee sooth, ye have done marvellously well this day; and I understand a part for whose love ye do it, and well I wot that love is a great mistress. And if my lady were here as she nis not, wit you well, said Sir Launcelot, ye should not bear away the worship. But beware your love be not discovered, for an Sir Tristram may know it ye will repent it; and sithen my quarrel is not here, ye shall have this day the worship as for me; considering the great travail and pain that ye have had this day, it were no worship for me to put you from it. And therewithal Sir Launcelot suffered Sir Palomides to depart.

Then Sir Launcelot by great force and might gat his own horse maugre twenty knights. So when Sir Launcelot was horsed he did many marvels, and so did Sir Tristram, and Sir Palomides in like wise. Then Sir Launcelot smote down with a spear Sir Dinadan, and the King of Scotland, and the King of Wales, and the King of Northumberland, and the King of Listinoise. So then Sir Launcelot and his fellows smote down well a forty knights. Then came the King of Ireland and the King of the Straight Marches to rescue Sir Tristram and Sir Palomides. There began a great medley, and many knights were smitten down on both parties; and always Sir Launcelot spared Sir Tristram, and he spared him. And Sir Palomides would not meddle with Sir Launcelot, and so there was hurtling here and there. And then King Arthur sent out many knights of the Table Round; and Sir Palomides was ever in the foremost front, and Sir Tristram did so strongly well that the king and all other had marvel. And then the king let blow to lodging; and because Sir Palomides began first, and never he went nor rode out of the field to repose, but ever he was doing marvellously well either on foot or on horseback, and longest during, King Arthur and all the kings gave Sir

Palomides the honour and the gree as for that day.

Then Sir Tristram commanded Sir Dinadan to fetch the queen La Beale Isoud, and bring her to his two pavilions that stood by the well. And so Dinadan did as he was commanded. But when Sir Palomides understood and wist that Sir Tristram was in the red armour, and on a red horse, wit ye well that he was glad, and so was Sir Gareth and Sir Dinadan, for they all weened that Sir Tristram had been taken prisoner. And then every knight drew to his inn. And then King Arthur and every knight spake of those knights; but above all men they gave Sir Palomides the prize, and all knights that knew Sir Palomides had wonder of his deeds. Sir, said Sir Launcelot unto Arthur, as for Sir Palomides an he be the green knight I dare say as for this day he is best worthy to have the degree, for he reposed him never, nor never changed his weeds, and he began first and longest held on. And yet, well I wot, said Sir Launcelot, that there was a better knight than he, and that shall be proved or we depart, upon pain of my life. Thus they talked on either party; and so Sir Dinadan railed with Sir Tristram and said: What the devil is upon thee this day? for Sir Palomides' strength feebled never this day, but ever he doubled his strength.

#### **CHAPTER LXXII. How Sir Dinadan provoked Sir Tristram to do well.**

AND thou, Sir Tristram, farest all this day as though thou hadst been asleep, and therefore I call thee coward. Well, Dinadan, said Sir Tristram, I was never called coward or now of no earthly knight in my life; and wit thou well, sir, I call myself never the more coward though Sir Launcelot gave me a fall, for I outcept him of all knights. And doubt ye not Sir Dinadan, an Sir Launcelot have a quarrel good, he is too over good for any knight that now is living; and yet of his sufferance, largess, bounty, and courtesy, I call him knight peerless: and so Sir Tristram was in manner wroth with Sir Dinadan. But all this language Sir Dinadan said because he would anger Sir Tristram, for to cause him to awake his spirits and to be wroth; for well knew Sir Dinadan that an Sir Tristram were thoroughly wroth Sir Palomides should not get the prize upon the morn. And for this intent Sir Dinadan said all this railing and language against Sir Tristram. Truly, said Sir Palomides, as for Sir Launcelot, of his noble knighthood, courtesy, and prowess, and gentleness, I know not his peer; for this day, said Sir Palomides, I did full uncourteously unto Sir Launcelot, and full unknighly, and full knightly and courteously he did to me again; for an he had been as ungentle to me as I was to him, this day I had won no worship. And therefore, said Palomides, I shall be Sir Launcelot's knight while my life lasteth. This talking was in the houses of kings. But all kings, lords, and knights, said, of clear knighthood, and of pure strength, of bounty, of courtesy, Sir Launcelot and Sir

Tristram bare the prize above all knights that ever were in Arthur's days. And there were never knights in Arthur's days did half so many deeds as they did; as the book saith, no ten knights did not half the deeds that they did, and there was never knight in their days that required Sir Launcelot or Sir Tristram of any quest, so it were not to their shame, but they performed their desire.

### **CHAPTER LXXIII. How King Arthur and Sir Lancelot came to see La Beale Isoud, and how Palomides smote down King Arthur.**

SO on the morn Sir Launcelot departed, and Sir Tristram was ready, and La Beale Isoud with Sir Palomides and Sir Gareth. And so they rode all in green full freshly beseen unto the forest. And Sir Tristram left Sir Dinadan sleeping in his bed. And so as they rode it happed the king and Launcelot stood in a window, and saw Sir Tristram ride and Isoud. Sir, said Launcelot, yonder rideth the fairest lady of the world except your queen, Dame Guenever. Who is that? said Sir Arthur. Sir, said he, it is Queen Isoud that, out-taken my lady your queen, she is makeless. Take your horse, said Arthur, and array you at all rights as I will do, and I promise you, said the king, I will see her. Then anon they were armed and horsed, and either took a spear and rode unto the forest. Sir, said Launcelot, it is not good that ye go too nigh them, for wit ye well there are two as good knights as now are living, and therefore, sir, I pray you be not too hasty. For peradventure there will be some knights be displeased an we come suddenly upon them. As for that, said Arthur, I will see her, for I take no force whom I grieve. Sir, said Launcelot, ye put yourself in great jeopardy. As for that, said the king, we will take the adventure. Right so anon the king rode even to her, and saluted her, and said: God you save. Sir, said she, ye are welcome. Then the king beheld her, and liked her wonderly well.

With that came Sir Palomides unto Arthur, and said: Uncourteous knight, what seekest thou here? thou art uncourteous to come upon a lady thus suddenly, therefore withdraw thee. Sir Arthur took none heed of Sir Palomides' words, but ever he looked still upon Queen Isoud. Then was Sir Palomides wroth, and therewith he took a spear, and came hurtling upon King Arthur, and smote him down with a spear. When Sir Launcelot saw that despite of Sir Palomides, he said to himself: I am loath to have ado with yonder knight, and not for his own sake but for Sir Tristram. And one thing I am sure of, if I smite down Sir Palomides I must have ado with Sir Tristram, and that were overmuch for me to match them both, for they are two noble knights; notwithstanding, whether I live or I die, needs must I revenge my lord, and so will I, whatsomever befall of me. And therewith Sir Launcelot cried to Sir Palomides: Keep thee from me. And then Sir Launcelot and Sir Palomides rushed together with two spears strongly,

but Sir Launcelot smote Sir Palomides so hard that he went quite out of his saddle, and had a great fall. When Sir Tristram saw Sir Palomides have that fall, he said to Sir Launcelot: Sir knight, keep thee, for I must joust with thee. As for to joust with me, said Sir Launcelot, I will not fail you, for no dread I have of you; but I am loath to have ado with you an I might choose, for I will that ye wit that I must revenge my special lord that was unhorsed unwarly and unknighly. And therefore, though I revenged that fall, take ye no displeasure therein, for he is to me such a friend that I may not see him shamed.

Anon Sir Tristram understood by his person and by his knightly words that it was Sir Launcelot du Lake, and verily Sir Tristram deemed that it was King Arthur, he that Sir Palomides had smitten down. And then Sir Tristram put his spear from him, and put Sir Palomides again on horseback, and Sir Launcelot put King Arthur on horseback and so departed. So God me help, said Sir Tristram unto Palomides, ye did not worshipfully when ye smote down that knight so suddenly as ye did. And wit ye well ye did yourself great shame, for the knights came hither of their gentleness to see a fair lady; and that is every good knight's part, to behold a fair lady; and ye had not ado to play such masteries afore my lady. Wit thou well it will turn to anger, for he that ye smote down was King Arthur, and that other was the good knight Sir Launcelot. But I shall not forget the words of Sir Launcelot when that he called him a man of great worship, thereby I wist that it was King Arthur. And as for Sir Launcelot, an there had been five hundred knights in the meadow, he would not have refused them, and yet he said he would refuse me. By that again I wist that it was Sir Launcelot, for ever he forbearth me in every place, and showeth me great kindness; and of all knights, I out-take none, say what men will say, he beareth the flower of all chivalry, say it him whosomever will. An he be well angered, and that him list to do his utterance without any favour, I know him not alive but Sir Launcelot is over hard for him, be it on horseback or on foot. I may never believe, said Palomides, that King Arthur will ride so privily as a poor errant knight. Ah, said Sir Tristram, ye know not my lord Arthur, for all knights may learn to be a knight of him. And therefore ye may be sorry, said Sir Tristram, of your unkindly deeds to so noble a king. And a thing that is done may not be undone, said Palomides. Then Sir Tristram sent Queen Isoud unto her lodging in the priory, there to behold all the tournament.

#### **CHAPTER LXXIV. How the second day Palomides forsook Sir Tristram, and went to the contrary part against him.**

THEN there was a cry unto all knights, that when they heard an horn blow they should make jousts as they did the first day. And like as the brethren Sir

Edward and Sir Sadok began the jousts the first day, Sir Uwaine the king's son Urien and Sir Lucanere de Buttelere began the jousts the second day. And at the first encounter

Sir Uwaine smote down the King's son of Scots; and Sir Lucanere ran against the King of Wales, and they brake their spears all to pieces; and they were so fierce both, that they hurtled together that both fell to the earth. Then they of Orkney horsed again Sir Lucanere. And then came in Sir Tristram de Liones; and then Sir Tristram smote down Sir Uwaine and Sir Lucanere; and Sir Palomides smote down other two knights and Sir Gareth smote down other two knights. Then said Sir Arthur unto Sir Launcelot: See yonder three knights do passingly well, and namely the first that jousted. Sir, said Launcelot, that knight began not yet but ye shall see him this day do marvellously. And then came into the place the duke's son of Orkney, and then they began to do many deeds of arms.

When Sir Tristram saw them so begin, he said to Palomides: How feel ye yourself? may ye do this day as ye did yesterday? Nay, said Palomides, I feel myself so weary, and so sore bruised of the deeds of yesterday, that I may not endure as I did yesterday. That me repenteth, said Sir Tristram, for I shall lack you this day. Sir Palomides said: Trust not to me, for I may not do as I did. All these words said Palomides for to beguile Sir Tristram. Sir, said Sir Tristram unto Sir Gareth, then must I trust upon you; wherefore I pray you be not far from me to rescue me. An need be, said Sir Gareth, I shall not fail you in all that I may do. Then Sir Palomides rode by himself; and then in despite of Sir Tristram he put himself in the thickest press among them of Orkney, and there he did so marvellously deeds of arms that all men had wonder of him, for there might none stand him a stroke.

When Sir Tristram saw Sir Palomides do such deeds, he marvelled and said to himself: He is weary of my company. So Sir Tristram beheld him a great while and did but little else, for the noise and cry was so huge and great that Sir Tristram marvelled from whence came the strength that Sir Palomides had there in the field. Sir, said Sir Gareth unto Sir Tristram, remember ye not of the words that Sir Dinadan said to you yesterday, when he called you a coward; forsooth, sir, he said it for none ill, for ye are the man in the world that he most loveth, and all that he said was for your worship. And therefore, said Sir Gareth to Sir Tristram, let me know this day what ye be; and wonder ye not so upon Sir Palomides, for he enforceth himself to win all the worship and honour from you. I may well believe it, said Sir Tristram. And sithen I understand his evil will and his envy, ye shall see, if that I enforce myself, that the noise shall be left that now is upon him.

Then Sir Tristram rode into the thickest of the press, and then he did so marvellously well, and did so great deeds of arms, that all men said that Sir Tristram did double so much deeds of arms as Sir Palomides had done aforehand. And then the noise went plain from Sir Palomides, and all the people cried upon Sir Tristram. O Jesu, said the people, see how Sir Tristram smiteth down with his spear so many knights. And see, said they all, how many knights he smiteth down with his sword, and of how many knights he rashed off their helms and their shields; and so he beat them all of Orkney afore him. How now, said Sir Launcelot unto King Arthur, I told you that this day there would a knight play his pageant. Yonder rideth a knight ye may see he doth knightly, for he hath strength and wind. So God me help, said Arthur to Launcelot, ye say sooth, for I saw never a better knight, for he passeth far Sir Palomides. Sir, wit ye well, said Launcelot, it must be so of right, for it is himself, that noble knight Sir Tristram. I may right well believe it, said Arthur.

But when Sir Palomides heard the noise and the cry was turned from him, he rode out on a part and beheld Sir Tristram. And when Sir Palomides saw Sir Tristram do so marvellously well he wept passingly sore for despite, for he wist well he should no worship win that day; for well knew Sir Palomides, when Sir Tristram would put forth his strength and his manhood, he should get but little worship that day.

#### **CHAPTER LXXV. How Sir Tristram departed of the field, and awaked Sir Dinadan, and changed his array into black.**

THEN came King Arthur, and the King of Northgalis, and Sir Launcelot du Lake; and Sir Bleoberis, Sir Bors de Ganis, Sir Ector de Maris, these three knights came into the field with Sir Launcelot. And then Sir Launcelot with the three knights of his kin did so great deeds of arms that all the noise began upon Sir Launcelot. And so they beat the King of Wales and the King of Scots far aback, and made them to avoid the field; but Sir Tristram and Sir Gareth abode still in the field and endured all that ever there came, that all men had wonder that any knight might endure so many strokes. But ever Sir Launcelot, and his three kinsmen by the commandment of Sir Launcelot, forbare Sir Tristram. Then said Sir Arthur: Is that Sir Palomides that endureth so well? Nay, said Sir Launcelot, wit ye well it is the good knight Sir Tristram, for yonder ye may see Sir Palomides beholdeth and hoveth, and doth little or nought. And sir, ye shall understand that Sir Tristram weeneth this day to beat us all out of the field. And as for me, said Sir Launcelot, I shall not beat him, beat him whoso will. Sir, said Launcelot unto Arthur, ye may see how Sir Palomides hoveth yonder, as though he were in a dream; wit ye well he is full heavy that Tristram doth such deeds of

arms Then is he but a fool, said Arthur, for never was Sir Palomides, nor never shall be, of such prowess as Sir Tristram. And if he have any envy at Sir Tristram, and cometh in with him upon his side he is a false knight.

As the king and Sir Launcelot thus spake, Sir Tristram rode privily out of the press, that none espied him but La Beale Isoud and Sir Palomides, for they two would not let off their eyes upon Sir Tristram. And when Sir Tristram came to his pavilions he found Sir Dinadan in his bed asleep. Awake, said Tristram, ye ought to be ashamed so to sleep when knights have ado in the field. Then Sir Dinadan arose lightly and said: What will ye that I shall do? Make you ready, said Sir Tristram, to ride with me into the field. So when Sir Dinadan was armed he looked upon Sir Tristram's helm and on his shield, and when he saw so many strokes upon his helm and upon his shield he said: In good time was I thus asleep, for had I been with you I must needs for shame there have followed you; more for shame than any prowess that is in me; that I see well now by those strokes that I should have been truly beaten as I was yesterday. Leave your japes, said Sir Tristram, and come off, that [we] were in the field again. What, said Sir Dinadan, is your heart up? yesterday ye fared as though ye had dreamed. So then Sir Tristram was arrayed in black harness. O Jesu, said Dinadan, what aileth you this day? meseemeth ye be wilder than ye were yesterday. Then smiled Sir Tristram and said to Dinadan: Await well upon me; if ye see me overmatched look that ye be ever behind me, and I shall make you ready way by God's grace. So Sir Tristram and Sir Dinadan took their horses. All this espied Sir Palomides, both their going and their coming, and so did La Beale Isoud, for she knew Sir Tristram above all other.

#### **CHAPTER LXXVI. How Sir Palomides changed his shield and his armour for to hurt Sir Tristram, and how Sir Launcelot did to Sir Tristram.**

THEN when Sir Palomides saw that Sir Tristram was disguised, then he thought to do him a shame. So Sir Palomides rode to a knight that was sore wounded, that sat under a fair well from the field. Sir knight, said Sir Palomides, I pray you to lend me your armour and your shield, for mine is over-well known in this field, and that hath done me great damage; and ye shall have mine armour and my shield that is as sure as yours. I will well, said the knight, that ye have mine armour and my shield, if they may do you any avail. So Sir Palomides armed him hastily in that knight's armour and his shield that shone as any crystal or silver, and so he came riding into the field. And then there was neither Sir Tristram nor none of King Arthur's party that knew Sir Palomides. And right so as Sir Palomides was come into the field Sir Tristram smote down three knights,



even in the sight of Sir Palomides. And then Sir Palomides rode against Sir Tristram, and either met other with great spears, that they brast to their hands. And then they dashed together with swords eagerly. Then Sir Tristram had marvel what knight he was that did battle so knightly with him. Then was Sir Tristram wroth, for he felt him passing strong, so that he deemed he might not have ado with the remnant of the knights, because of the strength of Sir Palomides. So they lashed together and gave many sad strokes together, and many knights marvelled what knight he might be that so encountered with the black knight, Sir Tristram. Full well knew La Beale Isoud that there was Sir Palomides that fought with Sir Tristram, for she espied all in her window where that she stood, as Sir Palomides changed his harness with the wounded knight. And then she began to weep so heartily for the despite of Sir Palomides that there she swooned.

Then came in Sir Launcelot with the knights of Orkney. And when the other party had espied Sir Launcelot, they cried: Return, return, here cometh Sir Launcelot du Lake. So there came knights and said: Sir Launcelot, ye must needs fight with yonder knight in the black harness, that was Sir Tristram, for he hath almost overcome that good knight that fighteth with him with the silver shield, that was Sir Palomides. Then Sir Launcelot rode betwixt Sir Tristram and Sir Palomides, and Sir Launcelot said to Palomides: Sir knight, let me have the battle, for ye have need to be reposed. Sir Palomides knew Sir Launcelot well, and so did Sir Tristram, but because Sir Launcelot was far hardier knight than himself therefore he was glad, and suffered Sir Launcelot to fight with Sir Tristram. For well wist he that Sir Launcelot knew not Sir Tristram, and there he hoped that Sir Launcelot should beat or shame Sir Tristram, whereof Sir Palomides was full fain. And so Sir Launcelot gave Sir Tristram many sad strokes, but Sir Launcelot knew not Sir Tristram, but Sir Tristram knew well Sir Launcelot. And thus they fought long together, that La Beale Isoud was well-nigh out of her mind for sorrow.

Then Sir Dinadan told Sir Gareth how that knight in the black harness was Sir Tristram: And this is Launcelot that fighteth with him, that must needs have the better of him, for Sir Tristram hath had too much travail this day. Then let us smite him down, said Sir Gareth. So it is better that we do, said Sir Dinadan, than Sir Tristram be shamed, for yonder hoveth the strong knight with the silver shield to fall upon Sir Tristram if need be. Then forthwithal Gareth rushed upon Sir Launcelot, and gave him a great stroke upon his helm so hard that he was astonied. And then came Sir Dinadan with a spear, and he smote Sir Launcelot such a buffet that horse and all fell to the earth. O Jesu, said Sir Tristram to Sir Gareth and Sir Dinadan, fie for shame, why did ye smite down so good a knight

as he is, and namely when I had ado with him? now ye do yourself great shame, and him no disworship; for I held him reasonable hot, though ye had not holpen me.

Then came Sir Palomides that was disguised, and smote down Sir Dinadan from his horse. Then Sir Launcelot, because Sir Dinadan had smitten him aforehand, then Sir Launcelot assailed Sir Dinadan passing sore, and Sir Dinadan defended him mightily. But well understood Sir Tristram that Sir Dinadan might not endure Sir Launcelot, wherefore Sir Tristram was sorry. Then came Sir Palomides fresh upon Sir Tristram. And when Sir Tristram saw him come, he thought to deliver him at once, because that he would help Sir Dinadan, because he stood in great peril with Sir Launcelot. Then Sir Tristram hurtled unto Sir Palomides and gave him a great buffet, and then Sir Tristram gat Sir Palomides and pulled him down underneath him. And so fell Sir Tristram with him; and Sir Tristram leapt up lightly and left Sir Palomides, and went betwixt Sir Launcelot and Dinadan, and then they began to do battle together.

Right so Sir Dinadan gat Sir Tristram's horse, and said on high that Sir Launcelot might hear it: My lord Sir Tristram, take your horse. And when Sir Launcelot heard him name Sir Tristram: O Jesu, said Launcelot, what have I done? I am dishonoured. Ah, my lord Sir Tristram, said Launcelot, why were ye disguised? ye have put yourself in great peril this day; but I pray you noble knight to pardon me, for an I had known you we had not done this battle. Sir, said Sir Tristram, this is not the first kindness ye showed me. So they were both horsed again.

Then all the people on the one side gave Sir Launcelot the honour and the degree, and on the other side all the people gave to the noble knight Sir Tristram the honour and the degree; but Launcelot said nay thereto: For I am not worthy to have this honour, for I will report me unto all knights that Sir Tristram hath been longer in the field than I, and he hath smitten down many more knights this day than I have done. And therefore I will give Sir Tristram my voice and my name, and so I pray all my lords and fellows so to do. Then there was the whole voice of dukes and earls, barons and knights, that Sir Tristram this day is proved the best knight.

#### **CHAPTER LXXVII. How Sir Tristram departed with La Beale Isoud, and how Palomides followed and excused him.**

THEN they blew unto lodging, and Queen Isoud was led unto her pavilions. But wit you well she was wroth out of measure with Sir Palomides, for she saw all his treason from the beginning to the ending. And all this while neither Sir Tristram, neither Sir Gareth nor Dinadan, knew not of the treason of Sir

Palomides; but afterward ye shall hear that there befell the greatest debate betwixt Sir Tristram and Sir Palomides that might be.

So when the tournament was done, Sir Tristram, Gareth, and Dinadan, rode with La Beale Isoud to these pavilions. And ever Sir Palomides rode with them in their company disguised as he was. But when Sir Tristram had espied him that he was the same knight with the shield of silver that held him so hot that day: Sir knight, said Sir Tristram, wit ye well here is none that hath need of your fellowship, and therefore I pray you depart from us. Sir Palomides answered again as though he had not known Sir Tristram: Wit you well, sir knight, from this fellowship will I never depart, for one of the best knights of the world commanded me to be in this company, and till he discharge me of my service I will not be discharged. By that Sir Tristram knew that it was Sir Palomides. Ah, Sir Palomides, said the noble knight Sir Tristram, are ye such a knight? Ye have been named wrong, for ye have long been called a gentle knight, and as this day ye have showed me great ungentleness, for ye had almost brought me unto my death. But, as for you, I suppose I should have done well enough, but Sir Launcelot with you was overmuch; for I know no knight living but Sir Launcelot is over good for him, an he will do his uttermost. Alas, said Sir Palomides, are ye my lord Sir Tristram? Yea, sir, and that ye know well enough. By my knighthood, said Palomides, until now I knew you not; I weened that ye had been the King of Ireland, for well I wot ye bare his arms. His arms I bare, said Sir Tristram, and that will I stand by, for I won them once in a field of a full noble knight, his name was Sir Marhaus; and with great pain I won that knight, for there was none other recover, but Sir Marhaus died through false leeches; and yet was he never yolden to me. Sir, said Palomides, I weened ye had been turned upon Sir Launcelot's party, and that caused me to turn. Ye say well, said Sir Tristram, and so I take you, and I forgive you.

So then they rode into their pavilions; and when they were alighted they unarmed them and washed their faces and hands, and so yode unto meat, and were set at their table. But when Isoud saw Sir Palomides she changed then her colours, and for wrath she might not speak. Anon Sir Tristram espied her countenance and said: Madam, for what cause make ye us such cheer? we have been sore travailed this day. Mine own lord, said La Beale Isoud, for God's sake be ye not displeased with me, for I may none otherwise do; for I saw this day how ye were betrayed and nigh brought to your death. Truly, sir, I saw every deal, how and in what wise, and therefore, sir, how should I suffer in your presence such a felon and traitor as Sir Palomides; for I saw him with mine eyes, how he beheld you when ye went out of the field. For ever he hoved still upon his horse till he saw you come in againward. And then forthwithal I saw him ride

to the hurt knight, and changed harness with him, and then straight I saw him how he rode into the field. And anon as he had found you he encountered with you, and thus wilfully Sir Palomides did battle with you; and as for him, sir, I was not greatly afraid, but I dread sore Launcelot, that knew you not. Madam, said Palomides, ye may say whatso ye will, I may not contrary you, but by my knighthood I knew not Sir Tristram. Sir Palomides, said Sir Tristram, I will take your excuse, but well I wot ye spared me but little, but all is pardoned on my part. Then La Beale Isoud held down her head and said no more at that time.

### **CHAPTER LXXVIII. How King Arthur and Sir Launcelot came unto their pavilions as they sat at supper, and of Sir Palomides.**

AND therewithal two knights armed came unto the pavilion, and there they alighted both, and came in armed at all pieces. Fair knights, said Sir Tristram, ye are to blame to come thus armed at all pieces upon me while we are at our meat; if ye would anything when we were in the field there might ye have eased your hearts. Not so, said the one of those knights, we come not for that intent, but wit ye well Sir Tristram, we be come hither as your friends. And I am come here, said the one, for to see you, and this knight is come for to see La Beale Isoud. Then said Sir Tristram: I require you do off your helms that I may see you. That will we do at your desire, said the knights. And when their helms were off, Sir Tristram thought that he should know them.

Then said Sir Dinadan privily unto Sir Tristram: Sir, that is Sir Launcelot du Lake that spake unto you first, and the other is my lord King Arthur. Then, said Sir Tristram unto La Beale Isoud, Madam arise, for here is my lord, King Arthur. Then the king and the queen kissed, and Sir Launcelot and Sir Tristram braced either other in arms, and then there was joy without measure; and at the request of La Beale Isoud, King Arthur and Launcelot were unarmed, and then there was merry talking. Madam, said Sir Arthur, it is many a day sithen that I have desired to see you, for ye have been praised so far; and now I dare say ye are the fairest that ever I saw, and Sir Tristram is as fair and as good a knight as any that I know; therefore me beseemeth ye are well beset together. Sir, God thank you, said the noble knight, Sir Tristram, and Isoud; of your great goodness and largess ye are peerless. Thus they talked of many things and of all the whole jousts. But for what cause, said King Arthur, were ye, Sir Tristram, against us? Ye are a knight of the Table Round; of right ye should have been with us. Sir, said Sir Tristram, here is Dinadan, and Sir Gareth your own nephew, caused me to be against you. My lord Arthur, said Gareth, I may well bear the blame, but it were Sir Tristram's own deeds. That may I repent, said Dinadan, for this unhappy Sir Tristram brought us to this tournament, and many great buffets he

caused us to have. Then the king and Launcelot laughed that they might not sit.

What knight was that, said Arthur, that held you so short, this with the shield of silver? Sir, said Sir Tristram, here he sitteth at this board. What, said Arthur, was it Sir Palomides? Wit ye well it was he, said La Beale Isoud. So God me help, said Arthur, that was unknighly done of you of so good a knight, for I have heard many people call you a courteous knight. Sir, said Palomides, I knew not Sir Tristram, for he was so disguised. So God me help, said Launcelot, it may well be, for I knew not Sir Tristram; but I marvel why ye turned on our party. That was done for the same cause, said Launcelot. As for that, said Sir Tristram, I have pardoned him, and I would be right loath to leave his fellowship, for I love right well his company: so they left off and talked of other things.

And in the evening King Arthur and Sir Launcelot departed unto their lodging; but wit ye well Sir Palomides had envy heartily, for all that night he had never rest in his bed, but wailed and wept out of measure. So on the morn Sir Tristram, Gareth, and Dinadan arose early, and then they went unto Sir Palomides' chamber, and there they found him fast asleep, for he had all night watched, and it was seen upon his cheeks that he had wept full sore. Say nothing, said Sir Tristram, for I am sure he hath taken anger and sorrow for the rebuke that I gave to him, and La Beale Isoud.

#### **CHAPTER LXXIX. How Sir Tristram and Sir Palomides did the next day, and how King Arthur was unhorsed.**

THEN Sir Tristram let call Sir Palomides, and bade him make him ready, for it was time to go to the field. When they were ready they were armed, and clothed all in red, both Isoud and all they; and so they led her passing freshly through the field, into the priory where was her lodging. And then they heard three blasts blow, and every king and knight dressed him unto the field. And the first that was ready to joust was Sir Palomides and Sir Kainus le Strange, a knight of the Table Round. And so they two encountered together, but Sir Palomides smote Sir Kainus so hard that he smote him quite over his horse's croup. And forthwithal Sir Palomides smote down another knight, and brake then his spear, and pulled out his sword and did wonderly well. And then the noise began greatly upon Sir Palomides. Lo, said King Arthur, yonder Palomides beginneth to play his pageant. So God me help, said Arthur, he is a passing good knight. And right as they stood talking thus, in came Sir Tristram as thunder, and he encountered with Sir Kay the Seneschal, and there he smote him down quite from his horse; and with that same spear Sir Tristram smote down three knights more, and then he pulled out his sword and did marvellously. Then the noise and

cry changed from Sir Palomides and turned to Sir Tristram, and all the people cried: O Tristram, O Tristram. And then was Sir Palomides clean forgotten.

How now, said Launcelot unto Arthur, yonder rideth a knight that playeth his pageants. So God me help, said Arthur to Launcelot, ye shall see this day that yonder two knights shall here do this day wonders. Sir, said Launcelot, the one knight waiteth upon the other, and enforceth himself through envy to pass the noble knight Sir Tristram, and he knoweth not of the privy envy the which Sir Palomides hath to him; for all that the noble Sir Tristram doth is through clean knighthood. And then Sir Gareth and Dinadan did wonderly great deeds of arms, as two noble knights, so that King Arthur spake of them great honour and worship; and the kings and knights of Sir Tristram's side did passingly well, and held them truly together. Then Sir Arthur and Sir Launcelot took their horses and dressed them, and gat into the thickest of the press. And there Sir Tristram unknowing smote down King Arthur, and then Sir Launcelot would have rescued him, but there were so many upon Sir Launcelot that they pulled him down from his horse. And then the King of Ireland and the King of Scots with their knights did their pain to take King Arthur and Sir Launcelot prisoner. When Sir Launcelot heard them say so, he fared as it had been an hungry lion, for he fared so that no knight durst nigh him.

Then came Sir Ector de Maris, and he bare a spear against Sir Palomides, and brast it upon him all to shivers. And then Sir Ector came again and gave Sir Palomides such a dash with a sword that he stooped down upon his saddle bow. And forthwithal Sir Ector pulled down Sir Palomides under his feet; and then Sir Ector de Maris gat Sir Launcelot du Lake an horse, and brought it to him, and bade him mount upon him; but Sir Palomides leapt afore and gat the horse by the bridle, and leapt into the saddle. So God me help, said Launcelot, ye are better worthy to have that horse than I. Then Sir Ector brought Sir Launcelot another horse. Gramercy, said Launcelot unto his brother. And so when he was horsed again, with one spear he smote down four knights. And then Sir Launcelot brought to King Arthur one of the best of the four horses. Then Sir Launcelot with King Arthur and a few of his knights of Sir Launcelot's kin did marvellous deeds; for that time, as the book recordeth, Sir Launcelot smote down and pulled down thirty knights. Notwithstanding the other party held them so fast together that King Arthur and his knights were overmatched. And when Sir Tristram saw that, what labour King Arthur and his knights, and in especial the noble deeds that Sir Launcelot did with his own hands, he marvelled greatly.

#### **CHAPTER LXXX. How Sir Tristram turned to King Arthur's side, and how Palomides would not.**

THEN Sir Tristram called unto him Sir Palomides, Sir Gareth, and Sir Dinadan, and said thus to them: My fair fellows, wit ye well that I will turn unto King Arthur's party, for I saw never so few men do so well, and it will be shame unto us knights that be of the Round Table to see our lord King Arthur, and that noble knight Sir Launcelot, to be dishonoured. It will be well done, said Sir Gareth and Sir Dinadan. Do your best, said Palomides, for I will not change my party that I came in withal. That is for my sake, said Sir Tristram; God speed you in your journey. And so departed Sir Palomides from them. Then Sir Tristram, Gareth, and Dinadan, turned with Sir Launcelot. And then Sir Launcelot smote down the King of Ireland quite from his horse; and so Sir Launcelot smote down the King of Scots, and the King of Wales; and then Sir Arthur ran unto Sir Palomides and smote him quite from his horse; and then Sir Tristram bare down all that he met. Sir Gareth and Sir Dinadan did there as noble knights; then all the parties began to flee. Alas, said Palomides, that ever I should see this day, for now have I lost all the worship that I won; and then Sir Palomides went his way wailing, and so withdrew him till he came to a well, and there he put his horse from him, and did off his armour, and wailed and wept like as he had been a wood man. Then many knights gave the prize to Sir Tristram, and there were many that gave the prize unto Sir Launcelot. Fair lords, said Sir Tristram, I thank you of the honour ye would give me, but I pray you heartily that ye would give your voice to Sir Launcelot, for by my faith said Sir Tristram, I will give Sir Launcelot my voice. But Sir Launcelot would not have it, and so the prize was given betwixt them both.

Then every man rode to his lodging, and Sir Bleoberis and Sir Ector rode with Sir Tristram and La Beale Isoud unto their pavilions. Then as Sir Palomides was at the well wailing and weeping, there came by him flying the kings of Wales and of Scotland, and they saw Sir Palomides in that arage. Alas, said they, that so noble a man as ye be should be in this array. And then those kings gat Sir Palomides' horse again, and made him to arm him and mount upon his horse, and so he rode with them, making great dole. So when Sir Palomides came nigh the pavilions thereas Sir Tristram and La Beale Isoud was in, then Sir Palomides prayed the two kings to abide him there the while that he spake with Sir Tristram. And when he came to the port of the pavilions, Sir Palomides said on high: Where art thou, Sir Tristram de Lioness? Sir, said Dinadan, that is Palomides. What, Sir Palomides, will ye not come in here among us? Fie on thee traitor, said Palomides, for wit you well an it were daylight as it is night I should slay thee, mine own hands. And if ever I may get thee, said Palomides, thou shalt die for this day's deed. Sir Palomides, said Sir Tristram, ye wite me with wrong, for had ye done as I did ye had won worship. But sithen ye give me so

large warning I shall be well ware of you. Fie on thee, traitor, said Palomides, and therewith departed.

Then on the morn Sir Tristram, Bleoberis, and Sir Ector de Maris, Sir Gareth, Sir Dinadan, what by water and what by land, they brought La Beale Isoud unto Joyous Gard, and there reposed them a seven night, and made all the mirths and disports that they could devise. And King Arthur and his knights drew unto Camelot, and Sir Palomides rode with the two kings; and ever he made the greatest dole that any man could think, for he was not all only so dolorous for the departing from La Beale Isoud, but he was a part as sorrowful to depart from the fellowship of Sir Tristram; for Sir Tristram was so kind and so gentle that when Sir Palomides remembered him thereof he might never be merry.

#### **CHAPTER LXXXI. How Sir Bleoberis and Sir Ector reported to Queen Guenever of the beauty of La Beale Isoud.**

SO at the seven nights' end Sir Bleoberis and Sir Ector departed from Sir Tristram and from the queen; and these two good knights had great gifts; and Sir Gareth and Sir Dinadan abode with Sir Tristram. And when Sir Bleoberis and Sir Ector were come there as the Queen Guenever was lodged, in a castle by the seaside, and through the grace of God the queen was recovered of her malady, then she asked the two knights from whence they came. They said that they came from Sir Tristram and from La Beale Isoud. How doth Sir Tristram, said the queen, and La Beale Isoud? Truly, said those two knights, he doth as a noble knight should do; and as for the Queen Isoud, she is peerless of all ladies; for to speak of her beauty, bount<sup>©</sup>, and mirth, and of her goodness, we saw never her match as far as we have ridden and gone. O mercy Jesu, said Queen Guenever, so saith all the people that have seen her and spoken with her. God would that I had part of her conditions; and it is misfortuned me of my sickness while that tournament endured. And as I suppose I shall never see in all my life such an assembly of knights and ladies as ye have done.

Then the knights told her how Palomides won the degree at the first day with great noblesse; and the second day Sir Tristram won the degree; and the third day Sir Launcelot won the degree. Well, said Queen Guenever, who did best all these three days? So God me help, said these knights, Sir Launcelot and Sir Tristram had least dishonour. And wit ye well Sir Palomides did passing well and mightily; but he turned against the party that he came in withal, and that caused him to lose a great part of his worship, for it seemed that Sir Palomides is passing envious. Then shall he never win worship, said Queen Guenever, for an it happeth an envious man once to win worship he shall be dishonoured twice



therefore; and for this cause all men of worship hate an envious man, and will shew him no favour, and he that is courteous, and kind, and gentle, hath favour in every place.

**CHAPTER LXXXII. How Epinogris complained by a well, and how Sir Palomides came and found him, and of their both sorrowing.**

NOW leave we of this matter and speak we of Sir Palomides, that rode and lodged him with the two kings, whereof the kings were heavy. Then the King of Ireland sent a man of his to Sir Palomides, and gave him a great courser, and the King of Scotland gave him great gifts; and fain they would have had Sir Palomides to have abiden with them, but in no wise he would abide; and so he departed, and rode as adventures would guide him, till it was nigh noon. And then in a forest by a well Sir Palomides saw where lay a fair wounded knight and his horse bounden by him; and that knight made the greatest dole that ever he heard man make, for ever he wept, and therewith he sighed as though he would die. Then Sir Palomides rode near him and saluted him mildly and said: Fair knight, why wail ye so? let me lie down and wail with you, for doubt not I am much more heavier than ye are; for I dare say, said Palomides, that my sorrow is an hundred fold more than yours is, and therefore let us complain either to other. First, said the wounded knight, I require you tell me your name, for an thou be none of the noble knights of the Round Table thou shalt never know my name, whatsomever come of me. Fair knight, said Palomides, such as I am, be it better or be it worse, wit thou well that my name is Sir Palomides, son and heir unto King Astlabor, and Sir Safere and Sir Segwarides are my two brethren; and wit thou well as for myself I was never christened, but my two brethren are truly christened. O noble knight, said that knight, well is me that I have met with you; and wit ye well my name is Epinogris, the king's son of Northumberland. Now sit down, said Epinogris, and let us either complain to other.

Then Sir Palomides began his complaint. Now shall I tell you, said Palomides, what woe I endure. I love the fairest queen and lady that ever bare life, and wit ye well her name is La Beale Isoud, King Mark's wife of Cornwall. That is great folly, said Epinogris, for to love Queen Isoud, for one of the best knights of the world loveth her, that is Sir Tristram de Liones. That is truth, said Palomides, for no man knoweth that matter better than I do, for I have been in Sir Tristram's fellowship this month, and with La Beale Isoud together; and alas, said Palomides, unhappy man that I am, now have I lost the fellowship of Sir Tristram for ever, and the love of La Beale Isoud for ever, and I am never like to see her more, and Sir Tristram and I be either to other mortal enemies. Well, said Epinogris, sith that ye loved La Beale Isoud, loved she you ever again by

anything that ye could think or wit, or else did ye rejoice her ever in any pleasure? Nay, by my knighthood, said Palomides, I never espied that ever she loved me more than all the world, nor never had I pleasure with her, but the last day she gave me the greatest rebuke that ever I had, the which shall never go from my heart. And yet I well deserved that rebuke, for I did not knightly, and therefore I have lost the love of her and of Sir Tristram for ever; and I have many times enforced myself to do many deeds for La Beale Isoud's sake, and she was the causer of my worship-winning. Alas, said Sir Palomides, now have I lost all the worship that ever I won, for never shall me befall such prowess as I had in the fellowship of Sir Tristram.

**CHAPTER LXXXIII. How Sir Palomides brought Sir Epinogris his lady; and how Sir Palomides and Sir Safere were assailed.**

NAY, nay, said Epinogris, your sorrow is but japes to my sorrow; for I rejoiced my lady and won her with my hands, and lost her again: alas that day! Thus first I won her, said Epinogris; my lady was an earl's daughter, and as the earl and two knights came from the tournament of Lonazep, for her sake I set upon this earl and on his two knights, my lady there being present; and so by fortune there I slew the earl and one of the knights, and the other knight fled, and so that night I had my lady. And on the morn as she and I reposed us at this well-side there came there to me an errant knight, his name was Sir Helior le Preuse, an hardy knight, and this Sir Helior challenged me to fight for my lady. And then we went to battle first upon horse and after on foot, but at the last Sir Helior wounded me so that he left me for dead, and so he took my lady with him; and thus my sorrow is more than yours, for I have rejoiced and ye rejoiced never. That is truth, said Palomides, but sith I can never recover myself I shall promise you if I can meet with Sir Helior I shall get you your lady again, or else he shall beat me.

Then Sir Palomides made Sir Epinogris to take his horse, and so they rode to an hermitage, and there Sir Epinogris rested him. And in the meanwhile Sir Palomides walked privily out to rest him under the leaves, and there beside he saw a knight come riding with a shield that he had seen Sir Ector de Maris bear beforehand; and there came after him a ten knights, and so these ten knights hove under the leaves for heat. And anon after there came a knight with a green shield and therein a white lion, leading a lady upon a palfrey. Then this knight with the green shield that seemed to be master of the ten knights, he rode fiercely after Sir Helior, for it was he that hurt Sir Epinogris. And when he came nigh Sir Helior he bade him defend his lady. I will defend her, said Helior, unto my power. And so they ran together so mightily that either of these knights smote

other down, horse and all, to the earth; and then they won up lightly and drew their swords and their shields, and lashed together mightily more than an hour. All this Sir Palomides saw and beheld, but ever at the last the knight with Sir Ector's shield was bigger, and at the last this knight smote Sir Helior down, and then that knight unlaced his helm to have stricken off his head. And then he cried mercy, and prayed him to save his life, and bade him take his lady. Then Sir Palomides dressed him up, because he wist well that that same lady was Epinogris' lady, and he promised him to help him.

Then Sir Palomides went straight to that lady, and took her by the hand, and asked her whether she knew a knight that hight Epinogris. Alas, she said, that ever he knew me or I him, for I have for his sake lost my worship, and also his life grieveth me most of all. Not so, lady, said Palomides, come on with me, for here is Epinogris in this hermitage. Ah! well is me, said the lady, an he be alive. Whither wilt thou with that lady? said the knight with Sir Ector's shield. I will do with her what me list, said Palomides. Wit you well, said that knight, thou speakest over large, though thou seemest me to have at advantage, because thou sawest me do battle but late. Thou weenest, sir knight, to have that lady away from me so lightly? nay, think it never not; an thou were as good a knight as is Sir Launcelot, or as is Sir Tristram, or Sir Palomides, but thou shalt win her dearer than ever did I. And so they went unto battle upon foot, and there they gave many sad strokes, and either wounded other passing sore, and thus they fought still more than an hour.

Then Sir Palomides had marvel what knight he might be that was so strong and so well breathed during, and thus said Palomides: Knight, I require thee tell me thy name. Wit thou well, said that knight, I dare tell thee my name, so that thou wilt tell me thy name. I will, said Palomides. Truly, said that knight, my name is Safere, son of King Astlabor, and Sir Palomides and Sir Segwarides are my brethren. Now, and wit thou well, my name is Sir Palomides. Then Sir Safere kneeled down upon his knees, and prayed him of mercy; and then they unlaced their helms and either kissed other weeping. And in the meanwhile Sir Epinogris arose out of his bed, and heard them by the strokes, and so he armed him to help Sir Palomides if need were.

#### **CHAPTER LXXXIV. How Sir Palomides and Sir Safere conducted Sir Epinogris to his castle, and of other adventures.**

THEN Sir Palomides took the lady by the hand and brought her to Sir Epinogris, and there was great joy betwixt them, for either swooned for joy. When they were met: Fair knight and lady, said Sir Safere, it were pity to depart you; Jesu send you joy either of other. Gramercy, gentle knight, said Epinogris;

and much more thanks be to my lord Sir Palomides, that thus hath through his prowess made me to get my lady. Then Sir Epinogris required Sir Palomides and Sir Safere, his brother, to ride with them unto his castle, for the safeguard of his person. Sir, said Palomides, we will be ready to conduct you because that ye are sore wounded; and so was Epinogris and his lady horsed, and his lady behind him upon a soft ambler. And then they rode unto his castle, where they had great cheer and joy, as great as ever Sir Palomides and Sir Safere had in their life-days.

So on the morn Sir Safere and Sir Palomides departed, day until after noon. And at the last they heard a great weeping and a great noise down in a manor. Sir, said then Sir Safere, let us wit what noise this is. I will well, said Sir Palomides. And so they rode forth till that they came to a fair gate of a manor, and there sat an old man saying his prayers and beads. Then Sir Palomides and Sir Safere alighted and left their horses, and went within the gates, and there they saw full many goodly men weeping. Fair sirs, said Palomides, wherefore weep ye and make this sorrow? Anon one of the knights of the castle beheld Sir Palomides and knew him, and then went to his fellows and said: Fair fellows, wit ye well all, we have in this castle the same knight that slew our lord at Lonazep, for I know him well; it is Sir Palomides. Then they went unto harness, all that might bear harness, some on horseback and some on foot, to the number of three score. And when they were ready they came freshly upon Sir Palomides and upon Sir Safere with a great noise, and said thus: Keep thee, Sir Palomides, for thou art known, and by right thou must be dead, for thou hast slain our lord; and therefore wit ye well we will slay thee, therefore defend thee.

Then Sir Palomides and Sir Safere, the one set his back to the other, and gave many great strokes, and took many great strokes; and thus they fought with a twenty knights and forty gentlemen and yeomen nigh two hours. But at the last though they were loath, Sir Palomides and Sir Safere were taken and yolden, and put in a strong prison; and within three days twelve knights passed upon them, and they found Sir Palomides guilty, and Sir Safere not guilty, of their lord's death. And when Sir Safere should be delivered there was great dole betwixt Sir Palomides and him, and many piteous complaints that Sir Safere made at his departing, there is no maker can rehearse the tenth part. Fair brother, said Palomides, let be thy dolour and thy sorrow. And if I be ordained to die a shameful death, welcome be it; but an I had wist of this death that I am deemed unto, I should never have been yolden. So Sir Safere departed from his brother with the greatest dolour and sorrow that ever made knight.

And on the morn they of the castle ordained twelve knights to ride with Sir Palomides unto the father of the same knight that Sir Palomides slew; and so

they bound his legs under an old steed's belly. And then they rode with Sir Palomides unto a castle by the seaside, that hight Pelownes, and there Sir Palomides should have justice. Thus was their ordinance; and so they rode with Sir Palomides fast by the castle of Joyous Gard. And as they passed by that castle there came riding out of that castle by them one that knew Sir Palomides. And when that knight saw Sir Palomides bounden upon a crooked courser, the knight asked Sir Palomides for what cause he was led so. Ah, my fair fellow and knight, said Palomides, I ride toward my death for the slaying of a knight at a tournament of Lonazep; and if I had not departed from my lord Sir Tristram, as I ought not to have done, now might I have been sure to have had my life saved; but I pray you, sir knight, recommend me unto my lord, Sir Tristram, and unto my lady, Queen Isoud, and say to them if ever I trespassed to them I ask them forgiveness. And also I beseech you recommend me unto my lord, King Arthur, and to all the fellowship of the Round Table, unto my power. Then that knight wept for pity of Sir Palomides; and therewithal he rode unto Joyous Gard as fast as his horse might run, and lightly that knight descended down off his horse and went unto Sir Tristram, and there he told him all as ye have heard, and ever the knight wept as he had been mad.

#### **CHAPTER LXXXV. How Sir Tristram made him ready to rescue Sir Palomides, but Sir Launcelot rescued him or he came.**

WHEN Sir Tristram heard how Sir Palomides went to his death, he was heavy to hear that, and said: Howbeit that I am wroth with Sir Palomides, yet will not I suffer him to die so shameful a death, for he is a full noble knight. And then anon Sir Tristram was armed and took his horse and two squires with him, and rode a great pace toward the castle of Pelownes where Sir Palomides was judged to death. And these twelve knights that led Sir Palomides passed by a well whereas Sir Launcelot was, which was alighted there, and had tied his horse to a tree, and taken off his helm to drink of that well; and when he saw these knights, Sir Launcelot put on his helm and suffered them to pass by him. And then was he ware of Sir Palomides bounden, and led shamefully to his death. O Jesu, said Launcelot, what misadventure is befallen him that he is thus led toward his death? Forsooth, said Launcelot, it were shame to me to suffer this noble knight so to die an I might help him, therefore I will help him whatsomever come of it, or else I shall die for Sir Palomides' sake. And then Sir Launcelot mounted upon his horse, and gat his spear in his hand, and rode after the twelve knights that led Sir Palomides. Fair knights, said Sir Launcelot, whither lead ye that knight? it beseemeth him full ill to ride bounden. Then these twelve knights suddenly turned their horses and said to Sir Launcelot: Sir knight,

we counsel thee not to meddle with this knight, for he hath deserved death, and unto death he is judged. That me repenteth, said Launcelot, that I may not borrow him with fairness, for he is over good a knight to die such a shameful death. And therefore, fair knights, said Sir Launcelot, keep you as well as ye can, for I will rescue that knight or die for it.

Then they began to dress their spears, and Sir Launcelot smote the foremost down, horse and man, and so he served three more with one spear; and then that spear brast, and therewithal Sir Launcelot drew his sword, and then he smote on the right hand and on the left hand. Then within a while he left none of those twelve knights, but he had laid them to the earth, and the most part of them were sore wounded. And then Sir Launcelot took the best horse that he found, and loosed Sir Palomides and set him upon that horse; and so they returned again unto Joyous Gard, and then was Sir Palomides ware of Sir Tristram how he came riding. And when Sir Launcelot saw him he knew him well, but Sir Tristram knew him not because Sir Launcelot had on his shoulder a golden shield. So Sir Launcelot made him ready to joust with Sir Tristram, that Sir Tristram should not ween that he were Sir Launcelot. Then Sir Palomides cried aloud to Sir Tristram: O my lord, I require you joust not with this knight, for this good knight hath saved me from my death. When Sir Tristram heard him say so he came a soft trotting pace toward them. And then Sir Palomides said: My lord, Sir Tristram, much am I beholding unto you of your great goodness, that would proffer your noble body to rescue me undeserved, for I have greatly offended you. Notwithstanding, said Sir Palomides, here met we with this noble knight that worshipfully and manly rescued me from twelve knights, and smote them down all and wounded them sore.

#### **CHAPTER LXXXVI. How Sir Tristram and Launcelot, with Palomides, came to joyous Gard; and of Palomides and Sir Tristram.**

FAIR knight, said Sir Tristram unto Sir Launcelot, of whence be ye? I am a knight errant, said Sir Launcelot, that rideth to seek many adventures. What is your name? said Sir Tristram. Sir, at this time I will not tell you. Then Sir Launcelot said unto Sir Tristram and to Palomides: Now either of you are met together I will depart from you. Not so, said Sir Tristram; I pray you of knighthood to ride with me unto my castle. Wit you well, said Sir Launcelot, I may not ride with you, for I have many deeds to do in other places, that at this time I may not abide with you. Ah, mercy Jesu, said Sir Tristram, I require you as ye be a true knight to the order of knighthood, play you with me this night. Then Sir Tristram had a grant of Sir Launcelot: howbeit though he had not desired him he would have ridden with them, outhur soon have come after them;

for Sir Launcelot came for none other cause into that country but for to see Sir Tristram. And when they were come within Joyous Gard they alighted, and their horses were led into a stable; and then they unarmed them. And when Sir Launcelot was unhelmed, Sir Tristram and Sir Palomides knew him. Then Sir Tristram took Sir Launcelot in arms, and so did La Beale Isoud; and Palomides kneeled down upon his knees and thanked Sir Launcelot. When Sir Launcelot saw Sir Palomides kneel he lightly took him up and said thus: Wit thou well, Sir Palomides, I and any knight in this land, of worship ought of very right succour and rescue so noble a knight as ye are proved and renowned, throughout all this realm endlong and overthwart. And then was there joy among them, and the oftener that Sir Palomides saw La Beale Isoud the heavier he waxed day by day.

Then Sir Launcelot within three or four days departed, and with him rode Sir Ector de Maris; and Dinadan and Sir Palomides were there left with Sir Tristram a two months and more. But ever Sir Palomides faded and mourned, that all men had marvel wherefore he faded so away. So upon a day, in the dawning, Sir Palomides went into the forest by himself alone; and there he found a well, and then he looked into the well, and in the water he saw his own visage, how he was disturbed and defaded, nothing like that he was. What may this mean? said Sir Palomides, and thus he said to himself: Ah, Palomides, Palomides, why art thou defaded, thou that was wont to be called one of the fairest knights of the world? I will no more lead this life, for I love that I may never get nor recover. And therewithal he laid him down by the well. And then he began to make a rhyme of La Beale Isoud and him.

And in the meanwhile Sir Tristram was that same day ridden into the forest to chase the hart of greese; but Sir Tristram would not ride a-hunting never more unarmed, because of Sir Breuse Saunce PitÃ©. And so as Sir Tristram rode into that forest up and down, he heard one sing marvellously loud, and that was Sir Palomides that lay by the well. And then Sir Tristram rode softly thither, for he deemed there was some knight errant that was at the well. And when Sir Tristram came nigh him he descended down from his horse and tied his horse fast till a tree, and then he came near him on foot; and anon he was ware where lay Sir Palomides by the well and sang loud and merrily; and ever the complaints were of that noble queen, La Beale Isoud, the which was marvellously and wonderfully well said, and full dolefully and piteously made. And all the whole song the noble knight, Sir Tristram, heard from the beginning to the ending, the which grieved and troubled him sore.

But then at the last, when Sir Tristram had heard all Sir Palomides' complaints, he was wroth out of measure, and thought for to slay him thereas he lay. Then Sir Tristram remembered himself that Sir Palomides was unarmed, and

of the noble name that Sir Palomides had, and the noble name that himself had, and then he made a restraint of his anger; and so he went unto Sir Palomides a soft pace and said: Sir Palomides, I have heard your complaint, and of thy treason that thou hast owed me so long, and wit thou well therefore thou shalt die; and if it were not for shame of knighthood thou shouldest not escape my hands, for now I know well thou hast awaited me with treason. Tell me, said Sir Tristram, how thou wilt acquit thee? Sir, said Palomides, thus I will acquit me: as for Queen La Beale Isoud, ye shall wit well that I love her above all other ladies in this world; and well I wot it shall befall me as for her love as befell to the noble knight Sir Kehydus, that died for the love of La Beale Isoud. And now, Sir Tristram, I will that ye wit that I have loved La Beale Isoud many a day, and she hath been the causer of my worship, and else I had been the most simplest knight in the world. For by her, and because of her, I have won the worship that I have; for when I remembered me of La Beale Isoud I won the worship wheresoever I came for the most part; and yet had I never reward nor bount<sup>©</sup> of her the days of my life, and yet have I been her knight guerdonless. And therefore, Sir Tristram, as for any death I dread not, for I had as lief die as to live. And if I were armed as thou art, I should lightly do battle with thee. Well have ye uttered your treason, said Tristram. I have done to you no treason, said Palomides, for love is free for all men, and though I have loved your lady, she is my lady as well as yours; howbeit I have wrong if any wrong be, for ye rejoice her, and have your desire of her, and so had I never nor never am like to have, and yet shall I love her to the uttermost days of my life as well as ye.

#### **CHAPTER LXXXVII. How there was a day set between Sir Tristram and Sir Palomides for to fight, and how Sir Tristram was hurt.**

THEN said Sir Tristram: I will fight with you to the uttermost. I grant, said Palomides, for in a better quarrel keep I never to fight, for an I die of your hands, of a better knight's hands may I not be slain. And sithen I understand that I shall never rejoice La Beale Isoud, I have as good will to die as to live. Then set ye a day, said Sir Tristram, that we shall do battle. This day fifteen days, said Palomides, will I meet with you hereby, in the meadow under Joyous Gard. Fie for shame, said Sir Tristram, will ye set so long day? let us fight to-morn. Not so, said Palomides, for I am meagre, and have been long sick for the love of La Beale Isoud, and therefore I will repose me till I have my strength again. So then Sir Tristram and Sir Palomides promised faith fully to meet at the well that day fifteen days. I am remembered, said Sir Tristram to Palomides, that ye brake me once a promise when that I rescued you from Breuse Saunce Pit<sup>©</sup> and nine knights; and then ye promised me to meet me at the peron and the grave beside



Camelot, whereas at that time ye failed of your promise. Wit you well, said Palomides unto Sir Tristram, I was at that day in prison, so that I might not hold my promise. So God me help, said Sir Tristram, an ye had holden your promise this work had not been here now at this time.

Right so departed Sir Tristram and Sir Palomides. And so Sir Palomides took his horse and his harness, and he rode unto King Arthur's court; and there Sir Palomides gat him four knights and four sergeants-of-arms, and so he returned againward unto Joyous Gard. And in the meanwhile Sir Tristram chased and hunted at all manner of venery; and about three days afore the battle should be, as Sir Tristram chased an hart, there was an archer shot at the hart, and by misfortune he smote Sir Tristram in the thick of the thigh, and the arrow slew Sir Tristram's horse and hurt him. When Sir Tristram was so hurt he was passing heavy, and wit ye well he bled sore; and then he took another horse, and rode unto Joyous Gard with great heaviness, more for the promise that he had made with Sir Palomides, as to do battle with him within three days after, than for any hurt of his thigh. Wherefore there was neither man nor woman that could cheer him with anything that they could make to him, neither Queen La Beale Isoud; for ever he deemed that Sir Palomides had smitten him so that he should not be able to do battle with him at the day set.

#### **CHAPTER LXXXVIII. How Sir Palomides kept his day to have foughten, but Sir Tristram might not come; and other things.**

BUT in no wise there was no knight about Sir Tristram that would believe that ever Sir Palomides would hurt Sir Tristram, neither by his own hands nor by none other consenting. Then when the fifteenth day was come, Sir Palomides came to the well with four knights with him of Arthur's court, and three sergeants-of-arms. And for this intent Sir Palomides brought the knights with him and the sergeants-of-arms, for they should bear record of the battle betwixt Sir Tristram and Sir Palomides. And the one sergeant brought in his helm, the other his spear, the third his sword. So thus Palomides came into the field, and there he abode nigh two hours; and then he sent a squire unto Sir Tristram, and desired him to come into the field to hold his promise.

When the squire was come to Joyous Gard, anon as Sir Tristram heard of his coming he let command that the squire should come to his presence thereas he lay in his bed. My lord Sir Tristram, said Palomides' squire, wit you well my lord, Palomides, abideth you in the field, and he would wit whether ye would do battle or not. Ah, my fair brother, said Sir Tristram, wit thou well that I am right heavy for these tidings; therefore tell Sir Palomides an I were well at ease I would not lie here, nor he should have no need to send for me an I might either

ride or go; and for thou shalt say that I am no liar—Sir Tristram showed him his thigh that the wound was six inches deep. And now thou hast seen my hurt, tell thy lord that this is no feigned matter, and tell him that I had liefer than all the gold of King Arthur that I were whole; and tell Palomides as soon as I am whole I shall seek him endlong and overthwart, and that I promise you as I am true knight; and if ever I may meet with him, he shall have battle of me his fill. And with this the squire departed; and when Palomides wist that Tristram was hurt he was glad and said: Now I am sure I shall have no shame, for I wot well I should have had hard handling of him, and by likely I must needs have had the worse, for he is the hardest knight in battle that now is living except Sir Launcelot.

And then departed Sir Palomides whereas fortune led him, and within a month Sir Tristram was whole of his hurt. And then he took his horse, and rode from country to country, and all strange adventures he achieved wheresomever he rode; and always he enquired for Sir Palomides, but of all that quarter of summer Sir Tristram could never meet with Sir Palomides. But thus as Sir Tristram sought and enquired after Sir Palomides Sir Tristram achieved many great battles, wherethrough all the noise fell to Sir Tristram, and it ceased of Sir Launcelot; and therefore Sir Launcelot's brethren and his kinsmen would have slain Sir Tristram because of his fame. But when Sir Launcelot wist how his kinsmen were set, he said to them openly: Wit you well, that an the envy of you all be so hardy to wait upon my lord, Sir Tristram, with any hurt, shame, or villainy, as I am true knight I shall slay the best of you with mine own hands. Alas, fie for shame, should ye for his noble deeds await upon him to slay him. Jesu defend, said Launcelot, that ever any noble knight as Sir Tristram is should be destroyed with treason. Of this noise and fame sprang into Cornwall, and among them of Liones, whereof they were passing glad, and made great joy. And then they of Liones sent letters unto Sir Tristram of recommendation, and many great gifts to maintain Sir Tristram's estate; and ever, between, Sir Tristram resorted unto Joyous Gard whereas La Beale Isoud was, that loved him as her life.

*Here endeth the tenth book which is of Sir Tristram. And here followeth the eleventh book which is of Sir Launcelot.*

## BOOK XI

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### **CHAPTER I. How Sir Launcelot rode on his adventure, and how he help a dolorous lady from her pain, and how that he fought with a dragon.**

NOW leave we Sir Tristram de Lionnes, and speak we of Sir Launcelot du Lake, and of Sir Galahad, Sir Launcelot's son, how he was gotten, and in what manner, as the book of French reheareth. Afore the time that Sir Galahad was gotten or born, there came in an hermit unto King Arthur upon Whitsunday, as the knights sat at the Table Round. And when the hermit saw the Siege Perilous, he asked the king and all the knights why that siege was void. Sir Arthur and all the knights answered: There shall never none sit in that siege but one, but if he be destroyed. Then said the hermit: Wot ye what is he? Nay, said Arthur and all the knights, we wot not who is he that shall sit therein. Then wot I, said the hermit, for he that shall sit there is unborn and ungotten, and this same year he shall be gotten that shall sit there in that Siege Perilous, and he shall win the Sangreal. When this hermit had made this mention he departed from the court of King Arthur.

And then after this feast Sir Launcelot rode on his adventure, till on a time by adventure he passed over the pont of Corbin; and there he saw the fairest tower that ever he saw, and there-under was a fair town full of people; and all the people, men and women, cried at once: Welcome, Sir Launcelot du Lake, the flower of all knighthood, for by thee all we shall be holpen out of danger. What mean ye, said Sir Launcelot, that ye cry so upon me? Ah, fair knight, said they all, here is within this tower a dolorous lady that hath been there in pains many winters and days, for ever she boileth in scalding water; and but late, said all the people, Sir Gawaine was here and he might not help her, and so he left her in pain. So may I, said Sir Launcelot, leave her in pain as well as Sir Gawaine did. Nay, said the people, we know well that it is Sir Launcelot that shall deliver her. Well, said Launcelot, then shew me what I shall do.

Then they brought Sir Launcelot into the tower; and when he came to the chamber thereas this lady was, the doors of iron unlocked and unbolted. And so Sir Launcelot went into the chamber that was as hot as any stew. And there Sir Launcelot took the fairest lady by the hand that ever he saw, and she was naked

as a needle; and by enchantment Queen Morgan le Fay and the Queen of Northgalis had put her there in that pains, because she was called the fairest lady of that country; and there she had been five years, and never might she be delivered out of her great pains unto the time the best knight of the world had taken her by the hand. Then the people brought her clothes. And when she was arrayed, Sir Launcelot thought she was the fairest lady of the world, but if it were Queen Guenever.

Then this lady said to Sir Launcelot: Sir, if it please you will ye go with me hereby into a chapel that we may give loving and thanking unto God? Madam, said Sir Launcelot, come on with me, I will go with you. So when they came there and gave thankings to God all the people, both learned and lewd, gave thankings unto God and him, and said: Sir knight, since ye have delivered this lady, ye shall deliver us from a serpent there is here in a tomb. Then Sir Launcelot took his shield and said: Bring me thither, and what I may do unto the pleasure of God and you I will do. So when Sir Launcelot came thither he saw written upon the tomb letters of gold that said thus: Here shall come a leopard of king's blood, and he shall slay this serpent, and this leopard shall engender a lion in this foreign country, the which lion shall pass all other knights. So then Sir Launcelot lift up the tomb, and there came out an horrible and a fiendly dragon, spitting fire out of his mouth. Then Sir Launcelot drew his sword and fought with the dragon long, and at the last with great pain Sir Launcelot slew that dragon. Therewithal came King Pelles, the good and noble knight, and saluted Sir Launcelot, and he him again. Fair knight, said the king, what is your name? I require you of your knighthood tell me!

## **CHAPTER II. How Sir Launcelot came to Pelles, and of the Sangreal, and of Elaine, King Pelles' daughter.**

SIR, said Launcelot, wit you well my name is Sir Launcelot du Lake. And my name is, said the king, Pelles, king of the foreign country, and cousin nigh unto Joseph of Armathie. And then either of them made much of other, and so they went into the castle to take their repast. And anon there came in a dove at a window, and in her mouth there seemed a little censer of gold. And herewithal there was such a savour as all the spicery of the world had been there. And forthwithal there was upon the table all manner of meats and drinks that they could think upon. So came in a damosel passing fair and young, and she bare a vessel of gold betwixt her hands; and thereto the king kneeled devoutly, and said his prayers, and so did all that were there. O Jesu, said Sir Launcelot, what may this mean? This is, said the king, the richest thing that any man hath living. And when this thing goeth about, the Round Table shall be broken; and wit thou well,

said the king, this is the holy Sangreal that ye have here seen. So the king and Sir Launcelot led their life the most part of that day. And fain would King Pelles have found the mean to have had Sir Launcelot to have lain by his daughter, fair Elaine. And for this intent: the king knew well that Sir Launcelot should get a child upon his daughter, the which should be named Sir Galahad the good knight, by whom all the foreign country should be brought out of danger, and by him the Holy Greal should be achieved.

Then came forth a lady that hight Dame Brisen, and she said unto the king: Sir, wit ye well Sir Launcelot loveth no lady in the world but all only Queen Guenever; and therefore work ye by counsel, and I shall make him to lie with your daughter, and he shall not wit but that he lieth with Queen Guenever. O fair lady, Dame Brisen, said the king, hope ye to bring this about? Sir, said she, upon pain of my life let me deal; for this Brisen was one of the greatest enchantresses that was at that time in the world living. Then anon by Dame Brisen's wit she made one to come to Sir Launcelot that he knew well. And this man brought him a ring from Queen Guenever like as it had come from her, and such one as she was wont for the most part to wear; and when Sir Launcelot saw that token wit ye well he was never so fain. Where is my lady? said Sir Launcelot. In the Castle of Case, said the messenger, but five mile hence. Then Sir Launcelot thought to be there the same might. And then this Brisen by the commandment of King Pelles let send Elaine to this castle with twenty-five knights unto the Castle of Case. Then Sir Launcelot against night rode unto that castle, and there anon he was received worshipfully with such people, to his seeming, as were about Queen Guenever secret.

So when Sir Launcelot was alighted, he asked where the queen was. So Dame Brisen said she was in her bed; and then the people were avoided, and Sir Launcelot was led unto his chamber. And then Dame Brisen brought Sir Launcelot a cup full of wine; and anon as he had drunken that wine he was so assotted and mad that he might make no delay, but withouten any let he went to bed; and he weened that maiden Elaine had been Queen Guenever. Wit you well that Sir Launcelot was glad, and so was that lady Elaine that she had gotten Sir Launcelot in her arms. For well she knew that same night should be gotten upon her Galahad that should prove the best knight of the world; and so they lay together until underne of the' morn; and all the windows and holes of that chamber were stopped that no manner of day might be seen. And then Sir Launcelot remembered him, and he arose up and went to the window.

### **CHAPTER III. How Sir Launcelot was displeased when he knew that he had lain by Dame Elaine, and how she was delivered of Galahad.**

AND anon as he had unshut the window the enchantment was gone; then he knew himself that he had done amiss. Alas, he said, that I have lived so long; now I am shamed. So then he gat his sword in his hand and said: Thou traitress, what art thou that I have lain by all this night? thou shalt die right here of my hands. Then this fair lady Elaine skipped out of her bed all naked, and kneeled down afore Sir Launcelot, and said: Fair courteous knight, come of king's blood, I require you have mercy upon me, and as thou art renowned the most noble knight of the world, slay me not, for I have in my womb him by thee that shall be the most noblest knight of the world. Ah, false traitress, said Sir Launcelot, why hast thou betrayed me? anon tell me what thou art. Sir, she said, I am Elaine, the daughter of King Pelles. Well, said Sir Launcelot, I will forgive you this deed; and therewith he took her up in his arms, and kissed her, for she was as fair a lady, and thereto lusty and young, and as wise, as any was that time living. So God me help, said Sir Launcelot, I may not wite this to you; but her that made this enchantment upon me as between you and me, an I may find her, that same Lady Brisen, she shall lose her head for witchcrafts, for there was never knight deceived so as I am this night. And so Sir Launcelot arrayed him, and armed him, and took his leave mildly at that lady young Elaine, and so he departed. Then she said: My lord Sir Launcelot, I beseech you see me as soon as ye may, for I have obeyed me unto the prophecy that my father told me. And by his commandment to fulfil this prophecy I have given the greatest riches and the fairest flower that ever I had, and that is my maidenhood that I shall never have again; and therefore, gentle knight, owe me your good will.

And so Sir Launcelot arrayed him and was armed, and took his leave mildly at that young lady Elaine; and so he departed, and rode till he came to the Castle of Corbin, where her father was. And as fast as her time came she was delivered of a fair child, and they christened him Galahad; and wit ye well that child was well kept and well nourished, and he was named Galahad because Sir Launcelot was so named at the fountain stone; and after that the Lady of the Lake confirmed him Sir Launcelot du Lake.

Then after this lady was delivered and churched, there came a knight unto her, his name was Sir Bromel la Pleche, the which was a great lord; and he had loved that lady long, and he evermore desired her to wed her; and so by no mean she could put him off, till on a day she said to Sir Bromel: Wit thou well, sir knight, I will not love you, for my love is set upon the best knight of the world. Who is he? said Sir Bromel. Sir, she said, it is Sir Launcelot du Lake that I love and none other, and therefore woo me no longer. Ye say well, said Sir Bromel, and sithen ye have told me so much, ye shall have but little joy of Sir Launcelot, for I shall slay him wheresomever I meet him. Sir, said the Lady Elaine, do to

him no treason. Wit ye well, my lady, said Bromel, and I promise you this twelvemonth I shall keep the pont of Corbin for Sir Launcelot's sake, that he shall neither come nor go unto you, but I shall meet with him.

#### **CHAPTER IV. How Sir Bors came to Dame Elaine and saw Galahad, and how he was fed with the Sangreal.**

THEN as it fell by fortune and adventure, Sir Bors de Ganis, that was nephew unto Sir Launcelot, came over that bridge; and there Sir Bromel and Sir Bors jousted, and Sir Bors smote Sir Bromel such a buffet that he bare him over his horse's croup. And then Sir Bromel, as an hardy knight, pulled out his sword, and dressed his shield to do battle with Sir Bors. And then Sir Bors alighted and avoided his horse, and there they dashed together many sad strokes; and long thus they fought, till at the last Sir Bromel was laid to the earth, and there Sir Bors began to unlace his helm to slay him. Then Sir Bromel cried Sir Bors mercy, and yielded him. Upon this covenant thou shalt have thy life, said Sir Bors, so thou go unto Sir Launcelot upon Whitsunday that next cometh, and yield thee unto him as knight recreant. I will do it, said Sir Bromel, and that he sware upon the cross of the sword. And so he let him depart, and Sir Bors rode unto King Pelles, that was within Corbin.

And when the king and Elaine his daughter wist that Sir Bors was nephew unto Sir Launcelot, they made him great cheer. Then said Dame Elaine: We marvel where Sir Launcelot is, for he came never here but once. Marvel not, said Sir Bors, for this half year he hath been in prison with Queen Morgan le Fay, King Arthur's sister. Alas, said Dame Elaine, that me repenteth. And ever Sir Bors beheld that child in her arms, and ever him seemed it was passing like Sir Launcelot. Truly, said Elaine, wit ye well this child he gat upon me. Then Sir Bors wept for joy, and he prayed to God it might prove as good a knight as his father was. And so came in a white dove, and she bare a little censer of gold in her mouth, and there was all manner of meats and drinks; and a maiden bare that Sangreal, and she said openly: Wit you well, Sir Bors, that this child is Galahad, that shall sit in the Siege Perilous, and achieve the Sangreal, and he shall be much better than ever was Sir Launcelot du Lake, that is his own father. And then they kneeled down and made their devotions, and there was such a savour as all the spicery in the world had been there. And when the dove took her flight, the maiden vanished with the Sangreal as she came.

Sir, said Sir Bors unto King Pelles, this castle may be named the Castle Adventurous, for here be many strange adventures. That is sooth, said the king, for well may this place be called the adventures place, for there come but few knights here that go away with any worship; be he never so strong, here he may

be proved; and but late Sir Gawaine, the good knight, gat but little worship here. For I let you wit, said King Pelles, here shall no knight win no worship but if he be of worship himself and of good living, and that loveth God and dreadeth God, and else he getteth no worship here, be he never so hardy. That is wonderful thing, said Sir Bors. What ye mean in this country I wot not, for ye have many strange adventures, and therefore I will lie in this castle this night. Ye shall not do so, said King Pelles, by my counsel, for it is hard an ye escape without a shame. I shall take the adventure that will befall me, said Sir Bors. Then I counsel you, said the king, to be confessed clean. As for that, said Sir Bors, I will be shriven with a good will. So Sir Bors was confessed, and for all women Sir Bors was a virgin, save for one, that was the daughter of King Brangoris, and on her he gat a child that hight Elaine, and save for her Sir Bors was a clean maiden.

And so Sir Bors was led unto bed in a fair large chamber, and many doors were shut about the chamber. When Sir Bors espied all those doors, he avoided all the people, for he might have nobody with him; but in no wise Sir Bors would unarm him, but so he laid him down upon the bed. And right so he saw come in a light, that he might well see a spear great and long that came straight upon him pointling, and to Sir Bors seemed that the head of the spear brent like a taper. And anon, or Sir Bors wist, the spear head smote him into the shoulder an hand-breadth in deepness, and that wound grieved Sir Bors passing sore. And then he laid him down again for pain; and anon therewithal there came a knight armed with his shield on his shoulder and his sword in his hand, and he bade Sir Bors: Arise, sir knight, and fight with me. I am sore hurt, he said, but yet I shall not fail thee. And then Sir Bors started up and dressed his shield; and then they lashed together mightily a great while; and at the last Sir Bors bare him backward until that he came unto a chamber door, and there that knight yede into that chamber and rested him a great while. And when he had reposed him he came out freshly again, and began new battle with Sir Bors mightily and strongly.

#### **CHAPTER V. How Sir Bors made Sir Pedivere to yield him, and of marvellous adventures that he had, and how he achieved them.**

THEN Sir Bors thought he should no more go into that chamber to rest him, and so Sir Bors dressed him betwixt the knight and that chamber door, and there Sir Bors smote him down, and then that knight yielded him What is your name? said Sir Bors. Sir, said he, my name is Pedivere of the Straight Marches. So Sir Bors made him to swear at Whitsunday next coming to be at the court of King Arthur, and yield him there as a prisoner as an overcome knight by the hands of



Sir Bors. So thus departed Sir Pedivere of the Straight Marches. And then Sir Bors laid him down to rest, and then he heard and felt much noise in that chamber; and then Sir Bors espied that there came in, he wist not whether at the doors nor windows, shot of arrows and of quarrels so thick that he marvelled, and many fell upon him and hurt him in the bare places.

And then Sir Bors was ware where came in an hideous lion; so Sir Bors dressed him unto the lion, and anon the lion bereft him his shield, and with his sword Sir Bors smote off the lion's head. Right so Sir Bors forthwithal saw a dragon in the court passing horrible, and there seemed letters of gold written in his forehead; and Sir Bors thought that the letters made a signification of King Arthur. Right so there came an horrible leopard and an old, and there they fought long, and did great battle together. And at the last the dragon spit out of his mouth as it had been an hundred dragons; and lightly all the small dragons slew the old dragon and tare him all to pieces.

Anon withal there came an old man into the hall, and he sat him down in a fair chair, and there seemed to be two adders about his neck; and then the old man had an harp, and there he sang an old song how Joseph of Armathie came into this land. Then when he had sung, the old man bade Sir Bors go from thence. For here shall ye have no more adventures; and full worshipfully have ye done, and better shall ye do hereafter. And then Sir Bors seemed that there came the whitest dove with a little golden censer in her mouth. And anon therewithal the tempest ceased and passed, that afore was marvellous to hear. So was all that court full of good savours. Then Sir Bors saw four children bearing four fair tapers, and an old man in the midst of the children with a censer in his own hand, and a spear in his other hand, and that spear was called the Spear of Vengeance.

#### **CHAPTER VI. How Sir Bors departed; and how Sir Launcelot was rebuked of Queen Guenever, and of his excuse.**

NOW, said that old man to Sir Bors, go ye to your cousin, Sir Launcelot, and tell him of this adventure the which had been most convenient for him of all earthly knights; but sin is so foul in him he may not achieve such holy deeds, for had not been his sin he had passed all the knights that ever were in his days; and tell thou Sir Launcelot, of all worldly adventures he passeth in manhood and prowess all other, but in this spiritual matters he shall have many his better. And then Sir Bors saw four gentlewomen come by him, purely beseen: and he saw where that they entered into a chamber where was great light as it were a summer light; and the women kneeled down afore an altar of silver with four pillars, and as it had been a bishop kneeled down afore that table of silver. And as Sir Bors looked over his head he saw a sword like silver, naked, hoving over

his head, and the clearness thereof smote so in his eyes that as at that time Sir Bors was blind; and there he heard a voice that said: Go hence, thou Sir Bors, for as yet thou art not worthy for to be in this place. And then he yede backward to his bed till on the morn. And on the morn King Pelles made great joy of Sir Bors; and then he departed and rode to Camelot, and there he found Sir Launcelot du Lake, and told him of the adventures that he had seen with King Pelles at Corbin.

So the noise sprang in Arthur's court that Launcelot had gotten a child upon Elaine, the daughter of King Pelles, wherefore Queen Guenever was wroth, and gave many rebukes to Sir Launcelot, and called him false knight. And then Sir Launcelot told the queen all, and how he was made to lie by her by enchantment in likeness of the queen. So the queen held Sir Launcelot excused. And as the book saith, King Arthur had been in France, and had made war upon the mighty King Claudas, and had won much of his lands. And when the king was come again he let cry a great feast, that all lords and ladies of all England should be there, but if it were such as were rebellious against him.

#### **CHAPTER VII. How Dame Elaine, Galahad's mother, came in great estate unto Camelot, and how Sir Launcelot behaved him there.**

AND when Dame Elaine, the daughter of King Pelles, heard of this feast she went to her father and required him that he would give her leave to ride to that feast. The king answered: I will well ye go thither, but in any wise as ye love me and will have my blessing, that ye be well beseen in the richest wise; and look that ye spare not for no cost; ask and ye shall have all that you needeth. Then by the advice of Dame Brisen, her maiden, all thing was apparelled unto the purpose, that there was never no lady more richlier beseen. So she rode with twenty knights, and ten ladies, and gentlewomen, to the number of an hundred horses. And when she came to Camelot, King Arthur and Queen Guenever said, and all the knights, that Dame Elaine was the fairest and the best beseen lady that ever was seen in that court. And anon as King Arthur wist that she was come he met her and saluted her, and so did the most part of all the knights of the Round Table, both Sir Tristram, Sir Bleoberis, and Sir Gawaine, and many more that I will not rehearse. But when Sir Launcelot saw her he was so ashamed, and that because he drew his sword on the morn when he had lain by her, that he would not salute her nor speak to her; and yet Sir Launcelot thought she was the fairest woman that ever he saw in his life-days.

But when Dame Elaine saw Sir Launcelot that would not speak unto her she was so heavy that she weened her heart would have to-brast; for wit you well, out of measure she loved him. And then Elaine said unto her woman, Dame

Brisen: the unkindness of Sir Launcelot slayeth me near. Ah, peace, madam, said Dame Brisen, I will undertake that this night he shall lie with you, an ye would hold you still. That were me liefer, said Dame Elaine, than all the gold that is above the earth. Let me deal, said Dame Brisen. So when Elaine was brought unto Queen Guenever either made other good cheer by countenance, but nothing with hearts. But all men and women spake of the beauty of Dame Elaine, and of her great riches.

Then, at night, the queen commanded that Dame Elaine should sleep in a chamber nigh her chamber, and all under one roof; and so it was done as the queen commanded. Then the queen sent for Sir Launcelot and bade him come to her chamber that night: Or else I am sure, said the queen, that ye will go to your lady's bed, Dame Elaine, by whom ye gat Galahad. Ah, madam, said Sir Launcelot, never say ye so, for that I did was against my will. Then, said the queen, look that ye come to me when I send for you. Madam, said Launcelot, I shall not fail you, but I shall be ready at your commandment. This bargain was soon done and made between them, but Dame Brisen knew it by her crafts, and told it to her lady, Dame Elaine. Alas, said she, how shall I do? Let me deal, said Dame Brisen, for I shall bring him by the hand even to your bed, and he shall ween that I am Queen Guenever's messenger. Now well is me, said Dame Elaine, for all the world I love not so much as I do Sir Launcelot.

#### **CHAPTER VIII. How Dame Brisen by enchantment brought Sir Launcelot to Dame Elaine's bed, and how Queen Guenever rebuked him.**

SO when time came that all folks were abed, Dame Brisen came to Sir Launcelot's bed's side and said: Sir Launcelot du Lake, sleep you? My lady, Queen Guenever, lieth and awaiteth upon you. O my fair lady, said Sir Launcelot, I am ready to go with you where ye will have me. So Sir Launcelot threw upon him a long gown, and his sword in his hand; and then Dame Brisen took him by the finger and led him to her lady's bed, Dame Elaine; and then she departed and left them in bed together. Wit you well the lady was glad, and so was Sir Launcelot, for he weened that he had had another in his arms.

Now leave we them kissing and clipping, as was kindly thing; and now speak we of Queen Guenever that sent one of her women unto Sir Launcelot's bed; and when she came there she found the bed cold, and he was away; so she came to the queen and told her all. Alas, said the queen, where is that false knight become? Then the queen was nigh out of her wit, and then she writhed and weltered as a mad woman, and might not sleep a four or five hours. Then Sir Launcelot had a condition that he used of custom, he would clatter in his sleep, and speak oft of his lady, Queen Guenever. So as Sir Launcelot had waked as

long as it had pleased him, then by course of kind he slept, and Dame Elaine both. And in his sleep he talked and clattered as a jay, of the love that had been betwixt Queen Guenever and him. And so as he talked so loud the queen heard him thereas she lay in her chamber; and when she heard him so clatter she was nigh wood and out of her mind, and for anger and pain wist not what to do. And then she coughed so loud that Sir Launcelot awaked, and he knew her hemming. And then he knew well that he lay not by the queen; and therewith he leapt out of his bed as he had been a wood man, in his shirt, and the queen met him in the floor; and thus she said: False traitor knight that thou art, look thou never abide in my court, and avoid my chamber, and not so hardy, thou false traitor knight that thou art, that ever thou come in my sight. Alas, said Sir Launcelot; and therewith he took such an hearty sorrow at her words that he fell down to the floor in a swoon. And therewithal Queen Guenever departed. And when Sir Launcelot awoke of his swoon, he leapt out at a bay window into a garden, and there with thorns he was all to-scratched in his visage and his body; and so he ran forth he wist not whither, and was wild wood as ever was man; and so he ran two year, and never man might have grace to know him.

#### **CHAPTER IX. How Dame Elaine was commanded by Queen Guenever to avoid the court, and how Sir Launcelot became mad.**

NOW turn we unto Queen Guenever and to the fair Lady Elaine, that when Dame Elaine heard the queen so to rebuke Sir Launcelot, and also she saw how he swooned, and how he leaped out at a bay window, then she said unto Queen Guenever: Madam, ye are greatly to blame for Sir Launcelot, for now have ye lost him, for I saw and heard by his countenance that he is mad for ever. Alas, madam, ye do great sin, and to yourself great dishonour, for ye have a lord of your own, and therefore it is your part to love him; for there is no queen in this world hath such another king as ye have. And, if ye were not, I might have the love of my lord Sir Launcelot; and cause I have to love him for he had my maidenhood, and by him I have borne a fair son, and his name is Galahad, and he shall be in his time the best knight of the world. Dame Elaine, said the queen, when it is daylight I charge you and command you to avoid my court; and for the love ye owe unto Sir Launcelot discover not his counsel, for an ye do, it will be his death. As for that, said Dame Elaine, I dare undertake he is marred for ever, and that have ye made; for ye, nor I, are like to rejoice him; for he made the most piteous groans when he leapt out at yonder bay window that ever I heard man make. Alas, said fair Elaine, and alas, said the Queen Guenever, for now I wot well we have lost him for ever.

So on the morn Dame Elaine took her leave to depart, and she would no

longer abide. Then King Arthur brought her on her way with mo than an hundred knights through a forest. And by the way she told Sir Bors de Ganis all how it betid that same night, and how Sir Launcelot leapt out at a window, araged out of his wit. Alas, said Sir Bors, where is my lord, Sir Launcelot, become? Sir, said Elaine, I wot ne'er. Alas, said Sir Bors, betwixt you both ye have destroyed that good knight. As for me, said Dame Elaine, I said never nor did never thing that should in any wise displease him, but with the rebuke that Queen Guenever gave him I saw him swoon to the earth; and when he awoke he took his sword in his hand, naked save his shirt, and leapt out at a window with the grisliest groan that ever I heard man make. Now farewell, Dame Elaine, said Sir Bors, and hold my lord Arthur with a tale as long as ye can, for I will turn again to Queen Guenever and give her a hete; and I require you, as ever ye will have my service, make good watch and espy if ever ye may see my lord Sir Launcelot. Truly, said fair Elaine, I shall do all that I may do, for as fain would I know and wit where he is become, as you, or any of his kin, or Queen Guenever; and cause great enough have I thereto as well as any other. And wit ye well, said fair Elaine to Sir Bors, I would lose my life for him rather than he should be hurt; but alas, I cast me never for to see him, and the chief causer of this is Dame Guenever. Madam, said Dame Brisen, the which had made the enchantment before betwixt Sir Launcelot and her, I pray you heartily, let Sir Bors depart, and hie him with all his might as fast as he may to seek Sir Launcelot, for I warn you he is clean out of his mind; and yet he shall be well holpen an but by miracle.

Then wept Dame Elaine, and so did Sir Bors de Ganis; and so they departed, and Sir Bors rode straight unto Queen Guenever. And when she saw Sir Bors she wept as she were wood. Fie on your weeping, said Sir Bors de Ganis, for ye weep never but when there is no bote. Alas, said Sir Bors, that ever Sir Launcelot's kin saw you, for now have ye lost the best knight of our blood, and he that was all our leader and our succour; and I dare say and make it good that all kings, christian nor heathen, may not find such a knight, for to speak of his nobleness and courtesy, with his beauty and his gentleness. Alas, said Sir Bors, what shall we do that be of his blood? Alas, said Sir Ector de Maris. Alas, said Lionel.

#### **CHAPTER X. What sorrow Queen Guenever made for Sir Launcelot, and how he was sought by knights of his kin.**

AND when the queen heard them say so she fell to the earth in a dead swoon. And then Sir Bors took her up, and daved her; and when she was awaked she kneeled afore the three knights, and held up both her hands, and besought them to seek him. And spare not for no goods but that he be found, for

I wot he is out of his mind. And Sir Bors, Sir Ector, and Sir Lionel departed from the queen, for they might not abide no longer for sorrow. And then the queen sent them treasure enough for their expenses, and so they took their horses and their armour, and departed. And then they rode from country to country, in forests, and in wilderness, and in wastes; and ever they laid watch both at forests and at all manner of men as they rode, to hearken and spere after him, as he that was a naked man, in his shirt, with a sword in his hand. And thus they rode nigh a quarter of a year, endlong and overthwart, in many places, forests and wilderness, and oft-times were evil lodged for his sake; and yet for all their labour and seeking could they never hear word of him. And wit you well these three knights were passing sorry.

Then at the last Sir Bors and his fellows met with a knight that hight Sir Melion de Tartare. Now fair knight, said Sir Bors, whither be ye away? for they knew either other afore time. Sir, said Melion, I am in the way toward the court of King Arthur. Then we pray you, said Sir Bors, that ye will tell my lord Arthur, and my lady, Queen Guenever, and all the fellowship of the Round Table, that we cannot in no wise hear tell where Sir Launcelot is become. Then Sir Melion departed from them, and said that he would tell the king, and the queen, and all the fellowship-of the Round Table, as they had desired him. So when Sir Melion came to the court of King Arthur he told the king, and the queen, and all the fellowship of the Round Table, what Sir Bors had said of Sir Launcelot. Then Sir Gawaine, Sir Uwaine, Sir Sagramore le Desirous, Sir Aglovale, and Sir Percivale de Galis took upon them by the great desire of King Arthur, and in especial by the queen, to seek throughout all England, Wales, and Scotland, to find Sir Launcelot, and with them rode eighteen knights mo to bear them fellowship; and wit ye well, they lacked no manner of spending; and so were they three and twenty knights.

Now turn we to Sir Launcelot, and speak we of his care and woe, and what pain he there endured; for cold, hunger, and thirst, he had plenty. And thus as these noble knights rode together, they by one assent departed, and then they rode by two, by three, and by four, and by five, and ever they assigned where they should meet. And so Sir Aglovale and Sir Percivale rode together unto their mother that was a queen in those days. And when she saw her two sons, for joy she wept tenderly. And then she said: Ah, my dear sons, when your father was slain he left me four sons, of the which now be twain slain. And for the death of my noble son, Sir Lamorak, shall my heart never be glad. And then she kneeled down upon her knees to-fore Aglovale and Sir Percivale, and besought them to abide at home with her. Ah, sweet mother, said Sir Percivale, we may not, for we be come of king's blood of both parties, and therefore, mother, it is our kind to

haunt arms and noble deeds. Alas, my sweet sons, then she said, for your sakes I shall lose my liking and lust, and then wind and weather I may not endure, what for the death of your father, King Pellinore, that was shamefully slain by the hands of Sir Gawaine, and his brother, Sir Gaheris: and they slew him not manly but by treason. Ah, my dear sons, this is a piteous complaint for me of your father's death, considering also the death of Sir Lamorak, that of knighthood had but few fellows. Now, my dear sons, have this in your mind. Then there was but weeping and sobbing in the court when they should depart, and she fell a-swooning in midst of the court.

### **CHAPTER XI. How a servant of Sir Aglovale's was slain, and what vengeance Sir Aglovale and Sir Percivale did therefore.**

AND when she was awaked she sent a squire after them with spending enough. And so when the squire had overtaken them, they would not suffer him to ride with them, but sent him home again to comfort their mother, praying her meekly of her blessing. And so this squire was benighted, and by misfortune he happened to come to a castle where dwelled a baron. And so when the squire was come into the castle, the lord asked him from whence he came, and whom he served. My lord, said the squire, I serve a good knight that is called Sir Aglovale: the squire said it to good intent, weening unto him to have been more forborne for Sir Aglovale's sake, than he had said he had served the queen, Aglovale's mother. Well, my fellow, said the lord of that castle, for Sir Aglovale's sake thou shalt have evil lodging, for Sir Aglovale slew my brother, and therefore thou shalt die on part of payment. And then that lord commanded his men to have him away and slay him; and so they did, and so pulled him out of the castle, and there they slew him without mercy.

Right so on the morn came Sir Aglovale and Sir Percivale riding by a churchyard, where men and women were busy, and beheld the dead squire, and they thought to bury him. What is there, said Sir Aglovale, that ye behold so fast? A good man stert forth and said: Fair knight, here lieth a squire slain shamefully this night. How was he slain, fair fellow? said Sir Aglovale. My fair sir, said the man, the lord of this castle lodged this squire this night; and because he said he was servant unto a good knight that is with King Arthur, his name is Sir Aglovale, therefore the lord commanded to slay him, and for this cause is he slain. Gramercy, said Sir Aglovale, and ye shall see his death revenged lightly; for I am that same knight for whom this squire was slain.

Then Sir Aglovale called unto him Sir Percivale, and bade him alight lightly; and so they alighted both, and betook their horses to their men, and so they yede on foot into the castle. And all so soon as they were within the castle gate Sir

Aglovale bade the porter: Go thou unto thy lord and tell him that I am Sir Aglovale for whom this squire was slain this night. Anon the porter told this to his lord, whose name was Goodewin. Anon he armed him, and then he came into the court and said: Which of you is Sir Aglovale? Here I am, said Aglovale: for what cause slewest thou this night my mother's squire? I slew him, said Sir Goodewin, because of thee, for thou slewest my brother, Sir Gawdelin. As for thy brother, said Sir Aglovale, I avow it I slew him, for he was a false knight and a betrayer of ladies and of good knights; and for the death of my squire thou shalt die. I defy thee, said Sir Goodewin. Then they lashed together as eagerly as it had been two lions, and Sir Percivale he fought with all the remnant that would fight. And within a while Sir Percivale had slain all that would withstand him; for Sir Percivale dealt so his strokes that were so rude that there durst no man abide him. And within a while Sir Aglovale had Sir Goodewin at the earth, and there he unlaced his helm, and struck off his head. And then they departed and took their horses; and then they let carry the dead squire unto a priory, and there they interred him.

**CHAPTER XII. How Sir Percivale departed secretly from his brother, and how he loosed a knight bound with a chain, and of other doings.**

AND when this was done they rode into many countries, ever inquiring after Sir Launcelot, but never they could hear of him; and at the last they came to a castle that hight Cardican, and there Sir Percivale and Sir Aglovale were lodged together. And privily about midnight Sir Percivale came to Aglovale's squire and said: Arise and make thee ready, for ye and I will ride away secretly. Sir, said the squire, I would full fain ride with you where ye would have me, but an my lord, your brother, take me he will slay me. As for that care thou not, for I shall be thy warrant.

And so Sir Percivale rode till it was after noon, and then he came upon a bridge of stone, and there he found a knight that was bound with a chain fast about the waist unto a pillar of stone. O fair knight, said that bound knight, I require thee loose me of my bonds. What knight are ye, said Sir Percivale, and for what cause are ye so bound? Sir, I shall tell you, said that knight: I am a knight of the Table Round, and my name is Sir Persides; and thus by adventure I came this way, and here I lodged in this castle at the bridge foot, and therein dwelleth an uncourteous lady; and because she proffered me to be her paramour, and I refused her, she set her men upon me suddenly or ever I might come to my weapon; and thus they bound me, and here I wot well I shall die but if some man of worship break my bands. Be ye of good cheer, said Sir Percivale, and because ye are a knight of the Round Table as well as I, I trust to God to break your



bands. And therewith Sir Percivale pulled out his sword and struck at the chain with such a might that he cut a-two the chain, and through Sir Persides' hauberk and hurt him a little. O Jesu, said Sir Persides, that was a mighty stroke as ever I felt one, for had not the chain been ye had slain me.

And therewithal Sir Persides saw a knight coming out of a castle all that ever he might fling. Beware, sir, said Sir Persides, yonder cometh a man that will have ado with you. Let him come, said Sir Percivale. And so he met with that knight in midst of the bridge; and Sir Percivale gave him such a buffet that he smote him quite from his horse and over a part of the bridge, that, had not been a little vessel under the bridge, that knight had been drowned. And then Sir Percivale took the knight's horse and made Sir Persides to mount up him; and so they rode unto the castle, and bade the lady deliver Sir Persides' servants, or else he would slay all that ever he found; and so for fear she delivered them all. Then was Sir Percivale ware of a lady that stood in that tower. Ah, madam, said Sir Percivale, what use and custom is that in a lady to destroy good knights but if they will be your paramour? Forsooth this is a shameful custom of a lady, and if I had not a great matter in my hand I should fordo your evil customs.

And so Sir Persides brought Sir Percivale unto his own castle, and there he made him great cheer all that night. And on the morn, when Sir Percivale had heard mass and broken his fast, he bade Sir Persides ride unto King Arthur: And tell the king how that ye met with me; and tell my brother, Sir Aglovale, how I rescued you; and bid him seek not after me, for I am in the quest to seek Sir Launcelot du Lake, and though he seek me he shall not find me; and tell him I will never see him, nor the court, till I have found Sir Launcelot. Also tell Sir Kay the Seneschal, and to Sir Mordred, that I trust to Jesu to be of as great worthiness as either of them, for tell them I shall never forget their mocks and scorns that they did to me that day that I was made knight; and tell them I will never see that court till men speak more worship of me than ever men did of any of them both. And so Sir Persides departed from Sir Percivale, and then he rode unto King Arthur, and told there of Sir Percivale. And when Sir Aglovale heard him speak of his brother Sir Percivale, he said: He departed from me unkindly.

### **CHAPTER XIII. How Sir Percivale met with Sir Ector, and how they fought long, and each had almost slain other.**

SIR, said Sir Persides, on my life he shall prove a noble knight as any now is living. And when he saw Sir Kay and Sir Mordred, Sir Persides said thus: My fair lords both, Sir Percivale greeteth you well both, and he sent you word by me that he trusteth to God or ever he come to the court again to be of as great noblesse as ever were ye both, and mo men to speak of his noblesse than ever

they did of you. It may well be, said Sir Kay and Sir Mordred, but at that time when he was made knight he was full unlike to prove a good knight. As for that, said King Arthur, he must needs prove a good knight, for his father and his brethren were noble knights

And now will we turn unto Sir Percivale that rode long; and in a forest he met a knight with a broken shield and a broken helm; and as soon as either saw other readily they made them ready to joust, and so hurtled together with all the might of their horses, and met together so hard, that Sir Percivale was smitten to the earth. And then Sir Percivale arose lightly, and cast his shield on his shoulder and drew his sword, and bade the other knight Alight, and do we battle unto the uttermost. Will ye more? said that knight. And therewith he alighted, and put his horse from him; and then they came together an easy pace, and there they lashed together with noble swords, and sometime they struck and sometime they foined, and either gave other many great wounds. Thus they fought near half a day, and never rested but right little, and there was none of them both that had less wounds than fifteen, and they bled so much that it was marvel they stood on their feet. But this knight that fought with Sir Percivale was a proved knight and a wise-fighting knight, and Sir Percivale was young and strong, not knowing in fighting as the other was.

Then Sir Percivale spoke first, and said: Sir knight, hold thy hand a while still, for we have fought for a simple matter and quarrel overlong, and therefore I require thee tell me thy name, for I was never or this time matched. So God me help, said that knight, and never or this time was there never knight that wounded me so sore as thou hast done, and yet have I fought in many battles; and now shalt thou wit that I am a knight of the Table Round, and my name is Sir Ector de Maris, brother unto the good knight, Sir Launcelot du Lake. Alas, said Sir Percivale, and my name is Sir Percivale de Galis that hath made my quest to seek Sir Launcelot, and now I am siker that I shall never finish my quest, for ye have slain me with your hands. It is not so, said Sir Ector, for I am slain by your hands, and may not live. Therefore I require you, said Sir Ector unto Sir Percivale, ride ye hereby to a priory, and bring me a priest that I may receive my Saviour, for I may not live. And when ye come to the court of King Arthur tell not my brother, Sir Launcelot, how that ye slew me, for then he would be your mortal enemy, but ye may say that I was slain in my quest as I sought him. Alas, said Sir Percivale, ye say that never will be, for I am so faint for bleeding that I may unnethe stand, how should I then take my horse?

#### **CHAPTER XIV. How by miracle they were both made whole by the coming of the holy vessel of Sangreal.**

THEN they made both great dole out of measure. This will not avail, said Sir Percivale. And then he kneeled down and made his prayer devoutly unto Almighty Jesu, for he was one of the best knights of the world that at that time was, in whom the very faith stood most in. Right so there came by the holy vessel of the Sangreal with all manner of sweetness and savour; but they could not readily see who that bare that vessel, but Sir Percivale had a glimmering of the vessel and of the maiden that bare it, for he was a perfect clean maiden; and forthwithal they both were as whole of hide and limb as ever they were in their life-days: then they gave thankings to God with great mildness. O Jesu, said Sir Percivale, what may this mean, that we be thus healed, and right now we were at the point of dying? I wot full well, said Sir Ector, what it is; it is an holy vessel that is borne by a maiden, and therein is part of the holy blood of our Lord Jesu Christ, blessed mote he be. But it may not be seen, said Sir Ector, but if it be by a perfect man. So God me help, said Sir Percivale, I saw a damosel, as me thought, all in white, with a vessel in both her hands, and forthwithal I was whole.

So then they took their horses and their harness, and amended their harness as well as they might that was broken; and so they mounted upon their horses, and rode talking together. And there Sir Ector de Maris told Sir Percivale how he had sought his brother, Sir Launcelot, long, and never could hear witting of him: In many strange adventures have I been in this quest. And so either told other of their adventures.

*Here endeth the eleventh book. And here followeth the twelfth book.*

## BOOK XII

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### **CHAPTER I. How Sir Launcelot in his madness took a sword and fought with a knight, and leapt in a bed.**

AND now leave we of a while of Sir Ector and of Sir Percivale, and speak we of Sir Launcelot that suffered and endured many sharp showers, that ever ran wild wood from place to place, and lived by fruit and such as he might get, and drank water two year; and other clothing had he but little but his shirt and his breech. Thus as Sir Launcelot wandered here and there he came in a fair meadow where he found a pavilion; and there by, upon a tree, there hung a white shield, and two swords hung thereby, and two spears leaned there by a tree. And when Sir Launcelot saw the swords, anon he leapt to the one sword, and took it in his hand, and drew it out. And then he lashed at the shield, that all the meadow rang of the dints, that he gave such a noise as ten knights had foughten together.

Then came forth a dwarf, and leapt unto Sir Launcelot, and would have had the sword out of his hand. And then Sir Launcelot took him by the both shoulders and threw him to the ground upon his neck, that he had almost broken his neck; and therewithal the dwarf cried help. Then came forth a likely knight, and well appavelled in scarlet furred with minever. And anon as he saw Sir Launcelot he deemed that he should be out of his wit. And then he said with fair speech: Good man, lay down that sword, for as meseemeth thou hadst more need of sleep and of warm clothes than to wield that sword. As for that, said Sir Launcelot, come not too nigh, for an thou do, wit thou well I will slay thee.

And when the knight of the pavilion saw that, he stert backward within the pavilion. And then the dwarf armed him lightly; and so the knight thought by force and might to take the sword from Sir Launcelot, and so he came stepping out; and when Sir Launcelot saw him come so all armed with his sword in his hand, then Sir Launcelot flew to him with such a might, and hit him upon the helm such a buffet, that the stroke troubled his brains, and therewith the sword brake in three. And the knight fell to the earth as he had been dead, the blood brasting out of his mouth, the nose, and the ears. And then Sir Launcelot ran into the pavilion, and rushed even into the warm bed; and there was a lady in that

bed, and she gat her smock, and ran out of the pavilion. And when she saw her lord lie at the ground like to be dead, then she cried and wept as she had been mad. Then with her noise the knight awaked out of his swoon, and looked up weakly with his eyes; and then he asked her, where was that mad man that had given him such a buffet: For such a buffet had I never of man's hand. Sir, said the dwarf, it is not worship to hurt him, for he is a man out of his wit; and doubt ye not he hath been a man of great worship, and for some heartly sorrow that he hath taken, he is fallen mad; and me beseemeth, said the dwarf, he resembleth much unto Sir Launcelot, for him I saw at the great tournament beside Lonazep. Jesu defend, said that knight, that ever that noble knight, Sir Launcelot, should be in such a plight; but whatsomever he be, said that knight, harm will I none do him: and this knight's name was Bliant. Then he said unto the dwarf: Go thou fast on horseback, unto my brother Sir Selivant, that is at the Castle Blank, and tell him of mine adventure, and bid him bring with him an horse litter, and then will we bear this knight unto my castle.

## **CHAPTER II. How Sir Lancelot was carried in an horse litter, and how Sir Launcelot rescued Sir Bliant, his host.**

SO the dwarf rode fast, and he came again and brought Sir Selivant with him, and six men with an horse litter; and so they took up the feather bed with Sir Launcelot, and so carried all away with them unto the Castle Blank, and he never awaked till he was within the castle. And then they bound his hands and his feet, and gave him good meats and good drinks, and brought him again to his strength and his fairness; but in his wit they could not bring him again, nor to know himself. Thus was Sir Launcelot there more than a year and a half, honestly arrayed and fair faren withal.

Then upon a day this lord of that castle, Sir Bliant, took his arms, on horseback, with a spear, to seek adventures. And as he rode in a forest there met with him two knights adventurous, the one was Breuse Saunce PitÃ©, and his brother, Sir Bertelot; and these two ran both at once upon Sir Bliant, and brake their spears upon his body. And then they drew out swords and made great battle, and fought long together. But at the last Sir Bliant was sore wounded, and felt himself faint; and then he fled on horseback toward his castle. And as they came hurling under the castle whereas Sir Launcelot lay in a window, [he] saw how two knights laid upon Sir Bliant with their swords. And when Sir Launcelot saw that, yet as wood as he was he was sorry for his lord, Sir Bliant. And then Sir Launcelot brake the chains from his legs and off his arms, and in the breaking he hurt his hands sore; and so Sir Launcelot ran out at a postern, and there he met with the two knights that chased Sir Bliant; and there he pulled

down Sir Bertelot with his bare hands from his horse, and therewithal he wrothe his sword out of his hand; and so he leapt unto Sir Breuse, and gave him such a buffet upon the head that he tumbled backward over his horse's croup. And when Sir Bertelot saw there his brother have such a fall, he gat a spear in his hand, and would have run Sir Launcelot through: that saw Sir Bliant, and struck off the hand of Sir Bertelot. And then Sir Breuse and Sir Bertelot gat their horses and fled away.

When Sir Selivant came and saw what Sir Launcelot had done for his brother, then he thanked God, and so did his brother, that ever they did him any good. But when Sir Bliant saw that Sir Launcelot was hurt with the breaking of his irons, then was he heavy that ever he bound him. Bind him no more, said Sir Selivant, for he is happy and gracious. Then they made great joy of Sir Launcelot, and they bound him no more; and so he abode there an half year and more. And on the morn early Sir Launcelot was ware where came a great boar with many hounds nigh him. But the boar was so big there might no hounds tear him; and the hunters came after, blowing their horns, both upon horseback and some upon foot; and then Sir Launcelot was ware where one alighted and tied his horse to a tree, and leaned his spear against the tree.

### **CHAPTER III. How Sir Launcelot fought against a boar and slew him, and how he was hurt, and brought unto an hermitage.**

SO came Sir Launcelot and found the horse bounden till a tree, and a spear leaning against a tree, and a sword tied to the saddle bow; and then Sir Launcelot leapt into the saddle and gat that spear in his hand, and then he rode after the boar; and then Sir Launcelot was ware where the boar set his arse to a tree fast by an hermitage. Then Sir Launcelot ran at the boar with his spear, and therewith the boar turned him nimble, and rove out the lungs and the heart of the horse, so that Launcelot fell to the earth; and, or ever Sir Launcelot might get from the horse, the boar rove him on the brawn of the thigh up to the hough bone. And then Sir Launcelot was wroth, and up he gat upon his feet, and drew his sword, and he smote off the boar's head at one stroke. And therewithal came out the hermit, and saw him have such a wound. Then the hermit came to Sir Launcelot and bemoaned him, and would have had him home unto his hermitage; but when Sir Launcelot heard him speak, he was so wroth with his wound that he ran upon the hermit to have slain him, and the hermit ran away. And when Sir Launcelot might not overget him, he threw his sword after him, for Sir Launcelot might go no further for bleeding; then the hermit turned again, and asked Sir Launcelot how he was hurt. Fellow, said Sir Launcelot, this boar hath bitten me sore. Then come with me, said the hermit, and I shall heal you. Go thy way, said Sir

Launcelot, and deal not with me.

Then the hermit ran his way, and there he met with a good knight with many men. Sir, said the hermit, here is fast by my place the goodliest man that ever I saw, and he is sore wounded with a boar, and yet he hath slain the boar. But well I wot, said the hermit, and he be not holpen, that goodly man shall die of that wound, and that were great pity. Then that knight at the desire of the hermit gat a cart, and in that cart that knight put the boar and Sir Launcelot, for Sir Launcelot was so feeble that they might right easily deal with him; and so Sir Launcelot was brought unto the hermitage, and there the hermit healed him of his wound. But the hermit might not find Sir Launcelot's sustenance, and so he impaired and waxed feeble, both of his body and of his wit: for the default of his sustenance he waxed more wooder than he was aforehand.

And then upon a day Sir Launcelot ran his way into the forest; and by adventure he came to the city of Corbin, where Dame Elaine was, that bare Galahad, Sir Launcelot's son. And so when he was entered into the town he ran through the town to the castle; and then all the young men of that city ran after Sir Launcelot, and there they threw turves at him, and gave him many sad strokes. And ever as Sir Launcelot might overreach any of them, he threw them so that they would never come in his hands no more; for of some he brake the legs and the arms, and so fled into the castle; and then came out knights and squires and rescued Sir Launcelot. And when they beheld him and looked upon his person, they thought they saw never so goodly a man. And when they saw so many wounds upon him, all they deemed that he had been a man of worship. And then they ordained him clothes to his body, and straw underneath him, and a little house. And then every day they would throw him meat, and set him drink, but there was but few would bring him meat to his hands.

#### **CHAPTER IV. How Sir Launcelot was known by Dame Elaine, and was borne into a chamber and after healed by the Sangreal.**

SO it befell that King Pelles had a nephew, his name was Castor; and so he desired of the king to be made knight, and so at the request of this Castor the king made him knight at the feast of Candlemas. And when Sir Castor was made knight, that same day he gave many gowns. And then Sir Castor sent for the fool—that was Sir Launcelot. And when he was come afore Sir Castor, he gave Sir Launcelot a robe of scarlet and all that longed unto him. And when Sir Launcelot was so arrayed like a knight, he was the seemliest man in all the court, and none so well made. So when he saw his time he went into the garden, and there Sir Launcelot laid him down by a well and slept. And so at-after noon Dame Elaine and her maidens came into the garden to play them; and as they roamed up and

down one of Dame Elaine's maidens espied where lay a goodly man by the well sleeping, and anon showed him to Dame Elaine. Peace, said Dame Elaine, and say no word: and then she brought Dame Elaine where he lay. And when that she beheld him, anon she fell in remembrance of him, and knew him verily for Sir Launcelot; and therewithal she fell a-weeping so heartily that she sank even to the earth; and when she had thus wept a great while, then she arose and called her maidens and said she was sick.

And so she yede out of the garden, and she went straight to her father, and there she took him apart by herself; and then she said: O father, now have I need of your help, and but if that ye help me farewell my good days for ever. What is that, daughter? said King Pelles. Sir, she said, thus is it: in your garden I went for to sport, and there, by the well, I found Sir Launcelot du Lake sleeping. I may not believe that, said King Pelles. Sir, she said, truly he is there, and meseemeth he should be distract out of his wit. Then hold you still, said the king, and let me deal. Then the king called to him such as he most trusted, a four persons, and Dame Elaine, his daughter. And when they came to the well and beheld Sir Launcelot, anon Dame Brisen knew him. Sir, said Dame Brisen, we must be wise how we deal with him, for this knight is out of his mind, and if we awake him rudely what he will do we all know not; but ye shall abide, and I shall throw such an enchantment upon him that he shall not awake within the space of an hour; and so she did.

Then within a little while after, the king commanded that all people should avoid, that none should be in that way thereas the king would come. And so when this was done, these four men and these ladies laid hand on Sir Launcelot, and so they bare him into a tower, and so into a chamber where was the holy vessel of the Sangreal, and by force Sir Launcelot was laid by that holy vessel; and there came an holy man and unhilled that vessel, and so by miracle and by virtue of that holy vessel Sir Launcelot was healed and recovered. And when that he was awaked he groaned and sighed, and complained greatly that he was passing sore.

#### **CHAPTER V. How Sir Launcelot, after that he was whole and had his mind, he was ashamed, and how that Elaine desired a castle for him.**

AND when Sir Launcelot saw King Pelles and Elaine, he waxed ashamed and said thus: O Lord Jesu, how came I here? for God's sake, my lord, let me wit how I came here. Sir, said Dame Elaine, into this country ye came like a madman, clean out of your wit, and here have ye been kept as a fool; and no creature here knew what ye were, until by fortune a maiden of mine brought me unto you whereas ye lay sleeping by a well, and anon as I verily beheld you I



knew you. And then I told my father, and so were ye brought afore this holy vessel, and by the virtue of it thus were ye healed. O Jesu, mercy, said Sir Launcelot; if this be sooth, how many there be that know of my woodness! So God me help, said Elaine, no more but my father, and I, and Dame Brisen. Now for Christ's love, said Sir Launcelot, keep it in counsel, and let no man know it in the world, for I am sore ashamed that I have been thus miscarried; for I am banished out of the country of Logris for ever, that is for to say the country of England.

And so Sir Launcelot lay more than a fortnight or ever that he might stir for soreness. And then upon a day he said unto Dame Elaine these words: Lady Elaine, for your sake I have had much travail, care, and anguish, it needeth not to rehearse it, ye know how. Notwithstanding I know well I have done foul to you when that I drew my sword to you, to have slain you, upon the morn when I had lain with you. And all was the cause, that ye and Dame Brisen made me for to lie by you maugre mine head; and as ye say, that night Galahad your son was begotten. That is truth, said Dame Elaine. Now will ye for my love, said Sir Launcelot, go unto your father and get me a place of him wherein I may dwell? for in the court of King Arthur may I never come. Sir, said Dame Elaine, I will live and die with you, and only for your sake; and if my life might not avail you and my death might avail you, wit you well I would die for your sake. And I will go to my father and I am sure there is nothing that I can desire of him but I shall have it. And where ye be, my lord Sir Launcelot, doubt ye not but I will be with you with all the service that I may do. So forthwithal she went to her father and said, Sir, my lord, Sir Launcelot, desireth to be here by you in some castle of yours. Well daughter, said the king, sith it is his desire to abide in these marches he shall be in the Castle of Bliant, and there shall ye be with him, and twenty of the fairest ladies that be in the country, and they shall all be of the great blood, and ye shall have ten knights with you; for, daughter, I will that ye wit we all be honoured by the blood of Sir Launcelot.

#### **CHAPTER VI. How Sir Launcelot came into the joyous Isle, and there he named himself Le Chevaler Mal Fet.**

THEN went Dame Elaine unto Sir Launcelot, and told him all how her father had devised for him and her. Then came the knight Sir Castor, that was nephew unto Kong Pelles, unto Sir Launcelot, and asked him what was his name. Sir, said Sir Launcelot, my name is Le Chevaler Mal Fet, that is to say the knight that hath trespassed. Sir, said Sir Castor, it may well be so, but ever meseemeth your name should be Sir Launcelot du Lake, for or now I have seen you. Sir, said Launcelot, ye are not as a gentle knight: I put case my name were Sir Launcelot,

and that it list me not to discover my name, what should it grieve you here to keep my counsel, and ye be not hurt thereby? but wit thou well an ever it lie in my power I shall grieve you, and that I promise you truly. Then Sir Castor kneeled down and besought Sir Launcelot of mercy: For I shall never utter what ye be, while that ye be in these parts. Then Sir Launcelot pardoned him.

And then, after this, King Pelles with ten knights, and Dame Elaine, and twenty ladies, rode unto the Castle of Bliant that stood in an island beclosed in iron, with a fair water deep and large. And when they were there Sir Launcelot let call it the Joyous Isle; and there was he called none otherwise but Le Chevaler Mal Fet, the knight that hath trespassed. Then Sir Launcelot let make him a shield all of sable, and a queen crowned in the midst, all of silver, and a knight clean armed kneeling afore her. And every day once, for any mirths that all the ladies might make him, he would once every day look toward the realm of Logris, where King Arthur and Queen Guenever was. And then would he fall upon a weeping as his heart should to-brast.

So it fell that time Sir Launcelot heard of a jousting fast by his castle, within three leagues. Then he called unto him a dwarf, and he bade him go unto that jousting. And or ever the knights depart, look thou make there a cry, in hearing of all the knights, that there is one knight in the Joyous Isle, that is the Castle of Bliant, and say his name is Le Chevaler Mal Fet, that will joust against knights that will come. And who that putteth that knight to the worse shall have a fair maid and a gerfalcon.

### **CHAPTER VII. Of a great tourneying in the Joyous Isle, and how Sir Pervivale and Sir Ector came thither, and Sir Percivale fought with him.**

SO when this cry was made, unto Joyous Isle drew knights to the number of five hundred; and wit ye well there was never seen in Arthur's days one knight that did so much deeds of arms as Sir Launcelot did three days together; for as the book maketh truly mention, he had the better of all the five hundred knights, and there was not one slain of them. And after that Sir Launcelot made them all a great feast.

And in the meanwhile came Sir Percivale de Galis and Sir Ector de Maris under that castle that was called the Joyous Isle. And as they beheld that gay castle they would have gone to that castle, but they might not for the broad water, and bridge could they find none. Then they saw on the other side a lady with a sperhawk on her hand, and Sir Percivale called unto her, and asked that lady who was in that castle. Fair knights, she said, here within this castle is the fairest lady in this land, and her name is Elaine. Also we have in this castle the fairest knight and the mightiest man that is I dare say living, and he called

himself Le Chevaler Mal Fet. How came he into these marches? said Sir Percivale. Truly, said the damosel, he came into this country like a mad man, with dogs and boys chasing him through the city of Corbin, and by the holy vessel of the Sangreal he was brought into his wit again; but he will not do battle with no knight, but by underne or by noon. And if ye list to come into the castle, said the lady, ye must ride unto the further side of the castle and there shall ye find a vessel that will bear you and your horse. Then they departed, and came unto the vessel. And then Sir Percivale alighted, and said to Sir Ector de Maris: Ye shall abide me here until that I wit what manner a knight he is; for it were shame unto us, inasmuch as he is but one knight, an we should both do battle with him. Do ye as ye list, said Sir Ector, and here I shall abide you until that I hear of you

Then passed Sir Percivale the water, and when he came to the castle gate he bade the porter: Go thou to the good knight within the castle, and tell him here is come an errant knight to joust with him. Sir, said the porter, ride ye within the castle, and there is a common place for jousting, that lords and ladies may behold you. So anon as Sir Launcelot had warning he was soon ready; and there Sir Percivale and Sir Launcelot encountered with such a might, and their spears were so rude, that both the horses and the knights fell to the earth. Then they avoided their horses, and flang out noble swords, and hewed away cantels of their shields, and hurtled together with their shields like two boars, and either wounded other passing sore. At the last Sir Percivale spake first when they had foughten there more than two hours. Fair knight, said Sir Percivale, I require thee tell me thy name, for I met never with such a knight. Sir, said Sir Launcelot, my name is Le Chevaler Mal Fet. Now tell me your name, said Sir Launcelot, I require you, gentle knight. Truly, said Sir Percivale, my name is Sir Percivale de Galis, that was brother unto the good knight, Sir Lamorak de Galis, and King Pellinore was our father, and Sir Aglovale is my brother. Alas, said Sir Launcelot, what have I done to fight with you that art a knight of the Round Table, that sometime was your fellow?

**CHAPTER VIII. How each of them knew other, and of their great courtesy, and how his brother Sir Ector came unto him, and of their joy.**

AND therewithal Sir Launcelot kneeled down upon his knees, and threw away his shield and his sword from him. When Sir Percivale saw him do so he marvelled what he meant. And then thus he said: Sir knight, whatsoever thou be, I require thee upon the high order of knighthood, tell me thy true name. Then he said: So God me help, my name is Sir Launcelot du Lake, King Ban's son of Benoy. Alas, said Sir Percivale, what have I done? I was sent by the queen for to

seek you, and so I have sought you nigh this two year, and yonder is Sir Ector de Maris, your brother abideth me on the other side of the yonder water. Now for God's sake, said Sir Percivale, forgive me mine offences that I have here done. It is soon forgiven, said Sir Launcelot.

Then Sir Percivale sent for Sir Ector de Maris, and when Sir Launcelot had a sight of him, he ran unto him and took him in his arms; and then Sir Ector kneeled down, and either wept upon other, that all had pity to behold them. Then came Dame Elaine and she there made them great cheer as might lie in her power; and there she told Sir Ector and Sir Percivale how and in what manner Sir Launcelot came into that country, and how he was healed; and there it was known how long Sir Launcelot was with Sir Bliant and with Sir Selivant, and how he first met with them, and how he departed from them because of a boar; and how the hermit healed Sir Launcelot of his great wound, and how that he came to Corbin.

#### **CHAPTER IX. How Sir Bors and Sir Lionel came to King Brandegore, and how Sir Bors took his son Helin le Blank, and of Sir Launcelot.**

NOW leave we Sir Launcelot in the Joyous Isle with the Lady Dame Elaine, and Sir Percivale and Sir Ector playing with them, and turn we to Sir Bors de Ganis and Sir Lionel, that had sought Sir Launcelot nigh by the space of two year, and never could they hear of him. And as they thus rode, by adventure they came to the house of Brandegore, and there Sir Bors was well known, for he had gotten a child upon the king's daughter fifteen year to-fore, and his name was Helin le Blank. And when Sir Bors saw that child it liked him passing well. And so those knights had good cheer of the King Brandegore. And on the morn Sir Bors came afore King Brandegore and said: Here is my son Helin le Blank, that as it is said he is my son; and sith it is so, I will that ye wit that I will have him with me unto the court of King Arthur. Sir, said the king, ye may well take him with you, but he is over tender of age. As for that, said Sir Bors, I will have him with me, and bring him to the house of most worship of the world. So when Sir Bors should depart there was made great sorrow for the departing of Helin le Blank, and great weeping was there made. But Sir Bors and Sir Lionel departed, and within a while they came to Camelot, where was King Arthur. And when King Arthur understood that Helin le Blank was Sir Bors' son, and nephew unto King Brandegore, then King Arthur let him make knight of the Round Table; and so he proved a good knight and an adventurous.

Now will we turn to our matter of Sir Launcelot. It befell upon a day Sir Ector and Sir Percivale came to Sir Launcelot and asked him what he would do, and whether he would go with them unto King Arthur or not. Nay, said Sir

Launcelot, that may not be by no mean, for I was so entreated at the court that I cast me never to come there more. Sir, said Sir Ector, I am your brother, and ye are the man in the world that I love most; and if I understood that it were your disworship, ye may understand I would never counsel you thereto; but King Arthur and all his knights, and in especial Queen Guenever, made such dole and sorrow that it was marvel to hear and see. And ye must remember the great worship and renown that ye be of, how that ye have been more spoken of than any other knight that is now living; for there is none that beareth the name now but ye and Sir Tristram. Therefore brother, said Sir Ector, make you ready to ride to the court with us, and I dare say there was never knight better welcome to the court than ye; and I wot well and can make it good, said Sir Ector, it hath cost my lady, the queen, twenty thousand pound the seeking of you. Well brother, said Sir Launcelot, I will do after your counsel, and ride with you.

So then they took their horses and made them ready, and took their leave at King Pelles and at Dame Elaine. And when Sir Launcelot should depart Dame Elaine made great sorrow. My lord, Sir Launcelot, said Dame Elaine, at this same feast of Pentecost shall your son and mine, Galahad, be made knight, for he is fully now fifteen winter old. Do as ye list, said Sir Launcelot; God give him grace to prove a good knight. As for that, said Dame Elaine, I doubt not he shall prove the best man of his kin except one. Then shall he be a man good enough, said Sir Launcelot.

#### **CHAPTER X. How Sir Launcelot with Sir Percivale and Sir Ector came to the court, and of the great joy of him.**

THEN they departed, and within five days' journey they came to Camelot, that is called in English, Winchester. And when Sir Launcelot was come among them, the king and all the knights made great joy of him. And there Sir Percivale de Galis and Sir Ector de Maris began and told the whole adventures: that Sir Launcelot had been out of his mind the time of his absence, and how he called himself Le Chevaler Mal Fet, the knight that had trespassed; and in three days Sir Launcelot smote down five hundred knights. And ever as Sir Ector and Sir Percivale told these tales of Sir Launcelot, Queen Guenever wept as she should have died. Then the queen made great cheer. O Jesu, said King Arthur, I marvel for what cause ye, Sir Launcelot, went out of your mind. I and many others deem it was for the love of fair Elaine, the daughter of King Pelles, by whom ye are noised that ye have gotten a child, and his name is Galahad, and men say he shall do marvels. My lord, said Sir Launcelot, if I did any folly I have that I sought. And therewithal the king spake no more. But all Sir Launcelot's kin knew for whom he went out of his mind. And then there were great feasts made and great

joy; and many great lords and ladies, when they heard that Sir Launcelot was come to the court again, they made great joy.

### **CHAPTER XI. How La Beale Isoud counselled Sir Tristram to go unto the court, to the great feast of Pentecost.**

NOW will we leave off this matter, and speak we of Sir Tristram, and of Sir Palomides that was the Saracen unchristened. When Sir Tristram was come home unto Joyous Gard from his adventures, all this while that Sir Launcelot was thus missed, two year and more, Sir Tristram bare the renown through all the realm of Logris, and many strange adventures befell him, and full well and manly and worshipfully he brought them to an end. So when he was come home La Beale Isoud told him of the great feast that should be at Pentecost next following, and there she told him how Sir Launcelot had been missed two year, and all that while he had been out of his mind, and how he was holpen by the holy vessel, the Sangreal. Alas, said Sir Tristram, that caused some debate betwixt him and Queen Guenever. Sir, said Dame Isoud, I know it all, for Queen Guenever sent me a letter in the which she wrote me all how it was, for to require you to seek him. And now, blessed be God, said La Beale Isoud, he is whole and sound and come again to the court.

Thereof am I glad, said Sir Tristram, and now shall ye and I make us ready, for both ye and I will be at the feast. Sir, said Isoud, an it please you I will not be there, for through me ye be marked of many good knights, and that caused you to have much more labour for my sake than needeth you. Then will I not be there, said Sir Tristram, but if ye be there. God defend, said La Beale Isoud, for then shall I be spoken of shame among all queens and ladies of estate; for ye that are called one of the noblest knights of the world, and ye a knight of the Round Table, how may ye be missed at that feast? What shall be said among all knights? See how Sir Tristram hunteth, and hawketh, and cowereth within a castle with his lady, and forsaketh your worship. Alas, shall some say, it is pity that ever he was made knight, or that ever he should have the love of a lady. Also what shall queens and ladies say of me? It is pity that I have my life, that I will hold so noble a knight as ye are from his worship. So God me help, said Sir Tristram unto La Beale Isoud, it is passing well said of you and nobly counselled; and now I well understand that ye love me; and like as ye have counselled me I will do a part thereafter. But there shall no man nor child ride with me, but myself. And so will I ride on Tuesday next coming, and no more harness of war but my spear and my sword.

### **CHAPTER XII. How Sir Tristram departed unarmed and met with Sir**

**Palomides, and how they smote each other, and how Sir Palomides forbare him.**

AND so when the day came Sir Tristram took his leave at La Beale Isoud, and she sent with him four knights, and within half a mile he sent them again: and within a mile after Sir Tristram saw afore him where Sir Palomides had stricken down a knight, and almost wounded him to the death. Then Sir Tristram repented him that he was not armed, and then he hoked still. With that Sir Palomides knew Sir Tristram, and cried on high: Sir Tristram, now be we met, for or we depart we will redress our old sores. As for that, said Sir Tristram, there was yet never Christian man might make his boast that ever I fled from him; and wit ye well, Sir Palomides, thou that art a Saracen shall never make thy boast that Sir Tristram de Liones shall flee from thee. And therewith Sir Tristram made his horse to run, and with all his might he came straight upon Sir Palomides, and brast his spear upon him an hundred pieces. And forthwithal Sir Tristram drew his sword. And then he turned his horse and struck at Palomides six great strokes upon his helm; and then Sir Palomides stood still, and beheld Sir Tristram, and marvelled of his woodness, and of his folly. And then Sir Palomides said to himself: An Sir Tristram were armed, it were hard to cease him of this battle, and if I turn again and slay him I am ashamed wheresomever that I go.

Then Sir Tristram spake and said: Thou coward knight, what castest thou to do; why wilt thou not do battle with me? for have thou no doubt I shall endure all thy malice. Ah, Sir Tristram, said Palomides, full well thou wottest I may not fight with thee for shame, for thou art here naked and I am armed, and if I slay thee, dishonour shall be mine. And well thou wottest, said Sir Palomides to Sir Tristram, I know thy strength and thy hardiness to endure against a good knight. That is truth, said Sir Tristram, I understand thy valiantness well. Ye say well, said Sir Palomides; now, I require you, tell me a question that I shall say to you. Tell me what it is, said Sir Tristram, and I shall answer you the truth, as God me help. I put case, said Sir Palomides, that ye were armed at all rights as well as I am, and I naked as ye be, what would you do to me now, by your true knighthood? Ah, said Sir Tristram, now I understand thee well, Sir Palomides, for now must I say mine own judgment, and as God me bless, that I shall say shall not be said for no fear that I have of thee. But this is all: wit Sir Palomides, as at this time thou shouldest depart from me, for I would not have ado with thee. No more will I, said Palomides, and therefore ride forth on thy way. As for that I may choose, said Sir Tristram, either to ride or to abide. But Sir Palomides, said Sir Tristram, I marvel of one thing, that thou that art so good a knight, that thou wilt not be christened, and thy brother, Sir Safere, hath been christened

many a day.

### **CHAPTER XIII. How that Sir Tristram gat him harness of a knight which was hurt, and how he overthrew Sir Palomides.**

AS for that, said Sir Palomides, I may not yet be christened for one avow that I have made many years agone; howbeit in my heart I believe in Jesu Christ and his mild mother Mary; but I have but one battle to do, and when that is done I will be baptised with a good will. By my head, said Tristram, as for one battle thou shalt not seek it no longer. For God defend, said Sir Tristram, that through my default thou shouldst longer live thus a Saracen, for yonder is a knight that ye, Sir Palomides, have hurt and smitten down. Now help me that I were armed in his armour, and I shall soon fulfil thine avows. As ye will, said Palomides, so it shall be.

So they rode both unto that knight that sat upon a bank, and then Sir Tristram saluted him, and he weakly saluted him again. Sir knight, said Sir Tristram, I require you tell me your right name. Sir, he said, my name is Sir Galleron of Galway, and knight of the Table Round. So God me help, said Sir Tristram, I am right heavy of your hurts; but this is all, I must pray you to lend me all your whole armour, for ye see I am unarmed, and I must do battle with this knight. Sir, said the hurt knight, ye shall have it with a good will; but ye must beware, for I warn you that knight is wight. Sir, said Galleron, I pray you tell me your name, and what is that knight's name that hath beaten me. Sir, as for my name it is Sir Tristram de Liones, and as for the knight's name that hath hurt you is Sir Palomides, brother to the good knight Sir Safere, and yet is Sir Palomides unchristened. Alas, said Sir Galleron, that is pity that so good a knight and so noble a man of arms should be unchristened. So God me help, said Sir Tristram, either he shall slay me or I him but that he shall be christened or ever we depart in-sunder. My lord Sir Tristram, said Sir Galleron, your renown and worship is well known through many realms, and God save you this day from shenship and shame.

Then Sir Tristram unarmed Galleron, the which was a noble knight, and had done many deeds of arms, and he was a large knight of flesh and bone. And when he was unarmed he stood upon his feet, for he was bruised in the back with a spear; yet so as Sir Galleron might, he armed Sir Tristram. And then Sir Tristram mounted upon his own horse, and in his hand he gat Sir Galleron's spear; and therewithal Sir Palomides was ready. And so they came hurtling together, and either smote other in midst of their shields; and therewithal Sir Palomides' spear brake, and Sir Tristram smote down the horse; and Sir Palomides, as soon as he might, avoided his horse, and dressed his shield, and



pulled out his sword. That saw Sir Tristram, and therewithal he alighted and tied his horse till a tree.

**CHAPTER XIV. How Sir Tristram and Sir Palomides fought long together, and after accorded, and how Sir Tristram made him to be christened.**

AND then they came together as two wild boars, lashing together, tracing and traversing as noble men that oft had been well proved in battle; but ever Sir Palomides dread the might of Sir Tristram, and therefore he suffered him to breathe him. Thus they fought more than two hours, but often Sir Tristram smote such strokes at Sir Palomides that he made him to kneel; and Sir Palomides brake and cut away many pieces of Sir Tristram's shield; and then Sir Palomides wounded Sir Tristram, for he was a well fighting man. Then Sir Tristram was wood wroth out of measure, and rushed upon Sir Palomides with such a might that Sir Palomides fell grovelling to the earth; and therewithal he leapt up lightly upon his feet, and then Sir Tristram wounded Palomides sore through the shoulder. And ever Sir Tristram fought still in like hard, and Sir Palomides failed not, but gave him many sad strokes. And at the last Sir Tristram doubled his strokes, and by fortune Sir Tristram smote Sir Palomides sword out of his hand, and if Sir Palomides had stooped for his sword he had been slain.

Then Palomides stood still and beheld his sword with a sorrowful heart. How now, said Sir Tristram unto Palomides, now have I thee at advantage as thou haddest me this day; but it shall never be said in no court, nor among good knights, that Sir Tristram shall slay any knight that is weaponless; and therefore take thou thy sword, and let us make an end of this battle. As for to do this battle, said Palomides, I dare right well end it, but I have no great lust to fight no more. And for this cause, said Palomides: mine offence to you is not so great but that we may be friends. All that I have offended is and was for the love of La Beale Isoud. And as for her, I dare say she is peerless above all other ladies, and also I proffered her never no dishonour; and by her I have gotten the most part of my worship. And sithen I offended never as to her own person, and as for the offence that I have done, it was against your own person, and for that offence ye have given me this day many sad strokes, and some I have given you again; and now I dare say I felt never man of your might, nor so well breathed, but if it were Sir Launcelot du Lake; wherefore I require you, my lord, forgive me all that I have offended unto you; and this same day have me to the next church, and first let me be clean confessed, and after see you now that I be truly baptised. And then will we all ride together unto the court of Arthur, that we be there at the high feast. Now take your horse, said Sir Tristram, and as ye say so it shall be,

and all thine evil will God forgive it you, and I do. And here within this mile is the Suffragan of Carlisle that shall give you the sacrament of baptism.

Then they took their horses and Sir Galleron rode with them. And when they came to the Suffragan Sir Tristram told him their desire. Then the Suffragan let fill a great vessel with water, and when he had hallowed it he then confessed clean Sir Palomides, and Sir Tristram and Sir Galleron were his godfathers. And then soon after they departed, riding toward Camelot, where King Arthur and Queen Guenever was, and for the most part all the knights of the Round Table. And so the king and all the court were glad that Sir Palomides was christened. And at the same feast in came Galahad and sat in the Siege Perilous. And so therewithal departed and dissevered all the knights of the Round Table. And Sir Tristram returned again unto Joyous Gard, and Sir Palomides followed the Questing Beast.

*Here endeth the second book of Sir Tristram that was drawn out of French into English. But here is no rehearsal of the third book. And here followeth the noble tale of the Sangreal, that called is the Holy Vessel; and the signification of the blessed blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, blessed mote it be, the which was brought into this land by Joseph Aramathie. Therefore on all sinful souls blessed Lord have thou mercy.*

*Explicit liber xii. Et incipit Decimustercius.*

## BOOK XIII

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### **CHAPTER I. How at the vigil of the Feast of Pentecost entered into the hall before King Arthur a damosel, and desired Sir Launcelot for to come and**

dub a knight, and how he went with her.

AT the vigil of Pentecost, when all the fellowship of the Round Table were come unto Camelot and there heard their service, and the tables were set ready to the meat, right so entered into the hall a full fair gentlewoman on horseback, that had ridden full fast, for her horse was all besweated. Then she there alighted, and came before the king and saluted him; and he said: Damosel, God thee bless. Sir, said she, for God's sake say me where Sir Launcelot is. Yonder ye may see him, said the king. Then she went unto Launcelot and said: Sir Launcelot, I salute you on King Pelles' behalf, and I require you come on with me hereby into a forest. Then Sir Launcelot asked her with whom she dwelled. I dwell, said she, with King Pelles. What will ye with me? said Launcelot. Ye shall know, said she, when ye come thither. Well, said he, I will gladly go with you. So Sir Launcelot bade his squire saddle his horse and bring his arms; and in all haste he did his commandment.

Then came the queen unto Launcelot, and said: Will ye leave us at this high feast? Madam, said the gentlewoman, wit ye well he shall be with you to-morn by dinner time. If I wist, said the queen, that he should not be with us here to-morn he should not go with you by my good will. Right so departed Sir Launcelot with the gentlewoman, and rode until that he came into a forest and into a great valley, where they saw an abbey of nuns; and there was a squire ready and opened the gates, and so they entered and descended off their horses; and there came a fair fellowship about Sir Launcelot, and welcomed him, and were passing glad of his coming. And then they led him unto the Abbess's chamber and unarmed him; and right so he was ware upon a bed lying two of his cousins, Sir Bors and Sir Lionel, and then he waked them; and when they saw him they made great joy. Sir, said Sir Bors unto Sir Launcelot, what adventure hath brought you hither, for we weened to-morn to have found you at Camelot? As God me help, said Sir Launcelot, a gentlewoman brought me hither, but I

know not the cause.

In the meanwhile that they thus stood talking together, therein came twelve nuns that brought with them Galahad, the which was passing fair and well made, that unnethe in the world men might not find his match: and all those ladies wept. Sir, said they all, we bring you here this child the which we have nourished, and we pray you to make him a knight, for of a more worthier man's hand may he not receive the order of knighthood. Sir Launcelot beheld the young squire and saw him seemly and demure as a dove, with all manner of good features, that he weened of his age never to have seen so fair a man of form. Then said Sir Launcelot: Cometh this desire of himself? He and all they said yea. Then shall he, said Sir Launcelot, receive the high order of knighthood as to-morn at the reverence of the high feast. That night Sir Launcelot had passing good cheer; and on the morn at the hour of prime, at Galahad's desire, he made him knight and said: God make him a good man, for of beauty faileth you not as any that liveth.

## **CHAPTER II. How the letters were found written in the Siege Perilous and of the marvellous adventure of the sword in a stone.**

NOW fair sir, said Sir Launcelot, will ye come with me unto the court of King Arthur? Nay, said he, I will not go with you as at this time. Then he departed from them and took his two cousins with him, and so they came unto Camelot by the hour of underne on Whitsunday. By that time the king and the queen were gone to the minster to hear their service. Then the king and the queen were passing glad of Sir Bors and Sir Lionel, and so was all the fellowship. So when the king and all the knights were come from service, the barons espied in the sieges of the Round Table all about, written with golden letters: Here ought to sit he, and he ought to sit here. And thus they went so long till that they came to the Siege Perilous, where they found letters newly written of gold which said: Four hundred winters and four and fifty accomplished after the passion of our Lord Jesu Christ ought this siege to be fulfilled. Then all they said: This is a marvellous thing and an adventurous. In the name of God, said Sir Launcelot; and then accompted the term of the writing from the birth of our Lord unto that day. It seemeth me said Sir Launcelot, this siege ought to be fulfilled this same day, for this is the feast of Pentecost after the four hundred and four and fifty year; and if it would please all parties, I would none of these letters were seen this day, till he be come that ought to enchieve this adventure. Then made they to ordain a cloth of silk, for to cover these letters in the Siege Perilous.

Then the king bade haste unto dinner. Sir, said Sir Kay the Steward, if ye go

now unto your meat ye shall break your old custom of your court, for ye have not used on this day to sit at your meat or that ye have seen some adventure. Ye say sooth, said the king, but I had so great joy of Sir Launcelot and of his cousins, which be come to the court whole and sound, so that I bethought me not of mine old custom. So, as they stood speaking, in came a squire and said unto the king: Sir, I bring unto you marvellous tidings. What be they? said the king. Sir, there is here beneath at the river a great stone which I saw fleet above the water, and therein I saw sticking a sword. The king said: I will see that marvel. So all the knights went with him, and when they came to the river they found there a stone fleeting, as it were of red marble, and therein stuck a fair rich sword, and in the pommel thereof were precious stones wrought with subtle letters of gold. Then the barons read the letters which said in this wise: Never shall man take me hence, but only he by whose side I ought to hang, and he shall be the best knight of the world.

When the king had seen the letters, he said unto Sir Launcelot: Fair Sir, this sword ought to be yours, for I am sure ye be the best knight of the world. Then Sir Launcelot answered full soberly: Certes, sir, it is not my sword; also, Sir, wit ye well I have no hardiness to set my hand to it, for it longed not to hang by my side. Also, who that assayeth to take the sword and faileth of it, he shall receive a wound by that sword that he shall not be whole long after. And I will that ye wit that this same day shall the adventures of the Sangreal, that is called the Holy Vessel, begin

### **CHAPTER III. How Sir Gawaine assayed to draw out the sword, and how an old man brought in Galahad.**

NOW, fair nephew, said the king unto Sir Gawaine, assay ye, for my love. Sir, he said, save your good grace I shall not do that. Sir, said the king, assay to take the sword and at my commandment. Sir, said Gawaine, your commandment I will obey. And therewith he took up the sword by the handles, but he might not stir it. I thank you, said the king to Sir Gawaine. My lord Sir Gawaine, said Sir Launcelot, now wit ye well this sword shall touch you so sore that ye shall will ye had never set your hand thereto for the best castle of this realm. Sir, he said, I might not withsay mine uncle's will and commandment. But when the king heard this he repented it much, and said unto Sir Percivale that he should assay, for his love. And he said: Gladly, for to bear Sir Gawaine fellowship. And therewith he set his hand on the sword and drew it strongly, but he might not move it. Then were there none (1) that durst be so hardy to set their hands thereto. Now may ye go to your dinner, said Sir Kay unto the king, for a marvellous adventure have ye seen. So the king and all went unto the court, and every knight knew his own

place, and set him therein, and young men that were knights served them.

So when they were served, and all sieges fulfilled save only the Siege Perilous, anon there befell a marvellous adventure, that all the doors and windows of the palace shut by themselves. Not for then the hall was not greatly darked; and therewith they were all abashed both one and other. Then King Arthur spake first and said: By God, fair fellows and lords, we have seen this day marvels, but or night I suppose we shall see greater marvels.

In the meanwhile came in a good old man, and an ancient, clothed all in white, and there was no knight knew from whence he came. And with him he brought a young knight, both on foot, in red arms, without sword or shield, save a scabbard hanging by his side. And these words he said: Peace be with you, fair lords. Then the old man said unto Arthur: Sir, I bring here a young knight, the which is of king's lineage, and of the kindred of Joseph of Aramathie, whereby the marvels of this court, and of strange realms, shall be fully accomplished.

<sup>1</sup>Omitted by Caxton, supplied from W. de Worde.

#### **CHAPTER IV. How the old man brought Galahad to the Siege Perilous and set him therein, and how all the knights marvelled.**

THE king was right glad of his words, and said unto the good man: Sir, ye be right welcome, and the young knight with you. Then the old man made the young man to unarm him, and he was in a coat of red sendal, and bare a mantle upon his shoulder that was furred with ermine, and put that upon him. And the old knight said unto the young knight: Sir, follow me. And anon he led him unto the Siege Perilous, where beside sat Sir Launcelot; and the good man lift up the cloth, and found there letters that said thus: This is the siege of Galahad, the haut prince. Sir, said the old knight, wit ye well that place is yours. And then he set him down surely in that siege. And then he said to the old man: Sir, ye may now go your way, for well have ye done that ye were commanded to do; and recommend me unto my grandsire, King Pelles, and unto my lord Petchere, and say them on my behalf, I shall come and see them as soon as ever I may. So the good man departed; and there met him twenty noble squires, and so took their horses and went their way.

Then all the knights of the Table Round marvelled greatly of Sir Galahad, that he durst sit there in that Siege Perilous, and was so tender of age; and wist not from whence he came but all only by God; and said: This is he by whom the Sangreal shall be enchieved, for there sat never none but he, but he were mischieved. Then Sir Launcelot beheld his son and had great joy of him. Then Bors told his fellows: Upon pain of my life this young knight shall come unto

great worship. This noise was great in all the court, so that it came to the queen. Then she had marvel what knight it might be that durst adventure him to sit in the Siege Perilous. Many said unto the queen he resembled much unto Sir Launcelot. I may well suppose, said the queen, that Sir Launcelot begat him on King Pelles' daughter, by the which he was made to lie by, by enchantment, and his name is Galahad. I would fain see him, said the queen, for he must needs be a noble man, for so is his father that him begat, I report me unto all the Table Round.

So when the meat was done that the king and all were risen, the king yede unto the Siege Perilous and lift up the cloth, and found there the name of Galahad; and then he shewed it unto Sir Gawaine, and said: Fair nephew, now have we among us Sir Galahad, the good knight that shall worship us all; and upon pain of my life he shall enchieve the Sangreal, right as Sir Launcelot had done us to understand. Then came King Arthur unto Galahad and said: Sir, ye be welcome, for ye shall move many good knights to the quest of the Sangreal, and ye shall enchieve that never knights might bring to an end. Then the king took him by the hand, and went down from the palace to shew Galahad the adventures of the stone.

#### **CHAPTER V. How King Arthur shewed the stone hoving on the water to Galahad, and how he drew out the sword.**

THE queen heard thereof, and came after with many ladies, and shewed them the stone where it hoved on the water. Sir, said the king unto Sir Galahad, here is a great marvel as ever I saw, and right good knights have assayed and failed. Sir, said Galahad, that is no marvel, for this adventure is not theirs but mine; and for the surety of this sword I brought none with me, for here by my side hangeth the scabbard. And anon he laid his hand on the sword, and lightly drew it out of the stone, and put it in the sheath, and said unto the king: Now it goeth better than it did aforehand. Sir, said the king, a shield God shall send you. Now have I that sword that sometime was the good knight's, Balin le Savage, and he was a passing good man of his hands; and with this sword he slew his brother Balan, and that was great pity, for he was a good knight, and either slew other through a dolorous stroke that Balin gave unto my grandfather King Pelles, the which is not yet whole, nor not shall be till I heal him.

Therewith the king and all espied where came riding down the river a lady on a white palfrey toward them. Then she saluted the king and the queen, and asked if that Sir Launcelot was there. And then he answered himself: I am here, fair lady. Then she said all with weeping: How your great doing is changed sith this day in the morn. Damosel, why say you so? said Launcelot. I say you sooth,

said the damosel, for ye were this day the best knight of the world, but who should say so now, he should be a liar, for there is now one better than ye, and well it is proved by the adventures of the sword whereto ye durst not set to your hand; and that is the change and leaving of your name. Wherefore I make unto you a remembrance, that ye shall not ween from henceforth that ye be the best knight of the world. As touching unto that, said Launcelot, I know well I was never the best. Yes, said the damosel, that were ye, and are yet, of any sinful man of the world. And, Sir king, Nacien, the hermit, sendeth thee word, that thee shall befall the greatest worship that ever befell king in Britain; and I say you wherefore, for this day the Sangreal appeared in thy house and fed thee and all thy fellowship of the Round Table. So she departed and went that same way that she came.

#### **CHAPTER VI. How King Arthur had all the knights together for to joust in the meadow beside Camelot or they departed.**

Now, said the king, I am sure at this quest of the Sangreal shall all ye of the Table Round depart, and never shall I see you again whole together; therefore I will see you all whole together in the meadow of Camelot to joust and to tourney, that after your death men may speak of it that such good knights were wholly together such a day. As unto that counsel and at the king's request they accorded all, and took on their harness that longed unto jousting. But all this moving of the king was for this intent, for to see Galahad proved; for the king deemed he should not lightly come again unto the court after his departing. So were they assembled in the meadow, both more and less. Then Sir Galahad, by the prayer of the king and the queen, did upon him a noble jesseraunce, and also he did on his helm, but shield would he take none for no prayer of the king. And then Sir Gawaine and other knights prayed him to take a spear. Right so he did; and the queen was in a tower with all her ladies, for to behold that tournament. Then Sir Galahad dressed him in midst of the meadow, and began to break spears marvellously, that all men had wonder of him; for he there surmounted all other knights, for within a while he had defouled many good knights of the Table Round save twain, that was Sir Launcelot and Sir Percivale.

#### **CHAPTER VII. How the queen desired to see Galahad; and how after, all the knights were replenished with the Holy Sangreal, and how they avowed the**

enquest of the same.

THEN the king, at the queen's request, made him to alight and to unlace his helm, that the queen might see him in the visage. When she beheld him she said:



Soothly I dare well say that Sir Launcelot begat him, for never two men resembled more in likeness, therefore it nis no marvel though he be of great prowess. So a lady that stood by the queen said: Madam, for God's sake ought he of right to be so good a knight? Yea, forsooth, said the queen, for he is of all parties come of the best knights of the world and of the highest lineage; for Sir Launcelot is come but of the eighth degree from our Lord Jesu Christ, and Sir Galahad is of the ninth degree from our Lord Jesu Christ, therefore I dare say they be the greatest gentlemen of the world.

And then the king and all estates went home unto Camelot, and so went to evensong to the great minster, and so after upon that to supper, and every knight sat in his own place as they were toforehand. Then anon they heard cracking and crying of thunder, that them thought the place should all to-drive. In the midst of this blast entered a sunbeam more clearer by seven times than ever they saw day, and all they were alighted of the grace of the Holy Ghost. Then began every knight to behold other, and either saw other, by their seeming, fairer than ever they saw afore. Not for then there was no knight might speak one word a great while, and so they looked every man on other as they had been dumb. Then there entered into the hall the Holy Grail covered with white samite, but there was none might see it, nor who bare it. And there was all the hall fulfilled with good odours, and every knight had such meats and drinks as he best loved in this world. And when the Holy Grail had been borne through the hall, then the holy vessel departed suddenly, that they wist not where it became: then had they all breath to speak. And then the king yielded thankings to God, of His good grace that he had sent them. Certes, said the king, we ought to thank our Lord Jesu greatly for that he hath shewed us this day, at the reverence of this high feast of Pentecost.

Now, said Sir Gawaine, we have been served this day of what meats and drinks we thought on; but one thing beguiled us, we might not see the Holy Grail, it was so preciously covered. Wherefore I will make here avow, that to-morn, without longer abiding, I shall labour in the quest of the Sangreal, that I shall hold me out a twelvemonth and a day, or more if need be, and never shall I return again unto the court till I have seen it more openly than it hath been seen here; and if I may not speed I shall return again as he that may not be against the will of our Lord Jesu Christ.

When they of the Table Round heard Sir Gawaine say so, they arose up the most part and made such avows as Sir Gawaine had made. Anon as King Arthur heard this he was greatly displeased, for he wist well they might not again-say their avows. Alas, said King Arthur unto Sir Gawaine, ye have nigh slain me with the avow and promise that ye have made; for through you ye have bereft

me the fairest fellowship and the truest of knighthood that ever were seen together in any realm of the world; for when they depart from hence I am sure they all shall never meet more in this world, for they shall die many in the quest. And so it forthinketh me a little, for I have loved them as well as my life, wherefore it shall grieve me right sore, the departition of this fellowship: for I have had an old custom to have them in my fellowship.

### **CHAPTER VIII. How great sorrow was made of the king and the queen and ladies for the departing of the knights, and how they departed.**

AND therewith the tears fell in his eyes. And then he said: Gawaine, Gawaine, ye have set me in great sorrow, for I have great doubt that my true fellowship shall never meet here more again. Ah, said Sir Launcelot, comfort yourself; for it shall be unto us a great honour and much more than if we died in any other places, for of death we be siker. Ah, Launcelot, said the king, the great love that I have had unto you all the days of my life maketh me to say such doleful words; for never Christian king had never so many worthy men at his table as I have had this day at the Round Table, and that is my great sorrow.

When the queen, ladies, and gentlewomen, wist these tidings, they had such sorrow and heaviness that there might no tongue tell it, for those knights had held them in honour and chiert<sup>©</sup>. But among all other Queen Guenever made great sorrow. I marvel, said she, my lord would suffer them to depart from him. Thus was all the court troubled for the love of the departition of those knights. And many of those ladies that loved knights would have gone with their lovers; and so had they done, had not an old knight come among them in religious clothing; and then he spake all on high and said: Fair lords, which have sworn in the quest of the Sangreal, thus sendeth you Nacien, the hermit, word, that none in this quest lead lady nor gentlewoman with him, for it is not to do in so high a service as they labour in; for I warn you plain, he that is not clean of his sins he shall not see the mysteries of our Lord Jesu Christ. And for this cause they left these ladies and gentlewomen.

After this the queen came unto Galahad and asked him of whence he was, and of what country. He told her of whence he was. And son unto Launcelot, she said he was. As to that, he said neither yea nor nay. So God me help, said the queen, of your father ye need not to shame you, for he is the goodliest knight, and of the best men of the world come, and of the strain, of all parties, of kings. Wherefore ye ought of right to be, of your deeds, a passing good man; and certainly, she said, ye resemble him much. Then Sir Galahad was a little ashamed and said: Madam, sith ye know in certain, wherefore do ye ask it me? for he that is my father shall be known openly and all betimes. And then they

went to rest them. And in the honour of the highness of Galahad he was led into King Arthur's chamber, and there rested in his own bed.

And as soon as it was day the king arose, for he had no rest of all that night for sorrow. Then he went unto Gawaine and to Sir Launcelot that were arisen for to hear mass. And then the king again said: Ah Gawaine, Gawaine, ye have betrayed me; for never shall my court be amended by you, but ye will never be sorry for me as I am for you. And therewith the tears began to run down by his visage. And therewith the king said: Ah, knight Sir Launcelot, I require thee thou counsel me, for I would that this quest were undone, an it might be Sir, said Sir Launcelot, ye saw yesterday so many worthy knights that then were sworn that they may not leave it in no manner of wise. That wot I well, said the king, but it shall so heavy me at their departing that I wot well there shall no manner of joy remedy me. And then the king and the queen went unto the minster. So anon Launcelot and Gawaine commanded their men to bring their arms. And when they all were armed save their shields and their helms, then they came to their fellowship, which were all ready in the same wise, for to go to the minster to hear their service.

Then after the service was done the king would wit how many had undertaken the quest of the Holy Grail; and to accompt them he prayed them all. Then found they by the tale an hundred and fifty, and all were knights of the Round Table. And then they put on their helms and departed, and recommended them all wholly unto the queen; and there was weeping and great sorrow. Then the queen departed into her chamber and held her, so that no man should perceive her great sorrows. When Sir Launcelot missed the queen he went till her chamber, and when she saw him she cried aloud: O Launcelot, Launcelot, ye have betrayed me and put me to the death, for to leave thus my lord. Ah, madam, I pray you be not displeased, for I shall come again as soon as I may with my worship. Alas, said she, that ever I saw you; but he that suffered upon the cross for all mankind, he be unto you good conduct and safety, and all the whole fellowship.

Right so departed Sir Launcelot, and found his fellowship that abode his coming. And so they mounted upon their horses and rode through the streets of Camelot; and there was weeping of rich and poor, and the king turned away and might not speak for weeping. So within a while they came to a city, and a castle that hight Vagon. There they entered into the castle, and the lord of that castle was an old man that hight Vagon, and he was a good man of his living, and set open the gates, and made them all the cheer that he might. And so on the morn they were all accorded that they should depart everych from other; and on the morn they departed with weeping cheer, and every knight took the way that him

liked best.

**CHAPTER IX. How Galahad gat him a shield, and how they sped that presumed to take down the said shield.**

NOW rideth Sir Galahad yet without shield, and so he rode four days without any adventure. And at the fourth day after evensong he came to a White Abbey, and there he was received with great reverence, and led unto a chamber, and there was he unarmed; and then was he ware of two (1)knights of the Table Round, one was Sir Bagdemagus, and (1)that other was Sir Uwaine. And when they saw him they went unto Galahad and made of him great solace, and so they went unto supper. Sirs, said Sir Galahad, what adventure brought you hither? Sir, said they, it is told us that within this place is a shield that no man may bear about his neck but he be mischieved outhere dead within three days, or maimed for ever. Ah sir, said King Bagdemagus, I shall it bear to-morrow for to assay this adventure. In the name of God, said Sir Galahad. Sir, said Bagdemagus, an I may not enchieve the adventure of this shield ye shall take it upon you, for I am sure ye shall not fail. Sir, said Galahad, I right well agree me thereto, for I have no shield. So on the morn they arose and heard mass. Then Bagdemagus asked where the adventurous shield was. Anon a monk led him behind an altar where the shield hung as white as any snow, but in the midst was a red cross. Sir, said the monk, this shield ought not to be hanged about no knight's neck but he be the worthiest knight of the world;

1 Omitted by Caxton, supplied from W. de Worde.

therefore I counsel you knights to be well advised. Well, said Bagdemagus, I wot well that I am not the best knight of the world, but yet I shall assay to bear it, and so bare it out of the minster. And then he said unto Galahad: An it please you abide here still, till ye wit how that I speed. I shall abide you, said Galahad. Then King Bagdemagus took with him a good squire, to bring tidings unto Sir Galahad how he sped.

Then when they had ridden a two mile and came to a fair valley afore an hermitage, then they saw a knight come from that part in white armour, horse and all; and he came as fast as his horse might run, and his spear in his rest, and Bagdemagus dressed his spear against him and brake it upon the white knight. But the other struck him so hard that he brast the mails, and sheef him through the right shoulder, for the shield covered him not as at that time; and so he bare him from his horse. And therewith he alighted and took the white shield from him, saying: Knight, thou hast done thyself great folly, for this shield ought not to be borne but by him that shall have no peer that liveth. And then he came to

Bagdemagus' squire and said: Bear this shield unto the good knight Sir Galahad, that thou left in the abbey, and greet him well by me. Sir, said the squire, what is your name? Take thou no heed of my name, said the knight, for it is not for thee to know nor for none earthly man. Now, fair sir, said the squire, at the reverence of Jesu Christ, tell me for what cause this shield may not be borne but if the bearer thereof be mischieved. Now sith thou hast conjured me so, said the knight, this shield behoveth unto no man but unto Galahad. And the squire went unto Bagdemagus and asked whether he were sore wounded or not. Yea forsooth, said he, I shall escape hard from the death. Then he fetched his horse, and brought him with great pain unto an abbey. Then was he taken down softly and unarmed, and laid in a bed, and there was looked to his wounds. And as the book telleth, he lay there long, and escaped hard with the life.

#### **CHAPTER X. How Galahad departed with the shield, and how King Evelake had received the shield of Joseph of Aramathie.**

SIR GALAHAD, said the squire, that knight that wounded Bagdemagus sendeth you greeting, and bade that ye should bear this shield, wherethrough great adventures should befall. Now blessed be God and fortune, said Galahad. And then he asked his arms, and mounted upon his horse, and hung the white shield about his neck, and commended them unto God. And Sir Uwayne said he would bear him fellowship if it pleased him. Sir, said Galahad, that may ye not, for I must go alone, save this squire shall bear me fellowship: and so departed Uwayne.

Then within a while came Galahad thereas the White Knight abode him by the hermitage, and everych saluted other courteously. Sir, said Galahad, by this shield be many marvels fallen. Sir, said the knight, it befell after the passion of our Lord Jesu Christ thirty-two year, that Joseph of Aramathie, the gentle knight, the which took down our Lord off the holy Cross, at that time he departed from Jerusalem with a great party of his kindred with him. And so he laboured till that they came to a city that hight Sarras. And at that same hour that Joseph came to Sarras there was a king that hight Evelake, that had great war against the Saracens, and in especial against one Saracen, the which was King Evelake's cousin, a rich king and a mighty, which marched nigh this land, and his name was called Tolleme la Feintes. So on a day these two met to do battle. Then Joseph, the son of Joseph of Aramathie, went to King Evelake and told him he should be discomfit and slain, but if he left his belief of the old law and believed upon the new law. And then there he shewed him the right belief of the Holy Trinity, to the which he agreed unto with all his heart; and there this shield was made for King Evelake, in the name of Him that died upon the Cross. And then

through his good belief he had the better of King Tolleme. For when Evelake was in the battle there was a cloth set afore the shield, and when he was in the greatest peril he let put away the cloth, and then his enemies saw a figure of a man on the Cross, wherethrough they all were discomfit. And so it befell that a man of King Evelake's was smitten his hand off, and bare that hand in his other hand; and Joseph called that man unto him and bade him go with good devotion touch the Cross. And as soon as that man had touched the Cross with his hand it was as whole as ever it was to-fore. Then soon after there fell a great marvel, that the cross of the shield at one time vanished away that no man wist where it became. And then King Evelake was baptised, and for the most part all the people of that city. So, soon after Joseph would depart, and King Evelake would go with him, whether he wold or nold. And so by fortune they came into this land, that at that time was called Great Britain; and there they found a great felon paynim, that put Joseph into prison. And so by fortune tidings came unto a worthy man that hight Mondrames, and he assembled all his people for the great renown he had heard of Joseph; and so he came into the land of Great Britain and disherited this felon paynim and consumed him, and therewith delivered Joseph out of prison. And after that all the people were turned to the Christian faith.

#### **CHAPTER XI. How Joseph made a cross on the white shield with his blood, and how Galahad was by a monk brought to a tomb.**

NOT long after that Joseph was laid in his deadly bed. And when King Evelake saw that he made much sorrow, and said: For thy love I have left my country, and sith ye shall depart out of this world, leave me some token of yours that I may think on you. Joseph said: That will I do full gladly; now bring me your shield that I took you when ye went into battle against King Tolleme. Then Joseph bled sore at the nose, so that he might not by no mean be staunched. And there upon that shield he made a cross of his own blood. Now may ye see a remembrance that I love you, for ye shall never see this shield but ye shall think on me, and it shall be always as fresh as it is now. And never shall man bear this shield about his neck but he shall repent it, unto the time that Galahad, the good knight, bear it; and the last of my lineage shall have it about his neck, that shall do many marvellous deeds. Now, said King Evelake, where shall I put this shield, that this worthy knight may have it? Ye shall leave it thereas Nacien, the hermit, shall be put after his death; for thither shall that good knight come the fifteenth day after that he shall receive the order of knighthood: and so that day that they set is this time that he have his shield, and in the same abbey lieth Nacien, the hermit. And then the White Knight vanished away.

Anon as the squire had heard these words, he alighted off his hackney and kneeled down at Galahad's feet, and prayed him that he might go with him till he had made him knight. Yea, (1) I would not refuse you. Then will ye make me a knight? said the squire, and that order, by the grace of God, shall be well set in me. So Sir Galahad granted him, and turned again unto the abbey where they came from; and there men made great joy of Sir Galahad. And anon as he was alighted there was a monk brought him unto a tomb in a churchyard, where there was such a noise that who that heard it should verily nigh be mad or lose his strength: and sir, they said, we deem it is a fiend.

1 Caxton "Yf," for which "Ye" seems the easiest emendation that will save the sense.

## **CHAPTER XII. Of the marvel that Sir Galahad saw and heard in the tomb, and how he made Melias knight.**

NOW lead me thither, said Galahad. And so they did, all armed save his helm. Now, said the good man, go to the tomb and lift it up. So he did, and heard a great noise; and piteously he said, that all men might hear it: Sir Galahad, the servant of Jesu Christ, come thou not nigh me, for thou shalt make me go again there where I have been so long. But Galahad was nothing afraid, but lifted up the stone; and there came out so foul a smoke, and after he saw the foulest figure leap thereout that ever he saw in the likeness of a man; and then he blessed him and wist well it was a fiend. Then heard he a voice say Galahad, I see there environ about thee so many angels that my power may not dere thee{sic} Right so Sir Galahad saw a body all armed lie in that tomb, and beside him a sword. Now, fair brother, said Galahad, let us remove this body, for it is not worthy to lie in this churchyard, for he was a false Christian man. And therewith they all departed and went to the abbey. And anon as he was unarmed a good man came and set him down by him and said: Sir, I shall tell you what betokeneth all that ye saw in the tomb; for that covered body betokeneth the duresse of the world, and the great sin that Our Lord found in the world. For there was such wretchedness that the father loved not the son, nor the son loved not the father; and that was one of the causes that Our Lord took flesh and blood of a clean maiden, for our sins were so great at that time that well-nigh all was wickedness. Truly, said Galahad, I believe you right well.

So Sir Galahad rested him there that night; and upon the morn he made the squire knight, and asked him his name, and of what kindred he was come. Sir, said he, men calleth me Melias de Lile, and I am the son of the King of Denmark. Now, fair sir, said Galahad, sith that ye be come of kings and queens,

now look that knighthood be well set in you, for ye ought to be a mirror unto all chivalry. Sir, said Sir Melias, ye say sooth. But, sir, sithen ye have made me a knight ye must of right grant me my first desire that is reasonable. Ye say sooth, said Galahad. Melias said: Then that ye will suffer me to ride with you in this quest of the Sangreal, till that some adventure depart us. I grant you, sir.

Then men brought Sir Melias his armour and his spear and his horse, and so Sir Galahad and he rode forth all that week or they found any adventure. And then upon a Monday in the morning, as they were departed from an abbey, they came to a cross which departed two ways, and in that cross were letters written that said thus: Now, ye knights errant, the which goeth to seek knights adventurous, see here two ways; that one way defendeth thee that thou ne go that way, for he shall not go out of the way again but if he be a good man and a worthy knight; and if thou go on the left hand, thou shalt not lightly there win prowess, for thou shalt in this way be soon assayed. Sir, said Melias to Galahad, if it like you to suffer me to take the way on the left hand, tell me, for there I shall well prove my strength. It were better, said Galahad, ye rode not that way, for I deem I should better escape in that way than ye. Nay, my lord, I pray you let me have that adventure. Take it in God's name, said Galahad.

### **CHAPTER XIII. Of the adventure that Melias had, and how Galahad revenged him, and how Melias was carried into an abbey.**

AND then rode Melias into an old forest, and therein he rode two days and more. And then he came into a fair meadow, and there was a fair lodge of boughs. And then he espied in that lodge a chair, wherein was a crown of gold, subtly wrought. Also there were cloths covered upon the earth, and many delicious meats set thereon. Sir Melias beheld this adventure, and thought it marvellous, but he had no hunger, but of the crown of gold he took much keep; and therewith he stooped down and took it up, and rode his way with it. And anon he saw a knight came riding after him that said: Knight, set down that crown which is not yours, and therefore defend you. Then Sir Melias blessed him and said: Fair lord of heaven, help and save thy new-made knight. And then they let their horses run as fast as they might, so that the other knight smote Sir Melias through hauberk and through the left side, that he fell to the earth nigh dead. And then he took the crown and went his way; and Sir Melias lay still and had no power to stir.

In the meanwhile by fortune there came Sir Galahad and found him there in peril of death. And then he said: Ah Melias, who hath wounded you? therefore it had been better to have ridden the other way. And when Sir Melias heard him speak: Sir, he said, for God's love let me not die in this forest, but bear me unto



the abbey here beside, that I may be confessed and have my rights. It shall be done, said Galahad, but where is he that hath wounded you? With that Sir Galahad heard in the leaves cry on high: Knight, keep thee from me. Ah sir, said Melias, beware, for that is he that hath slain me. Sir Galahad answered: Sir knight, come on your peril. Then either dressed to other, and came together as fast as their horses might run, and Galahad smote him so that his spear went through his shoulder, and smote him down off his horse, and in the falling Galahad's spear brake.

With that came out another knight out of the leaves, and brake a spear upon Galahad or ever he might turn him. Then Galahad drew out his sword and smote off the left arm of him, so that it fell to the earth. And then he fled, and Sir Galahad pursued fast after him. And then he turned again unto Sir Melias, and there he alighted and dressed him softly on his horse to-fore him, for the truncheon of his spear was in his body; and Sir Galahad stert up behind him, and held him in his arms, and so brought him to the abbey, and there unarmed him and brought him to his chamber. And then he asked his Saviour. And when he had received Him he said unto Sir Galahad: Sir, let death come when it pleaseth him. And therewith he drew out the truncheon of the spear out of his body: and then he swooned.

Then came there an old monk which sometime had been a knight, and beheld Sir Melias. And anon he ransacked him; and then he said unto Sir Galahad: I shall heal him of his wound, by the grace of God, within the term of seven weeks. Then was Sir Galahad glad, and unarmed him, and said he would abide there three days. And then he asked Sir Melias how it stood with him. Then he said he was turned unto helping, God be thanked.

#### **CHAPTER XIV. How Sir Galahad departed, and how he was commanded to go to the Castle of Maidens to destroy the wicked custom.**

NOW will I depart, said Galahad, for I have much on hand, for many good knights be full busy about it, and this knight and I were in the same quest of the Sangreal. Sir, said a good man, for his sin he was thus wounded; and I marvel, said the good man, how ye durst take upon you so rich a thing as the high order of knighthood without clean confession, and that was the cause ye were bitterly wounded. For the way on the right hand betokeneth the highway of our Lord Jesu Christ, and the way of a good true good liver. And the other way betokeneth the way of sinners and of misbelievers. And when the devil saw your pride and presumption, for to take you in the quest of the Sangreal, that made you to be overthrown, for it may not be enchieved but by virtuous living. Also, the writing on the cross was a signification of heavenly deeds, and of knightly deeds in

God's works, and no knightly deeds in worldly works. And pride is head of all deadly sins, that caused this knight to depart from Galahad. And where thou tookest the crown of gold thou sinnest in covetise and in theft: all this were no knightly deeds. And this Galahad, the holy knight, the which fought with the two knights, the two knights signify the two deadly sins which were wholly in this knight Melias; and they might not withstand you, for ye are without deadly sin.

Now departed Galahad from thence, and betaught them all unto God. Sir Melias said: My lord Galahad, as soon as I may ride I shall seek you. God send you health, said Galahad, and so took his horse and departed, and rode many journeys forward and backward, as adventure would lead him. And at the last it happened him to depart from a place or a castle the which was named Abblasoure; and he had heard no mass, the which he was wont ever to hear or ever he departed out of any castle or place, and kept that for a custom. Then Sir Galahad came unto a mountain where he found an old chapel, and found there nobody, for all, all was desolate; and there he kneeled to-fore the altar, and besought God of wholesome counsel. So as he prayed he heard a voice that said: Go thou now, thou adventurous knight, to the Castle of Maidens, and there do thou away the wicked customs.

#### **CHAPTER XV. How Sir Galahad fought with the knights of the castle, and destroyed the wicked custom.**

WHEN Sir Galahad heard this he thanked God, and took his horse; and he had not ridden but half a mile, he saw in the valley afore him a strong castle with deep ditches, and there ran beside it a fair river that hight Severn; and there he met with a man of great age, and either saluted other, and Galahad asked him the castle's name. Fair sir, said he, it is the Castle of Maidens. That is a cursed castle, said Galahad, and all they that be conversant therein, for all pity is out thereof, and all hardiness and mischief is therein. Therefore, I counsel you, sir knight, to turn again. Sir, said Galahad, wit you well I shall not turn again. Then looked Sir Galahad on his arms that nothing failed him, and then he put his shield afore him; and anon there met him seven fair maidens, the which said unto him: Sir knight, ye ride here in a great folly, for ye have the water to pass over. Why should I not pass the water? said Galahad. So rode he away from them and met with a squire that said: Knight, those knights in the castle defy you, and defenden you ye go no further till that they wit what ye would. Fair sir, said Galahad, I come for to destroy the wicked custom of this castle. Sir, an ye will abide by that ye shall have enough to do. Go you now, said Galahad, and haste my needs.

Then the squire entered into the castle. And anon after there came out of the

castle seven knights, and all were brethren. And when they saw Galahad they cried: Knight, keep thee, for we assure thee nothing but death. Why, said Galahad, will ye all have ado with me at once? Yea, said they, thereto mayst thou trust. Then Galahad put forth his spear and smote the foremost to the earth, that near he brake his neck. And therewithal the other smote him on his shield great strokes, so that their spears brake. Then Sir Galahad drew out his sword, and set upon them so hard that it was marvel to see it, and so through great force he made them to forsake the field; and Galahad chased them till they entered into the castle, and so passed through the castle at another gate.

And there met Sir Galahad an old man clothed in religious clothing, and said: Sir, have here the keys of this castle. Then Sir Galahad opened the gates, and saw so much people in the streets that he might not number them, and all said: Sir, ye be welcome, for long have we abiden here our deliverance. Then came to him a gentlewoman and said: These knights be fled, but they will come again this night, and here to begin again their evil custom. What will ye that I shall do? said Galahad. Sir, said the gentlewoman, that ye send after all the knights hither that hold their lands of this castle, and make them to swear for to use the customs that were used heretofore of old time. I will well, said Galahad. And there she brought him an horn of ivory, bounden with gold richly, and said: Sir, blow this horn which will be heard two mile about this castle. When Sir Galahad had blown the horn he set him down upon a bed.

Then came a priest to Galahad, and said: Sir, it is past a seven year ago that these seven brethren came into this castle, and harboured with the lord of this castle that hight the Duke Lianour, and he was lord of all this country. And when they espied the duke's daughter, that was a full fair woman, then by their false covin they made debate betwixt themselves, and the duke of his goodness would have departed them, and there they slew him and his eldest son. And then they took the maiden and the treasure of the castle. And then by great force they held all the knights of this castle against their will under their obeissance, and in great service and truage, robbing and pilling the poor common people of all that they had. So it happened on a day the duke's daughter said: Ye have done unto me great wrong to slay mine own father, and my brother, and thus to hold our lands: not for then, she said, ye shall not hold this castle for many years, for by one knight ye shall be overcome. Thus she prophesied seven years ago. Well, said the seven knights, sithen ye say so, there shall never lady nor knight pass this castle but they shall abide maugre their heads, or die therefore, till that knight be come by whom we shall lose this castle. And therefore is it called the Maidens' Castle, for they have devoured many maidens. Now, said Galahad, is she here for whom this castle was lost? Nay sir, said the priest, she was dead

within these three nights after that she was thus enforced; and sithen have they kept her younger sister, which endureth great pains with mo other ladies.

By this were the knights of the country come, and then he made them do homage and fealty to the king's daughter, and set them in great ease of heart. And in the morn there came one to Galahad and told him how that Gawaine, Gareth, and Uwaine, had slain the seven brethren. I suppose well, said Sir Galahad, and took his armour and his horse, and commended them unto God.

#### **CHAPTER XVI. How Sir Gawaine came to the abbey for to follow Galahad, and how he was shriven to a hermit.**

NOW, saith the tale, after Sir Gawaine departed, he rode many journeys, both toward and froward. And at the last he came to the abbey where Sir Galahad had the white shield, and there Sir Gawaine learned the way to sewe after Sir Galahad; and so he rode to the abbey where Melias lay sick, and there Sir Melias told Sir Gawaine of the marvellous adventures that Sir Galahad did. Certes, said Sir Gawaine, I am not happy that I took not the way that he went, for an I may meet with him I will not depart from him lightly, for all marvellous adventures Sir Galahad enchieveth. Sir, said one of the monks, he will not of your fellowship. Why? said Sir Gawaine. Sir, said he, for ye be wicked and sinful, and he is full blessed. Right as they thus stood talking there came in riding Sir Gareth. And then they made joy either of other. And on the morn they heard mass, and so departed. And by the way they met with Sir Uwaine les Avoutres, and there Sir Uwaine told Sir Gawaine how he had met with none adventure sith he departed from the court. Nor we, said Sir Gawaine. And either promised other of the three knights not to depart while they were in that quest, but if fortune caused it.

So they departed and rode by fortune till that they came by the Castle of Maidens; and there the seven brethren espied the three knights, and said: Sithen, we be flemed by one knight from this castle, we shall destroy all the knights of King Arthur's that we may overcome, for the love of Sir Galahad. And therewith the seven knights set upon the three knights, and by fortune Sir Gawaine slew one of the brethren, and each one of his fellows slew another, and so slew the remnant. And then they took the way under the castle, and there they lost the way that Sir Galahad rode, and there everych of them departed from other; and Sir Gawaine rode till he came to an hermitage, and there he found the good man saying his evensong of Our Lady; and there Sir Gawaine asked harbour for charity, and the good man granted it him gladly.

Then the good man asked him what he was. Sir, he said, I am a knight of King Arthur's that am in the quest of the Sangreal, and my name is Sir Gawaine.

Sir, said the good man, I would wit how it standeth betwixt God and you. Sir, said Sir Gawaine, I will with a good will shew you my life if it please you; and there he told the hermit how a monk of an abbey called me wicked knight. He might well say it, said the hermit, for when ye were first made knight ye should have taken you to knightly deeds and virtuous living, and ye have done the contrary, for ye have lived mischievously many winters; and Sir Galahad is a maid and sinned never, and that is the cause he shall enchieve where he goeth that ye nor none such shall not attain, nor none in your fellowship, for ye have used the most untriest life that ever I heard knight live. For certes had ye not been so wicked as ye are, never had the seven brethren been slain by you and your two fellows. For Sir Galahad himself alone beat them all seven the day tofore, but his living is such he shall slay no man lightly. Also I may say you the Castle of Maidens betokeneth the good souls that were in prison afore the Incarnation of Jesu Christ. And the seven knights betoken the seven deadly sins that reigned that time in the world; and I may liken the good Galahad unto the son of the High Father, that lighted within a maid, and bought all the souls out of thrall, so did Sir Galahad deliver all the maidens out of the woful castle.

Now, Sir Gawaine, said the good man, thou must do penance for thy sin. Sir, what penance shall I do? Such as I will give, said the good man. Nay, said Sir Gawaine, I may do no penance; for we knights adventurous oft suffer great woe and pain. Well, said the good man, and then he held his peace. And on the morn Sir Gawaine departed from the hermit, and betaught him unto God. And by adventure he met with Sir Aglovale and Sir Griflet, two knights of the Table Round. And they two rode four days without finding of any adventure, and at the fifth day they departed. And everych held as fell them by adventure. Here leaveth the tale of Sir Gawaine and his fellows, and speak we of Sir Galahad.

### **CHAPTER XVII. How Sir Galahad met with Sir Launcelot and Sir Percivale, and smote them down, and departed from them.**

So when Sir Galahad was departed from the Castle of Maidens he rode till he came to a waste forest, and there he met with Sir Launcelot and Sir Percivale, but they knew him not, for he was new disguised. Right so Sir Launcelot, his father, dressed his spear and brake it upon Sir Galahad, and Galahad smote him so again that he smote down horse and man. And then he drew his sword, and dressed him unto Sir Percivale, and smote him so on the helm, that it rove to the coif of steel; and had not the sword swerved Sir Percivale had been slain, and with the stroke he fell out of his saddle. This jousts was done tofore the hermitage where a recluse dwelled. And when she saw Sir Galahad ride, she said: God be with thee, best knight of the world. Ah certes, said she, all aloud

that Launcelot and Percivale might hear it: An yonder two knights had known thee as well as I do they would not have encountered with thee. Then Sir Galahad heard her say so he was adread to be known: therewith he smote his horse with his spurs and rode a great pace froward them. Then perceived they both that he was Galahad; and up they gat on their horses, and rode fast after him, but in a while he was out of their sight. And then they turned again with heavy cheer. Let us spere some tidings, said Percivale, at yonder recluse. Do as ye list, said Sir Launcelot.

When Sir Percivale came to the recluse she knew him well enough, and Sir Launcelot both. But Sir Launcelot rode overthwart and endlong in a wild forest, and held no path but as wild adventure led him. And at the last he came to a stony cross which departed two ways in waste land; and by the cross was a stone that was of marble, but it was so dark that Sir Launcelot might not wit what it was. Then Sir Launcelot looked by him, and saw an old chapel, and there he weened to have found people; and Sir Launcelot tied his horse till a tree, and there he did off his shield and hung it upon a tree, and then went to the chapel door, and found it waste and broken. And within he found a fair altar, full richly arrayed with cloth of clean silk, and there stood a fair clean candlestick, which bare six great candles, and the candlestick was of silver. And when Sir Launcelot saw this light he had great will for to enter into the chapel, but he could find no place where he might enter; then was he passing heavy and dismayed. Then he returned and came to his horse and did off his saddle and bridle, and let him pasture, and unlaced his helm, and ungirt his sword, and laid him down to sleep upon his shield to-fore the cross.

**CHAPTER XVIII. How Sir Launcelot, half sleeping and half waking, saw a sick man borne in a litter, and how he was healed with the Sangreal.**

AND so he fell asleep; and half waking and sleeping he saw come by him two palfreys all fair and white, the which bare a litter, therein lying a sick knight. And when he was nigh the cross he there abode still. All this Sir Launcelot saw and beheld, for he slept not verily; and he heard him say: O sweet Lord, when shall this sorrow leave me? and when shall the holy vessel come by me, wherethrough I shall be blessed? For I have endured thus long, for little trespass. A full great while complained the knight thus, and always Sir Launcelot heard it. With that Sir Launcelot saw the candlestick with the six tapers come before the cross, and he saw nobody that brought it. Also there came a table of silver, and the holy vessel of the Sangreal, which Launcelot had seen aforetime in King Pescheour's house. And therewith the sick knight set him up, and held up both his hands, and said: Fair sweet Lord, which is here within this holy vessel; take

heed unto me that I may be whole of this malady. And therewith on his hands and on his knees he went so nigh that he touched the holy vessel and kissed it, and anon he was whole; and then he said: Lord God, I thank thee, for I am healed of this sickness.

So when the holy vessel had been there a great while it went unto the chapel with the chandelier and the light, so that Launcelot wist not where it was become; for he was overtaken with sin that he had no power to rise again the holy vessel; wherefore after that many men said of him shame, but he took repentance after that. Then the sick knight dressed him up and kissed the cross; anon his squire brought him his arms, and asked his lord how he did. Certes, said he, I thank God right well, through the holy vessel I am healed. But I have marvel of this sleeping knight that had no power to awake when this holy vessel was brought hither. I dare right well say, said the squire, that he dwelleth in some deadly sin whereof he was never confessed. By my faith, said the knight, whatsomever he be he is unhappy, for as I deem he is of the fellowship of the Round Table, the which is entered into the quest of the Sangreal. Sir, said the squire, here I have brought you all your arms save your helm and your sword, and therefore by mine assent now may ye take this knight's helm and his sword: and so he did. And when he was clean armed he took Sir Launcelot's horse, for he was better than his; and so departed they from the cross.

#### **CHAPTER XIX. How a voice spake to Sir Launcelot, and how he found his horse and his helm borne away, and after went afoot.**

THEN anon Sir Launcelot waked, and set him up, and bethought him what he had seen there, and whether it were dreams or not. Right so heard he a voice that said: Sir Launcelot, more harder than is the stone, and more bitter than is the wood, and more naked and barer than is the leaf of the fig tree; therefore go thou from hence, and withdraw thee from this holy place. And when Sir Launcelot heard this he was passing heavy and wist not what to do, and so departed sore weeping, and cursed the time that he was born. For then he deemed never to have had worship more. For those words went to his heart, till that he knew wherefore he was called so. Then Sir Launcelot went to the cross and found his helm, his sword, and his horse taken away. And then he called himself a very wretch, and most unhappy of all knights; and there he said: My sin and my wickedness have brought me unto great dishonour. For when I sought worldly adventures for worldly desires, I ever enchieved them and had the better in every place, and never was I discomfit in no quarrel, were it right or wrong. And now I take upon me the adventures of holy things, and now I see and understand that mine old sin hindereth me and shameth me, so that I had no power to stir nor

speak when the holy blood appeared afore me. So thus he sorrowed till it was day, and heard the fowls sing: then somewhat he was comforted. But when Sir Launcelot missed his horse and his harness then he wist well God was displeased with him.

Then he departed from the cross on foot into a forest; and so by prime he came to an high hill, and found an hermitage and a hermit therein which was going unto mass. And then Launcelot kneeled down and cried on Our Lord mercy for his wicked works. So when mass was done Launcelot called him, and prayed him for charity for to hear his life. With a good will, said the good man. Sir, said he, be ye of King Arthur's court and of the fellowship of the Round Table? Yea forsooth, and my name is Sir Launcelot du Lake that hath been right well said of, and now my good fortune is changed, for I am the most wretch of the world. The hermit beheld him and had marvel how he was so abashed. Sir, said the hermit, ye ought to thank God more than any knight living, for He hath caused you to have more worldly worship than any knight that now liveth. And for your presumption to take upon you in deadly sin for to be in His presence, where His flesh and His blood was, that caused you ye might not see it with worldly eyes; for He will not appear where such sinners be, but if it be unto their great hurt and unto their great shame; and there is no knight living now that ought to give God so great thank as ye, for He hath given you beauty, seemliness, and great strength above all other knights; and therefore ye are the more beholding unto God than any other man, to love Him and dread Him, for your strength and manhood will little avail you an God be against you.

#### **CHAPTER XX. How Sir Launcelot was shriven, and what sorrow he made and of the good ensamples which were shewed him.**

THEN Sir Launcelot wept with heavy cheer, and said: Now I know well ye say me sooth. Sir, said the good man, hide none old sin from me. Truly, said Sir Launcelot, that were me full loath to discover. For this fourteen year I never discovered one thing that I have used, and that may I now wite my shame and my disadvantage. And then he told there that good man all his life. And how he had loved a queen unmeasurably and out of measure long. And all my great deeds of arms that I have done, I did for the most part for the queen's sake, and for her sake would I do battle were it right or wrong, and never did I battle all only for God's sake, but for to win worship and to cause me to be the better beloved and little or nought I thanked God of it. Then Sir Launcelot said: I pray you counsel me. I will counsel you, said the hermit, if ye will ensure me that ye will never come in that queen's fellowship as much as ye may forbear. And then Sir Launcelot promised him he nold, by the faith of his body. Look that your



heart and your mouth accord, said the good man, and I shall ensure you ye shall have more worship than ever ye had.

Holy father, said Sir Launcelot, I marvel of the voice that said to me marvellous words, as ye have heard toforehand. Have ye no marvel, said the good man thereof, for it seemeth well God loveth you; for men may understand a stone is hard of kind, and namely one more than another; and that is to understand by thee, Sir Launcelot, for thou wilt not leave thy sin for no goodness that God hath sent thee; therefore thou art more than any stone, and never wouldst thou be made nesh nor by water nor by fire, and that is the heat of the Holy Ghost may not enter in thee. Now take heed, in all the world men shall not find one knight to whom Our Lord hath given so much of grace as He hath given you, for He hath given you fairness with seemliness, He hath given thee wit, discretion to know good from evil, He hath given thee prowess and hardiness, and given thee to work so largely that thou hast had at all days the better wheresomever thou came; and now Our Lord will suffer thee no longer, but that thou shalt know Him whether thou wilt or nylt. And why the voice called thee bitterer than wood, for where overmuch sin dwelleth, there may be but little sweetness, wherefore thou art likened to an old rotten tree.

Now have I shewed thee why thou art harder than the stone and bitterer than the tree. Now shall I shew thee why thou art more naked and barer than the fig tree. It befell that Our Lord on Palm Sunday preached in Jerusalem, and there He found in the people that all hardness was harboured in them, and there He found in all the town not one that would harbour him. And then He went without the town, and found in midst of the way a fig tree, the which was right fair and well garnished of leaves, but fruit had it none. Then Our Lord cursed the tree that bare no fruit; that betokeneth the fig tree unto Jerusalem, that had leaves and no fruit. So thou, Sir Launcelot, when the Holy Grail was brought afore thee, He found in thee no fruit, nor good thought nor good will, and defouled with lechery. Certes, said Sir Launcelot, all that you have said is true, and from henceforward I cast me, by the grace of God, never to be so wicked as I have been, but as to follow knighthood and to do feats of arms.

Then the good man enjoined Sir Launcelot such penance as he might do and to sewe knighthood, and so assoiled him, and prayed Sir Launcelot to abide with him all that day. I will well, said Sir Launcelot, for I have neither helm, nor horse, nor sword. As for that, said the good man, I shall help you or to-morn at even of an horse, and all that longed unto you. And then Sir Launcelot repented him greatly.

*Here endeth off the history of Sir Launcelot. And here followeth of Sir Percivale de Galis, which is the fourteenth book.*

## BOOK XIV

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### **CHAPTER I. How Sir Percivale came to a recluse and asked counsel, and how she told him that she was his aunt.**

NOW saith the tale, that when Sir Launcelot was ridden after Sir Galahad, the which had all these adventures above said, Sir Percivale turned again unto the recluse, where he deemed to have tidings of that knight that Launcelot followed. And so he kneeled at her window, and the recluse opened it and asked Sir Percivale what he would. Madam, he said, I am a knight of King Arthur's court, and my name is Sir Percivale de Galis. When the recluse heard his name she had great joy of him, for mickle she had loved him to-fore any other knight, for she ought to do so, for she was his aunt. And then she commanded the gates to be opened, and there he had all the cheer that she might make him, and all that was in her power was at his commandment.

So on the morn Sir Percivale went to the recluse and asked her if she knew that knight with the white shield. Sir, said she, why would ye wit? Truly, madam, said Sir Percivale, I shall never be well at ease till that I know of that knight's fellowship, and that I may fight with him, for I may not leave him so lightly, for I have the shame yet. Ah, Percivale, said she, would ye fight with him? I see well ye have great will to be slain as your father was, through outrageousness. Madam, said Sir Percivale, it seemeth by your words that ye know me. Yea, said she, I well ought to know you, for I am your aunt, although I be in a priory place. For some called me sometime the Queen of the Waste Lands, and I was called the queen of most riches in the world; and it pleased me never my riches so much as doth my poverty. Then Sir Percivale wept for very pity when that he knew it was his aunt. Ah, fair nephew, said she, when heard ye tidings of your mother? Truly, said he, I heard none of her, but I dream of her much in my sleep; and therefore I wot not whether she be dead or alive. Certes, fair nephew, said she, your mother is dead, for after your departing from her she took such a sorrow that anon, after she was confessed, she died. Now, God have mercy on her soul, said Sir Percivale, it sore forthinketh me; but all we must change the life. Now, fair aunt, tell me what is the knight? I deem it be he that bare the red arms on Whitsunday. Wit you well, said she, that this is he, for

otherwise ought he not to do, but to go in red arms; and that same knight hath no peer, for he worketh all by miracle, and he shall never be overcome of none earthly man's hand.

## **CHAPTER II. How Merlin likened the Round Table to the world, and how the knights that should achieve the Sangreal should be known.**

ALSO Merlin made the Round Table in tokening of roundness of the world, for by the Round Table is the world signified by right, for all the world, Christian and heathen, repair unto the Round Table; and when they are chosen to be of the fellowship of the Round Table they think them more blessed and more in worship than if they had gotten half the world; and ye have seen that they have lost their fathers and their mothers, and all their kin, and their wives and their children, for to be of your fellowship. It is well seen by you; for since ye have departed from your mother ye would never see her, ye found such fellowship at the Round Table. When Merlin had ordained the Round Table he said, by them which should be fellows of the Round Table the truth of the Sangreal should be well known. And men asked him how men might know them that should best do and to enchieve the Sangreal? Then he said there should be three white bulls that should enchieve it, and the two should be maidens, and the third should be chaste. And that one of the three should pass his father as much as the lion passeth the leopard, both of strength and hardiness.

They that heard Merlin say so said thus unto Merlin: Sithen there shall be such a knight, thou shouldest ordain by thy crafts a siege, that no man should sit in it but he all only that shall pass all other knights. Then Merlin answered that he would do so. And then he made the Siege Perilous, in the which Galahad sat in at his meat on Whitsunday last past. Now, madam, said Sir Percivale, so much have I heard of you that by my good will I will never have ado with Sir Galahad but by way of kindness; and for God's love, fair aunt, can ye teach me some way where I may find him? for much would I love the fellowship of him. Fair nephew, said she, ye must ride unto a castle the which is called Goothe, where he hath a cousin-germain, and there may ye be lodged this night. And as he teacheth you, seweth after as fast as ye can; and if he can tell you no tidings of him, ride straight unto the Castle of Carbonek, where the maimed king is there lying, for there shall ye hear true tidings of him.

## **CHAPTER III. How Sir Percivale came into a monastery, where he found King Evelake, which was an old man.**

THEN departed Sir Percivale from his aunt, either making great sorrow. And so he rode till evensong time. And then he heard a clock smite; and then he was

ware of an house closed well with walls and deep ditches, and there he knocked at the gate and was let in, and he alighted and was led unto a chamber, and soon he was unarmed. And there he had right good cheer all that night; and on the morn he heard his mass, and in the monastery he found a priest ready at the altar. And on the right side he saw a pew closed with iron, and behind the altar he saw a rich bed and a fair, as of cloth of silk and gold.

Then Sir Percivale espied that therein was a man or a woman, for the visage was covered; then he left off his looking and heard his service. And when it came to the sacring, he that lay within that parclos dressed him up, and uncovered his head; and then him beseemed a passing old man, and he had a crown of gold upon his head, and his shoulders were naked and unhilled unto his navel. And then Sir Percivale espied his body was full of great wounds, both on the shoulders, arms, and visage. And ever he held up his hands against Our Lord's body, and cried: Fair, sweet Father, Jesu Christ, forget not me. And so he lay down, but always he was in his prayers and orisons; and him seemed to be of the age of three hundred winter. And when the mass was done the priest took Our Lord's body and bare it to the sick king. And when he had used it he did off his crown, and commanded the crown to be set on the altar.

Then Sir Percivale asked one of the brethren what he was. Sir, said the good man, ye have heard much of Joseph of Aramathie, how he was sent by Jesu Christ into this land for to teach and preach the holy Christian faith; and therefore he suffered many persecutions the which the enemies of Christ did unto him, and in the city of Sarras he converted a king whose name was Evelake. And so this king came with Joseph into this land, and ever he was busy to be thereas the Sangreal was; and on a time he nighed it so nigh that Our Lord was displeased with him, but ever he followed it more and more, till God struck him almost blind. Then this king cried mercy, and said: Fair Lord, let me never die till the good knight of my blood of the ninth degree be come, that I may see him openly that he shall enchieve the Sangreal, that I may kiss him.

#### **CHAPTER IV. How Sir Percivale saw many men of arms bearing a dead knight, and how he fought against them.**

WHEN the king thus had made his prayers he heard a voice that said: Heard be thy prayers, for thou shalt not die till he have kissed thee. And when that knight shall come the clearness of your eyes shall come again, and thou shalt see openly, and thy wounds shall be healed, and erst shall they never close. And this befell of King Evelake, and this same king hath lived this three hundred winters this holy life, and men say the knight is in the court that shall heal him. Sir, said the good man, I pray you tell me what knight that ye be, and if ye be of King

Arthur's court and of the Table Round. Yea forsooth, said he, and my name is Sir Percivale de Galis. And when the good man understood his name he made great joy of him.

And then Sir Percivale departed and rode till the hour of noon. And he met in a valley about a twenty men of arms, which bare in a bier a knight deadly slain. And when they saw Sir Percivale they asked him of whence he was. And he answered: Of the court of King Arthur. Then they cried all at once: Slay him. Then Sir Percivale smote the first to the earth and his horse upon him. And then seven of the knights smote upon his shield all at once, and the remnant slew his horse so that he fell to the earth. So had they slain him or taken him had not the good knight, Sir Galahad, with the red arms come there by adventure into those parts. And when he saw all those knights upon one knight he cried: Save me that knight's life. And then he dressed him toward the twenty men of arms as fast as his horse might drive, with his spear in the rest, and smote the foremost horse and man to the earth. And when his spear was broken he set his hand to his sword, and smote on the right hand and on the left hand that it was marvel to see, and at every stroke he smote one down or put him to a rebuke, so that they would fight no more but fled to a thick forest, and Sir Galahad followed them.

And when Sir Percivale saw him chase them so, he made great sorrow that his horse was away. And then he wist well it was Sir Galahad. And then he cried aloud: Ah fair knight, abide and suffer me to do thankings unto thee, for much have ye done for me. But ever Sir Galahad rode so fast that at the last he passed out of his sight. And as fast as Sir Percivale might he went after him on foot, crying. And then he met with a yeoman riding upon an hackney, the which led in his hand a great steed blacker than any bear. Ah, fair friend, said Sir Percivale, as ever I may do for you, and to be your true knight in the first place ye will require me, that ye will lend me that black steed, that I might overtake a knight the which rideth afore me. Sir knight, said the yeoman, I pray you hold me excused of that, for that I may not do. For wit ye well, the horse is such a man's horse, that an I lent it you or any man, that he would slay me. Alas, said Sir Percivale, I had never so great sorrow as I have had for losing of yonder knight. Sir, said the yeoman, I am right heavy for you, for a good horse would beseem you well; but I dare not deliver you this horse but if ye would take him from me. That will I not do, said Sir Percivale. And so they departed; and Sir Percivale set him down under a tree, and made sorrow out of measure. And as he was there, there came a knight riding on the horse that the yeoman led, and he was clean armed.

## **CHAPTER V. How a yeoman desired him to get again an horse, and**

### **how Sir Percivale's hackney was slain, and how he gat an horse.**

AND anon the yeoman came pricking after as fast as ever he might, and asked Sir Percivale if he saw any knight riding on his black steed. Yea, sir, forsooth, said he; why, sir, ask ye me that? Ah, sir, that steed he hath benome me with strength; wherefore my lord will slay me in what place he findeth me. Well, said Sir Percivale, what wouldst thou that I did? Thou seest well that I am on foot, but an I had a good horse I should bring him soon again. Sir, said the yeoman, take mine hackney and do the best ye can, and I shall sewe you on foot to wit how that ye shall speed. Then Sir Percivale alighted upon that hackney, and rode as fast as he might, and at the last he saw that knight. And then he cried: Knight, turn again; and he turned and set his spear against Sir Percivale, and he smote the hackney in the midst of the breast that he fell down dead to the earth, and there he had a great fall, and the other rode his way. And then Sir Percivale was wood wroth, and cried: Abide, wicked knight; coward and false-hearted knight, turn again and fight with me on foot. But he answered not, but passed on his way.

When Sir Percivale saw he would not turn he cast away his helm and sword, and said: Now am I a very wretch, cursed and most unhappy above all other knights. So in this sorrow he abode all that day till it was night; and then he was faint, and laid him down and slept till it was midnight; and then he awaked and saw afore him a woman which said unto him right fiercely: Sir Percivale, what dost thou here? He answered, I do neither good nor great ill. If thou wilt ensure me, said she, that thou wilt fulfil my will when I summon thee, I shall lend thee mine own horse which shall bear thee whither thou wilt. Sir Percivale was glad of her proffer, and ensured her to fulfil all her desire. Then abide me here, and I shall go and fetch you an horse. And so she came soon again and brought an horse with her that was inly black. When Percivale beheld that horse he marvelled that it was so great and so well apparelled; and not for then he was so hardy, and he leapt upon him, and took none heed of himself. And so anon as he was upon him he thrust to him with his spurs, and so he rode by a forest, and the moon shone clear. And within an hour and less he bare him four days' journey thence, until he came to a rough water the which roared, and his horse would have borne him into it.

### **CHAPTER VI. Of the great danger that Sir Percivale was in by his horse, and how he saw a serpent and a lion fight.**

AND when Sir Percivale came nigh the brim, and saw the water so boistous, he doubted to overpass it. And then he made a sign of the cross in his forehead. When the fiend felt him so charged he shook off Sir Percivale, and he went into

the water crying and roaring, making great sorrow, and it seemed unto him that the water brent. Then Sir Percivale perceived it was a fiend, the which would have brought him unto his perdition. Then he commended himself unto God, and prayed Our Lord to keep him from all such temptations; and so he prayed all that night till on the morn that it was day; then he saw that he was in a wild mountain the which was closed with the sea nigh all about, that he might see no land about him which might relieve him, but wild beasts.

And then he went into a valley, and there he saw a young serpent bring a young lion by the neck, and so he came by Sir Percivale. With that came a great lion crying and roaring after the serpent. And as fast as Sir Percivale saw this he marvelled, and hied him thither, but anon the lion had overtaken the serpent and began battle with him. And then Sir Percivale thought to help the lion, for he was the more natural beast of the two; and therewith he drew his sword, and set his shield afore him, and there he gave the serpent such a buffet that he had a deadly wound. When the lion saw that, he made no resemblaunt to fight with him, but made him all the cheer that a beast might make a man. Then Percivale perceived that, and cast down his shield which was broken; and then he did off his helm for to gather wind, for he was greatly enchafed with the serpent: and the lion went alway about him fawning as a spaniel. And then he stroked him on the neck and on the shoulders. And then he thanked God of the fellowship of that beast. And about noon the lion took his little whelp and trussed him and bare him there he came from.

Then was Sir Percivale alone. And as the tale telleth, he was one of the men of the world at that time which most believed in Our Lord Jesu Christ, for in those days there were but few folks that believed in God perfectly. For in those days the son spared not the father no more than a stranger. And so Sir Percivale comforted himself in our Lord Jesu, and besought God no temptation should bring him out of God's service, but to endure as his true champion. Thus when Sir Percivale had prayed he saw the lion come toward him, and then he couched down at his feet. And so all that night the lion and he slept together; and when Sir Percivale slept he dreamed a marvellous dream, that there two ladies met with him, and that one sat upon a lion, and that other sat upon a serpent, and that one of them was young, and the other was old; and the youngest him thought said: Sir Percivale, my lord saluteth thee, and sendeth thee word that thou array thee and make thee ready, for to-morn thou must fight with the strongest champion of the world. And if thou be overcome thou shall not be quit for losing of any of thy members, but thou shalt be shamed for ever to the world's end. And then he asked her what was her lord. And she said the greatest lord of all the world: and so she departed suddenly that he wist not where.

## **CHAPTER VII. Of the vision that Sir Percivale saw, and how his vision was expounded, and of his lion.**

THEN came forth the other lady that rode upon the serpent, and she said: Sir Percivale, I complain me of you that ye have done unto me, and have not offended unto you. Certes, madam, he said, unto you nor no lady I never offended. Yes, said she, I shall tell you why. I have nourished in this place a great while a serpent, which served me a great while, and yesterday ye slew him as he gat his prey. Say me for what cause ye slew him, for the lion was not yours. Madam, said Sir Percivale, I know well the lion was not mine, but I did it for the lion is of more gentler nature than the serpent, and therefore I slew him; meseemeth I did not amiss against you. Madam, said he, what would ye that I did? I would, said she, for the amends of my beast that ye become my man. And then he answered: That will I not grant you. No, said she, truly ye were never but my servant sin ye received the homage of Our Lord Jesu Christ. Therefore, I ensure you in what place I may find you without keeping I shall take you, as he that sometime was my man. And so she departed from Sir Percivale and left him sleeping, the which was sore travailed of his advison. And on the morn he arose and blessed him, and he was passing feeble.

Then was Sir Percivale ware in the sea, and saw a ship come sailing toward him; and Sir Percivale went unto the ship and found it covered within and without with white samite. And at the board stood an old man clothed in a surplice, in likeness of a priest. Sir, said Sir Percivale, ye be welcome. God keep you, said the good man. Sir, said the old man, of whence be ye? Sir, said Sir Percivale, I am of King Arthur's court, and a knight of the Table Round, the which am in the quest of the Sangreal; and here am I in great duresse, and never like to escape out of this wilderness. Doubt not, said the good man, an ye be so true a knight as the order of chivalry requireth, and of heart as ye ought to be, ye should not doubt that none enemy should slay you. What are ye? said Sir Percivale. Sir, said the old man, I am of a strange country, and hither I come to comfort you.

Sir, said Sir Percivale, what signifieth my dream that I dreamed this night? And there he told him altogether: She which rode upon the lion betokeneth the new law of holy church, that is to understand, faith, good hope, belief, and baptism. For she seemed younger than the other it is great reason, for she was born in the resurrection and the passion of Our Lord Jesu Christ. And for great love she came to thee to warn thee of thy great battle that shall befall thee. With whom, said Sir Percivale, shall I fight? With the most champion of the world, said the old man; for as the lady said, but if thou quit thee well thou shalt not be



quit by losing of one member, but thou shalt be shamed to the world's end. And she that rode on the serpent signifieth the old law, and that serpent betokeneth a fiend. And why she blamed thee that thou slewest her servant, it betokeneth nothing; the serpent that thou slewest betokeneth the devil that thou rodest upon to the rock. And when thou madest a sign of the cross, there thou slewest him, and put away his power. And when she asked thee amends and to become her man, and thou saidst thou wouldst not, that was to make thee to believe on her and leave thy baptism. So he commanded Sir Percivale to depart, and so he leapt over the board and the ship, and all went away he wist not whither. Then he went up unto the rock and found the lion which always kept him fellowship, and he stroked him upon the back and had great joy of him.

#### **CHAPTER VIII. How Sir Percivale saw a ship coming to him-ward, and how the lady of the ship told him of her disheritance.**

BY that Sir Percivale had abiden there till mid-day he saw a ship came rowing in the sea, as all the wind of the world had driven it. And so it drove under that rock. And when Sir Percivale saw this he hied him thither, and found the ship covered with silk more blacker than any bear, and therein was a gentlewoman of great beauty, and she was clothed richly that none might be better. And when she saw Sir Percivale she said: Who brought you in this wilderness where ye be never like to pass hence, for ye shall die here for hunger and mischief? Damosel, said Sir Percivale, I serve the best man of the world, and in his service he will not suffer me to die, for who that knocketh shall enter, and who that asketh shall have, and who that seeketh him he hideth him not. But then she said: Sir Percivale, wot ye what I am? Yea, said he. Now who taught you my name? said she. Now, said Sir Percivale, I know you better than ye ween. And I came out of the waste forest where I found the Red Knight with the white shield, said the damosel. Ah, damosel, said he, with that knight would I meet passing fain. Sir knight, said she, an ye will ensure me by the faith that ye owe unto knighthood that ye shall do my will what time I summon you, and I shall bring you unto that knight. Yea, said he, I shall promise you to fulfil your desire. Well, said she, now shall I tell you. I saw him in the forest chasing two knights unto a water, the which is called Mortaise; and they drove him into the water for dread of death, and the two knights passed over, and the Red Knight passed after, and there his horse was drenched, and he, through great strength, escaped unto the land: thus she told him, and Sir Percivale was passing glad thereof.

Then she asked him if he had ate any meat late. Nay, madam, truly I ate no meat nigh this three days, but late here I spake with a good man that fed me with his good words and holy, and refreshed me greatly. Ah, sir knight, said she, that

same man is an enchanter and a multiplier of words. For an ye believe him ye shall plainly be shamed, and die in this rock for pure hunger, and be eaten with wild beasts; and ye be a young man and a goodly knight, and I shall help you an ye will. What are ye, said Sir Percivale, that proffered me thus great kindness? I am, said she, a gentlewoman that am disherited, which was sometime the richest woman of the world. Damosel, said Sir Percivale, who hath disherited you? for I have great pity of you. Sir, said she, I dwelled with the greatest man of the world, and he made me so fair and clear that there was none like me; and of that great beauty I had a little pride more than I ought to have had. Also I said a word that pleased him not. And then he would not suffer me to be any longer in his company, and so drove me from mine heritage, and so disherited me, and he had never pity of me nor of none of my council, nor of my court. And sithen, sir knight, it hath befallen me so, and through me and mine I have benome him many of his men, and made them to become my men. For they ask never nothing of me but I give it them, that and much more. Thus I and all my servants were against him night and day. Therefore I know now no good knight, nor no good man, but I get them on my side an I may. And for that I know that thou art a good knight, I beseech you to help me; and for ye be a fellow of the Round Table, wherefore ye ought not to fail no gentlewoman which is disherited, an she besought you of help.

#### **CHAPTER IX. How Sir Percivale promised her help, and how he required her of love, and how he was saved from the fiend.**

THEN Sir Percivale promised her all the help that he might; and then she thanked him. And at that time the weather was hot. Then she called unto her a gentlewoman and bade her bring forth a pavilion; and so she did, and pight it upon the gravel. Sir, said she, now may ye rest you in this heat of the day. Then he thanked her, and she put off his helm and his shield, and there he slept a great while. And then he awoke and asked her if she had any meat, and she said: Yea, also ye shall have enough. And so there was set enough upon the table, and thereon so much that he had marvel, for there was all manner of meats that he could think on. Also he drank there the strongest wine that ever he drank, him thought, and therewith he was a little chafed more than he ought to be; with that he beheld the gentlewoman, and him thought she was the fairest creature that ever he saw. And then Sir Percivale proffered her love, and prayed her that she would be his. Then she refused him, in a manner, when he required her, for the cause he should be the more ardent on her, and ever he ceased not to pray her of love. And when she saw him well enchafed, then she said: Sir Percivale, wit you well I shall not fulfil your will but if ye swear from henceforth ye shall be my

true servant, and to do nothing but that I shall command you. Will ye ensure me this as ye be a true knight? Yea, said he, fair lady, by the faith of my body. Well, said she, now shall ye do with me whatso it please you; and now wit ye well ye are the knight in the world that I have most desire to.

And then two squires were commanded to make a bed in midst of the pavilion. And anon she was unclothed and laid therein. And then Sir Percivale laid him down by her naked; and by adventure and grace he saw his sword lie on the ground naked, in whose pommel was a red cross and the sign of the crucifix therein, and bethought him on his knighthood and his promise made to-forehand unto the good man; then he made a sign of the cross in his forehead, and therewith the pavilion turned up-so-down, and then it changed unto a smoke, and a black cloud, and then he was adread and cried aloud:

### **CHAPTER X. How Sir Percivale for penance rove himself through the thigh; and how she was known for the devil.**

FAIR sweet Father, Jesu Christ, ne let me not be shamed, the which was nigh lost had not thy good grace been. And then he looked into a ship, and saw her enter therein, which said: Sir Percivale, ye have betrayed me. And so she went with the wind roaring and yelling, that it seemed all the water brent after her. Then Sir Percivale made great sorrow, and drew his sword unto him, saying: Sithen my flesh will be my master I shall punish it; and therewith he rove himself through the thigh that the blood stert about him, and said: O good Lord, take this in recompensation of that I have done against thee, my Lord. So then he clothed him and armed him, and called himself a wretch, saying: How nigh was I lost, and to have lost that I should never have gotten again, that was my virginity, for that may never be recovered after it is once lost. And then he stopped his bleeding wound with a piece of his shirt.

Thus as he made his moan he saw the same ship come from Orient that the good man was in the day afore, and the noble knight was ashamed with himself, and therewith he fell in a swoon. And when he awoke he went unto him weakly, and there he saluted this good man. And then he asked Sir Percivale: How hast thou done sith I departed? Sir, said he, here was a gentlewoman and led me into deadly sin. And there he told him altogether. Knew ye not the maid? said the good man. Sir, said he, nay, but well I wot the fiend sent her hither to shame me. O good knight, said he, thou art a fool, for that gentlewoman was the master fiend of hell, the which hath power above all devils, and that was the old lady that thou sawest in thine advision riding on the serpent. Then he told Sir Percivale how our Lord Jesu Christ beat him out of heaven for his sin, the which was the most brightest angel of heaven, and therefore he lost his heritage. And

that was the champion that thou foughtest withal, the which had overcome thee had not the grace of God been. Now beware Sir Percivale, and take this for an ensample. And then the good man vanished away. Then Sir Percivale took his arms, and entered into the ship, and so departed from thence.

*Here endeth the fourteenth book, which is of Sir Percivale. And here followeth of Sir Launcelot, which is the fifteenth book.*

## BOOK XV

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### **CHAPTER I. How Sir Launcelot came to a chapel, where he found dead, in a white shirt, a man of religion, of an hundred winter old.**

WHEN the hermit had kept Sir Launcelot three days, the hermit gat him an horse, an helm, and a sword. And then he departed about the hour of noon. And then he saw a little house. And when he came near he saw a chapel, and there beside he saw an old man that was clothed all in white full richly; and then Sir Launcelot said: God save you. God keep you, said the good man, and make you a good knight. Then Sir Launcelot alighted and entered into the chapel, and there he saw an old man dead, in a white shirt of passing fine cloth.

Sir, said the good man, this man that is dead ought not to be in such clothing as ye see him in, for in that he brake the oath of his order, for he hath been more than an hundred winter a man of a religion. And then the good man and Sir Launcelot went into the chapel; and the good man took a stole about his neck, and a book, and then he conjured on that book; and with that they saw in an hideous figure and horrible, that there was no man so hard-hearted nor so hard but he should have been afeard. Then said the fiend: Thou hast travailed me greatly; now tell me what thou wilt with me. I will, said the good man, that thou tell me how my fellow became dead, and whether he be saved or damned. Then he said with an horrible voice: He is not lost but saved. How may that be? said the good man; it seemed to me that he lived not well, for he brake his order for to wear a shirt where he ought to wear none, and who that trespasseth against our order doth not well. Not so, said the fiend, this man that lieth here dead was come of a great lineage. And there was a lord that hight the Earl de Vale, that held great war against this man's nephew, the which hight Aguarus. And so this Aguarus saw the earl was bigger than he. Then he went for to take counsel of his uncle, the which lieth here dead as ye may see. And then he asked leave, and went out of his hermitage for to maintain his nephew against the mighty earl; and so it happed that this man that lieth here dead did so much by his wisdom and hardiness that the earl was taken, and three of his lords, by force of this dead man.

## **CHAPTER II. Of a dead man, how men would have hewn him, and it would not be, and how Sir Launcelot took the hair of the dead man.**

THEN was there peace betwixt the earl and this Aguarus, and great surety that the earl should never war against him. Then this dead man that here lieth came to this hermitage again; and then the earl made two of his nephews for to be avenged upon this man. So they came on a day, and found this dead man at the sacring of his mass, and they abode him till he had said mass. And then they set upon him and drew out swords to have slain him; but there would no sword bite on him more than upon a gad of steel, for the high Lord which he served He him preserved. Then made they a great fire, and did off all his clothes, and the hair off his back. And then this dead man hermit said unto them: Ween you to burn me? It shall not lie in your power nor to perish me as much as a thread, an there were any on my body. No? said one of them, it shall be assayed. And then they despoiled him, and put upon him this shirt, and cast him in a fire, and there he lay all that night till it was day in that fire, and was not dead, and so in the morn I came and found him dead; but I found neither thread nor skin tamed, and so took him out of the fire with great fear, and laid him here as ye may see. And now may ye suffer me to go my way, for I have said you the sooth. And then he departed with a great tempest.

Then was the good man and Sir Launcelot more gladder than they were tofore. And then Sir Launcelot dwelled with that good man that night. Sir, said the good man, be ye not Sir Launcelot du Lake? Yea, sir, said he. What seek ye in this country? Sir, said Sir Launcelot, I go to seek the adventures of the Sangreal. Well, said he, seek it ye may well, but though it were here ye shall have no power to see it no more than a blind man should see a bright sword, and that is long on your sin, and else ye were more abler than any man living. And then Sir Launcelot began to weep. Then said the good man: Were ye confessed sith ye entered into the quest of the Sangreal? Yea, sir, said Sir Launcelot. Then upon the morn when the good man had sung his mass, then they buried the dead man. Then Sir Launcelot said: Father, what shall I do? Now, said the good man, I require you take this hair that was this holy man's and put it next thy skin, and it shall prevail thee greatly. Sir, and I will do it, said Sir Launcelot. Also I charge you that ye eat no flesh as long as ye be in the quest of the Sangreal, nor ye shall drink no wine, and that ye hear mass daily an ye may do it. So he took the hair and put it upon him, and so departed at evensong-time.

And so rode he into a forest, and there he met with a gentlewoman riding upon a white palfrey, and then she asked him: Sir knight, whither ride ye? Certes, damosel, said Launcelot, I wot not whither I ride but as fortune leadeth me. Ah, Sir Launcelot, said she, I wot what adventure ye seek, for ye were afore

time nearer than ye be now, and yet shall ye see it more openly than ever ye did, and that shall ye understand in short time. Then Sir Launcelot asked her where he might be harboured that night. Ye shall not find this day nor night, but to-morn ye shall find harbour good, and ease of that ye be in doubt of And then he commended her unto God. Then he rode till that he came to a Cross, and took that for his host as for that night.

### **CHAPTER III. Of an advision that Sir Launcelot had, and how he told it to an hermit, and desired counsel of him.**

AND so he put his horse to pasture, and did off his helm and his shield, and made his prayers unto the Cross that he never fall in deadly sin again. And so he laid him down to sleep. And anon as he was asleep it befell him there an advision, that there came a man afore him all by compass of stars, and that man had a crown of gold on his head and that man led in his fellowship seven kings and two knights. And all these worshipped the Cross, kneeling upon their knees, holding up their hands toward the heaven. And all they said: Fair sweet Father of heaven come and visit us, and yield unto us everych as we have deserved.

Then looked Launcelot up to the heaven, and him seemed the clouds did open, and an old man came down, with a company of angels, and alighted among them, and gave unto everych his blessing, and called them his servants, and good and true knights. And when this old man had said thus he came to one of those knights, and said: I have lost all that I have set in thee, for thou hast ruled thee against me as a warrior, and used wrong wars with vain-glory, more for the pleasure of the world than to please me, therefore thou shalt be confounded without thou yield me my treasure. All this advision saw Sir Launcelot at the Cross.

And on the morn he took his horse and rode till mid-day; and there by adventure he met with the same knight that took his horse, helm, and his sword, when he slept when the Sangreal appeared afore the Cross. When Sir Launcelot saw him he saluted hin not fair, but cried on high: Knight, keep thee, for thou hast done to me great unkindness. And then they put afore them their spears, and Sir Launcelot came so fiercely upon him that he smote him and his horse down to the earth, that he had nigh broken his neck. Then Sir Launcelot took the knight's horse that was his own aforehand, and descended from the horse he sat upon, and mounted upon his own horse, and tied the knight's own horse to a tree, that he might find that horse when that he was arisen. Then Sir Launcelot rode till night, and by adventure he met an hermit, and each of them saluted other; and there he rested with that good man all night, and gave his horse such as he might get. Then said the good man unto Launcelot: Of whence be ye? Sir, said

he, I am of Arthur's court, and my name is Sir Launcelot du Lake that am in the quest of the Sangreal, and therefore I pray you to counsel me of a vision the which I had at the Cross. And so he told him all.

#### **CHAPTER IV. How the hermit expounded to Sir Launcelot his advision, and told him that Sir Galahad was his son.**

LO, Sir Launcelot, said the good man, there thou mightest understand the high lineage that thou art come of, and thine advision betokeneth. After the passion of Jesu Christ forty year, Joseph of Aramathie preached the victory of King Evelake, that he had in the battles the better of his enemies. And of the seven kings and the two knights: the first of them is called Nappus, an holy man; and the second hight Nacien, in remembrance of his grandsire, and in him dwelled our Lord Jesu Christ; and the third was called Helias le Grose; and the fourth hight Lisais; and the fifth hight Jonas, he departed out of his country and went into Wales, and took there the daughter of Manuel, whereby he had the land of Gaul, and he came to dwell in this country. And of him came King Launcelot thy grandsire, the which there wedded the king's daughter of Ireland, and he was as worthy a man as thou art, and of him came King Ban, thy father, the which was the last of the seven kings. And by thee, Sir Launcelot, it signifieth that the angels said thou were none of the seven fellowships. And the last was the ninth knight, he was signified to a lion, for he should pass all manner of earthly knights, that is Sir Galahad, the which thou gat on King Pelles' daughter; and thou ought to thank God more than any other man living, for of a sinner earthly thou hast no peer as in knighthood, nor never shall be. But little thank hast thou given to God for all the great virtues that God hath lent thee. Sir, said Launcelot, ye say that that good knight is my son. That oughtest thou to know and no man better, said the good man, for thou knewest the daughter of King Pelles fleshly, and on her thou begattest Galahad, and that was he that at the feast of Pentecost sat in the Siege Perilous; and therefore make thou it known openly that he is one of thy begetting on King Pelles' daughter, for that will be your worship and honour, and to all thy kindred. And I counsel you in no place press not upon him to have ado with him. Well, said Launcelot, meseemeth that good knight should pray for me unto the High Father, that I fall not to sin again. Trust thou well, said the good man, thou farest mickle the better for his prayer; but the son shall not bear the wickedness of the father, nor the father shall not bear the wickedness of the son, but everych shall bear his own burden. And therefore beseek thou only God, and He will help thee in all thy needs. And then Sir Launcelot and he went to supper, and so laid him to rest, and the hair pricked so Sir Launcelot's skin which grieved him full sore, but he took it meekly, and



suffered the pain. And so on the morn he heard his mass and took his arms, and so took his leave.

### **CHAPTER V. How Sir Launcelot jousted with many knights, and how he was taken.**

AND then mounted upon his horse, and rode into a forest, and held no highway. And as he looked afore him he saw a fair plain, and beside that a fair castle, and afore the castle were many pavilions of silk and of diverse hue. And him seemed that he saw there five hundred knights riding on horseback; and there were two parties: they that were of the castle were all on black horses and their trappings black, and they that were without were all on white horses and trappings, and everych hurtled to other that it marvelled Sir Launcelot. And at the last him thought they of the castle were put to the worse.

Then thought Sir Launcelot for to help there the weaker party in increasing of his chivalry. And so Sir Launcelot thrust in among the party of the castle, and smote down a knight, horse and man, to the earth. And then he rashed here and there, and did marvellous deeds of arms. And then he drew out his sword, and struck many knights to the earth, so that all those that saw him marvelled that ever one knight might do so great deeds of arms. But always the white knights held them nigh about Sir Launcelot, for to tire him and wind him. But at the last, as a man may not ever endure, Sir Launcelot waxed so faint of fighting and travailing, and was so weary of his great deeds, that (1) he might not lift up his arms for to give one stroke, so that he weened never to have borne arms; and then they all took and led him away into a forest, and there made him to alight and to rest him. And then all the fellowship of the castle were overcome for the default of him. Then they said all unto Sir Launcelot: Blessed be God that ye be now of our fellowship, for we shall hold you in our prison; and so they left

1 So W. de Worde; Caxton "but."

him with few words. And then Sir Launcelot made great sorrow, For never or now was I never at tournament nor jousts but I had the best, and now I am shamed; and then he said: Now I am sure that I am more sinfuller than ever I was.

Thus he rode sorrowing, and half a day he was out of despair, till that he came into a deep valley. And when Sir Launcelot saw he might not ride up into the mountain, he there alighted under an apple tree, and there he left his helm and his shield, and put his horse unto pasture. And then he laid him down to sleep. And then him thought there came an old man afore him, the which said: Ah, Launcelot of evil faith and poor belief, wherefore is thy will turned so

lightly toward thy deadly sin? And when he had said thus he vanished away, and Launcelot wist not where he was become. Then he took his horse, and armed him; and as he rode by the way he saw a chapel where was a recluse, which had a window that she might see up to the altar. And all aloud she called Launcelot, for that he seemed a knight errant. And then he came, and she asked him what he was, and of what place, and where about he went to seek.

## **CHAPTER VI. How Sir Launcelot told his advison to a woman, and how she expounded it to him.**

AND then he told her altogether word by word, and the truth how it befell him at the tournament. And after told her his advison that he had had that night in his sleep, and prayed her to tell him what it might mean, for he was not well content with it. Ah, Launcelot, said she, as long as ye were knight of earthly knighthood ye were the most marvellous man of the world, and most adventurous. Now, said the lady, sithen ye be set among the knights of heavenly adventures, if adventure fell thee contrary at that tournament have thou no marvel, for that tournament yesterday was but a tokening of Our Lord. And not for then there was none enchantment, for they at the tournament were earthly knights. The tournament was a token to see who should have most knights, either Eliazar, the son of King Pelles, or Argustus, the son of King Harlon. But Eliazar was all clothed in white, and Argustus was covered in black, the which were [over]come.

All what this betokeneth I shall tell you. The day of Pentecost, when King Arthur held his court, it befell that earthly kings and knights took a tournament together, that is to say the quest of the Sangreal. The earthly knights were they the which were clothed all in black, and the covering betokeneth the sins whereof they be not confessed. And they with the covering of white betokeneth virginity, and they that chose chastity. And thus was the quest begun in them. Then thou beheld the sinners and the good men, and when thou sawest the sinners overcome, thou inclinest to that party for bobaunce and pride of the world, and all that must be left in that quest, for in this quest thou shalt have many fellows and thy betters. For thou art so feeble of evil trust and good belief, this made it when thou were there where they took thee and led thee into the forest. And anon there appeared the Sangreal unto the white knights, but thou was so feeble of good belief and faith that thou mightest not abide it for all the teaching of the good man, but anon thou turnest to the sinners, and that caused thy misadventure that thou should'st know good from evil and vain glory of the world, the which is not worth a pear. And for great pride thou madest great sorrow that thou hadst not overcome all the white knights with the covering of

white, by whom was betokened virginity and chastity; and therefore God was wroth with you, for God loveth no such deeds in this quest. And this advision signifieth that thou were of evil faith and of poor belief, the which will make thee to fall into the deep pit of hell if thou keep thee not. Now have I warned thee of thy vain glory and of thy pride, that thou hast many times erred against thy Maker. Beware of everlasting pain, for of all earthly knights I have most pity of thee, for I know well thou hast not thy peer of any earthly sinful man.

And so she commended Sir Launcelot to dinner. And after dinner he took his horse and commended her to God, and so rode into a deep valley, and there he saw a river and an high mountain. And through the water he must needs pass, the which was hideous; and then in the name of God he took it with good heart. And when he came over he saw an armed knight, horse and man black as any bear; without any word he smote Sir Launcelot's horse to the earth; and so he passed on, he wist not where he was become. And then he took his helm and his shield, and thanked God of his adventure.

*Here leadeth off the story of Sir Launcelot, and speak we of Sir Gawaine, the which is the sixteenth book.*

## BOOK XVI

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### CHAPTER I. How Sir Gawaine was nigh weary of the quest of the Sangreal, and of his marvellous dream.

WHEN Sir Gawaine was departed from his fellowship he rode long without any adventure. For he found not the tenth part of adventure as he was wont to do. For Sir Gawaine rode from Whitsuntide until Michaelmas and found none adventure that pleased him. So on a day it befell Gawaine met with Sir Ector de Maris, and either made great joy of other that it were marvel to tell. And so they told everych other, and complained them greatly that they could find none adventure. Truly, said Sir Gawaine unto Sir Ector, I am nigh weary of this quest, and loath I am to follow further in strange countries. One thing marvelled me, said Sir Ector, I have met with twenty knights, fellows of mine, and all they complain as I do. I have marvel, said Sir Gawaine, where that Sir Launcelot, your brother, is. Truly, said Sir Ector, I cannot hear of him, nor of Sir Galahad, Percivale, nor Sir Bors. Let them be, said Sir Gawaine, for they four have no peers. And if one thing were not in Sir Launcelot he had no fellow of none earthly man; but he is as we be, but if he took more pain upon him. But an these four be met together they will be loath that any man meet with them; for an they fail of the Sangreal it is in waste of all the remnant to recover it.

Thus Ector and Gawaine rode more than eight days, and on a Saturday they found an old chapel, the which was wasted that there seemed no man thither repaired; and there they alighted, and set their spears at the door, and in they entered into the chapel, and there made their orisons a great while, and set them down in the sieges of the chapel. And as they spake of one thing and other, for heaviness they fell asleep, and there befell them both marvellous adventures. Sir Gawaine him seemed he came into a meadow full of herbs and flowers, and there he saw a rack of bulls, an hundred and fifty, that were proud and black, save three of them were all white, and one had a black spot, and the other two were so fair and so white that they might be no whiter. And these three bulls which were so fair were tied with two strong cords. And the remnant of the bulls said among them: Go we hence to seek better pasture. And so some went, and some came again, but they were so lean that they might not stand upright; and of

the bulls that were so white, that one came again and no mo. But when this white bull was come again among these other there rose up a great cry for lack of wind that failed them; and so they departed one here and another there: this advision befell Gawaine that night.

## **CHAPTER II. Of the advision of Sir Ector, and how he jousted with Sir Uwaine les Avoutres, his sworn brother.**

BUT to Ector de Maris befell another vision the contrary. For it seemed him that his brother, Sir Launcelot, and he alighted out of a chair and leapt upon two horses, and the one said to the other: Go we seek that we shall not find. And him thought that a man beat Sir Launcelot, and despoiled him, and clothed him in another array, the which was all full of knots, and set him upon an ass, and so he rode till he came to the fairest well that ever he saw; and Sir Launcelot alighted and would have drunk of that well. And when he stooped to drink of the water the water sank from him. And when Sir Launcelot saw that, he turned and went thither as the head came from. And in the meanwhile he trowed that himself and Sir Ector rode till that they came to a rich man's house where there was a wedding. And there he saw a king the which said: Sir knight, here is no place for you. And then he turned again unto the chair that he came from.

Thus within a while both Gawaine and Ector awaked, and either told other of their advision, the which marvelled them greatly. Truly, said Ector, I shall never be merry till I hear tidings of my brother Launcelot. Now as they sat thus talking they saw an hand showing unto the elbow, and was covered with red samite, and upon that hung a bridle not right rich, and held within the fist a great candle which burned right clear, and so passed afore them, and entered into the chapel, and then vanished away and they wist not where. And anon came down a voice which said: Knights of full evil faith and of poor belief, these two things have failed you, and therefore ye may not come to the adventures of the Sangreal.

Then first spake Gawaine and said: Ector, have ye heard these words? Yea truly, said Sir Ector, I heard all. Now go we, said Sir Ector, unto some hermit that will tell us of our advision, for it seemeth me we labour all in vain. And so they departed and rode into a valley, and there met with a squire which rode on an hackney, and they saluted him fair. Sir, said Gawaine, can thou teach us to any hermit? Here is one in a little mountain, but it is so rough there may no horse go thither, and therefore ye must go upon foot; there shall ye find a poor house, and there is Nacien the hermit, which is the holiest man in this country. And so they departed either from other.

And then in a valley they met with a knight all armed, which proffered them to joust as far as he saw them. In the name of God, said Sir Gawaine, sith I

departed from Camelot there was none proffered me to joust but once. And now, sir, said Ector, let me joust with him. Nay, said Gawaine, ye shall not but if I be beat; it shall not for-think me then if ye go after me. And then either embraced other to joust and came together as fast as their horses might run, and brast their shields and the mails, and the one more than the other; and Gawaine was wounded in the left side, but the other knight was smitten through the breast, and the spear came out on the other side, and so they fell both out of their saddles, and in the falling they brake both their spears.

Anon Gawaine arose and set his hand to his sword, and cast his shield afore him. But all for naught was it, for the knight had no power to arise against him. Then said Gawaine: Ye must yield you as an overcome man, or else I may slay you. Ah, sir knight, said he, I am but dead, for God's sake and of your gentleness lead me here unto an abbey that I may receive my Creator. Sir, said Gawaine, I know no house of religion hereby. Sir, said the knight, set me on an horse to-fore you, and I shall teach you. Gawaine set him up in the saddle, and he leapt up behind him for to sustain him, and so came to an abbey where they were well received; and anon he was unarmed, and received his Creator. Then he prayed Gawaine to draw out the truncheon of the spear out of his body. Then Gawaine asked him what he was, that knew him not. I am, said he, of King Arthur's court, and was a fellow of the Round Table, and we were brethren sworn together; and now Sir Gawaine, thou hast slain me, and my name is Uwaine les Avoutres, that sometime was son unto King Uriens, and was in the quest of the Sangreal; and now forgive it thee God, for it shall ever be said that the one sworn brother hath slain the other.

### **CHAPTER III. How Sir Gawaine and Sir Ector came to an hermitage to be confessed, and how they told to the hermit their advisions.**

ALAS, said Gawaine, that ever this misadventure is befallen me. No force, said Uwaine, sith I shall die this death, of a much more worshipfuller man's hand might I not die; but when ye come to the court recommend me unto my lord, King Arthur, and all those that be left alive, and for old brotherhood think on me. Then began Gawaine to weep, and Ector also. And then Uwaine himself and Sir Gawaine drew out the truncheon of the spear, and anon departed the soul from the body. Then Sir Gawaine and Sir Ector buried him as men ought to bury a king's son, and made write upon his name, and by whom he was slain.

Then departed Gawaine and Ector, as heavy as they might for their misadventure, and so rode till that they came to the rough mountain, and there they tied their horses and went on foot to the hermitage. And when they were come up they saw a poor house, and beside the chapel a little courtelage, where

Nacien the hermit gathered worts, as he which had tasted none other meat of a great while. And when he saw the errant knights he came toward them and saluted them, and they him again. Fair lords, said he, what adventure brought you hither? Sir, said Gawaine, to speak with you for to be confessed. Sir, said the hermit, I am ready. Then they told him so much that he wist well what they were. And then he thought to counsel them if he might.

Then began Gawaine first and told him of his advision that he had had in the chapel, and Ector told him all as it is afore rehearsed. Sir, said the hermit unto Sir Gawaine, the fair meadow and the rack therein ought to be understood the Round Table, and by the meadow ought to be understood humility and patience, those be the things which be always green and quick; for men may no time overcome humility and patience, therefore was the Round Table founded, and the chivalry hath been at all times so by the fraternity which was there that she might not be overcome; for men said she was founded in patience and in humility. At the rack ate an hundred and fifty bulls; but they ate not in the meadow, for their hearts should be set in humility and patience, and the bulls were proud and black save only three. By the bulls is to understand the fellowship of the Round Table, which for their sin and their wickedness be black. Blackness is to say without good or virtuous works. And the three bulls which were white save only one that was spotted: the two white betoken Sir Galahad and Sir Percivale, for they be maidens clean and without spot; and the third that had a spot signifieth Sir Bors de Ganis, which trespassed but once in his virginity, but sithen he kept himself so well in chastity that all is forgiven him and his misdeeds. And why those three were tied by the necks, they be three knights in virginity and chastity, and there is no pride smitten in them. And the black bulls which said: Go we hence, they were those which at Pentecost at the high feast took upon them to go in the quest of the Sangreal without confession: they might not enter in the meadow of humility and patience. And therefore they returned into waste countries, that signifieth death, for there shall die many of them: everych of them shall slay other for sin, and they that shall escape shall be so lean that it shall be marvel to see them. And of the three bulls without spot, the one shall come again, and the other two never.

#### **CHAPTER IV. How the hermit expounded their advision.**

THEN spake Nacien unto Ector: Sooth it is that Launcelot and ye came down off one chair: the chair betokeneth mastership and lordship which ye came down from. But ye two knights, said the hermit, ye go to seek that ye shall never find, that is the Sangreal; for it is the secret thing of our Lord Jesu Christ. What is to mean that Sir Launcelot fell down off his horse: he hath left pride and taken

him to humility, for he hath cried mercy loud for his sin, and sore repented him, and our Lord hath clothed him in his clothing which is full of knots, that is the hair that he weareth daily. And the ass that he rode upon is a beast of humility, for God would not ride upon no steed, nor upon no palfrey; so in ensample that an ass betokeneth meekness, that thou sawest Sir Launcelot ride on in thy sleep. And the well whereas the water sank from him when he should have taken thereof, and when he saw he might not have it, he returned thither from whence he came, for the well betokeneth the high grace of God, the more men desire it to take it, the more shall be their desire. So when he came nigh the Sangreal, he meeked him that he held him not a man worthy to be so nigh the Holy Vessel, for he had been so defouled in deadly sin by the space of many years; yet when he kneeled to drink of the well, there he saw great providence of the Sangreal. And for he had served so long the devil, he shall have vengeance four-and-twenty days long, for that he hath been the devil's servant four-and-twenty years. And then soon after he shall return unto Camelot out of this country, and he shall say a part of such things as he hath found.

Now will I tell you what betokeneth the hand with the candle and the bridle: that is to understand the Holy Ghost where charity is ever, and the bridle signifieth abstinence. For when she is bridled in Christian man's heart she holdeth him so short that he falleth not in deadly sin. And the candle which sheweth clearness and sight signifieth the right way of Jesu Christ. And when he went and said: Knights of poor faith and of wicked belief, these three things failed, charity, abstinence, and truth; therefore ye may not attain that high adventure of the Sangreal.

#### **CHAPTER V. Of the good counsel that the hermit gave to them.**

CERTES, said Gawaine, soothly have ye said, that I see it openly. Now, I pray you, good man and holy father, tell me why we met not with so many adventures as we were wont to do, and commonly have the better. I shall tell you gladly, said the good man; the adventure of the Sangreal which ye and many other have undertaken the quest of it and find it not, the cause is for it appeareth not to sinners. Wherefore marvel not though ye fail thereof, and many other. For ye be an untrue knight and a great murderer, and to good men signifieth other things than murder. For I dare say, as sinful as Sir Launcelot hath been, sith that he went into the quest of the Sangreal he slew never man, nor nought shall, till that he come unto Camelot again, for he hath taken upon him for to forsake sin. And nere that he nis not stable, but by his thought he is likely to turn again, he should be next to enchieve it save Galahad, his son. But God knoweth his thought and his unstableness, and yet shall he die right an holy man, and no



doubt he hath no fellow of no earthly sinful man. Sir, said Gawaine, it seemeth me by your words that for our sins it will not avail us to travel in this quest Truly, said the good man, there be an hundred such as ye be that never shall prevail, but to have shame. And when they had heard these voices they commended him unto God.

Then the good man called Gawaine, and said: It is long time passed sith that ye were made knight, and never sithen thou servedst thy Maker, and now thou art so old a tree that in thee is neither life nor fruit; wherefore bethink thee that thou yield to Our Lord the bare rind, sith the fiend hath the leaves and the fruit. Sir, said Gawaine an I had leisure I would speak with you, but my fellow here, Sir Ector, is gone, and abideth me yonder beneath the hill. Well, said the good man, thou were better to be counselled. Then departed Gawaine and came to Ector, and so took their horses and rode till they came to a forester's house, which harboured them right well. And on the morn they departed from their host, and rode long or they could find any adventure.

#### **CHAPTER VI. How Sir Bors met with an hermit, and how he was confessed to him, and of his penance enjoined to him.**

WHEN Bors was departed from Camelot he met with a religious man riding on an ass, and Sir Bors saluted him. Anon the good man knew him that he was one of the knights-errant that was in the quest of the Sangreal. What are ye? said the good man. Sir, said he, I am a knight that fain would be counselled in the quest of the Sangreal, for he shall have much earthly worship that may bring it to an end. Certes, said the good man, that is sooth, for he shall be the best knight of the world, and the fairest of all the fellowship. But wit you well there shall none attain it but by cleanness, that is pure confession.

So rode they together till that they came to an hermitage. And there he prayed Bors to dwell all that night with him. And so he alighted and put away his armour, and prayed him that he might be confessed; and so they went into the chapel, and there he was clean confessed, and they ate bread and drank water together. Now, said the good man, I pray thee that thou eat none other till that thou sit at the table where the Sangreal shall be. Sir, said he, I agree me thereto, but how wit ye that I shall sit there. Yes, said the good man, that know I, but there shall be but few of your fellows with you. All is welcome, said Sir Bors, that God sendeth me. Also, said the good man, instead of a shirt, and in sign of chastisement, ye shall wear a garment; therefore I pray you do off all your clothes and your shirt: and so he did. And then he took him a scarlet coat, so that should be instead of his shirt till he had fulfilled the quest of the Sangreal; and the good man found in him so marvellous a life and so stable, that he marvelled

and felt that he was never corrupt in fleshly lusts, but in one time that he begat Elian le Blank.

Then he armed him, and took his leave, and so departed. And so a little from thence he looked up into a tree, and there he saw a passing great bird upon an old tree, and it was passing dry, without leaves; and the bird sat above, and had birds, the which were dead for hunger. So smote he himself with his beak, the which was great and sharp. And so the great bird bled till that he died among his birds. And the young birds took the life by the blood of the great bird. When Bors saw this he wist well it was a great tokening; for when he saw the great bird arose not, then he took his horse and yede his way. So by evensong, by adventure he came to a strong tower and an high, and there was he lodged gladly.

### **CHAPTER VII. How Sir Bors was lodged with a lady, and how he took upon him for to fight against a champion for her land.**

AND when he was unarmed they led him into an high tower where was a lady, young, lusty, and fair. And she received him with great joy, and made him to sit down by her, and so was he set to sup with flesh and many dainties. And when Sir Bors saw that, he bethought him on his penance, and bade a squire to bring him water. And so he brought him, and he made sops therein and ate them. Ah, said the lady, I trow ye like not my meat. Yes, truly, said Sir Bors, God thank you, madam, but I may eat none other meat this day. Then she spake no more as at that time, for she was loath to displease him. Then after supper they spake of one thing and other.

With that came a squire and said: Madam, ye must purvey you to-morn for a champion, for else your sister will have this castle and also your lands, except ye can find a knight that will fight to-morn in your quarrel against Pridam le Noire. Then she made sorrow and said: Ah, Lord God, wherefore granted ye to hold my land, whereof I should now be disherited without reason and right? And when Sir Bors had heard her say thus, he said: I shall comfort you. Sir, said she, I shall tell you there was here a king that hight Aniause, which held all this land in his keeping. So it mishapped he loved a gentlewoman a great deal elder than I. So took he her all this land to her keeping, and all his men to govern; and she brought up many evil customs whereby she put to death a great part of his kinsmen. And when he saw that, he let chase her out of this land, and betook it me, and all this land in my demesnes. But anon as that worthy king was dead, this other lady began to war upon me, and hath destroyed many of my men, and turned them against me, that I have well-nigh no man left me; and I have nought else but this high tower that she left me. And yet she hath promised me to have

this tower, without I can find a knight to fight with her champion.

Now tell me, said Sir Bors, what is that Pridam le Noire? Sir, said she, he is the most doubted man of this land. Now may ye send her word that ye have found a knight that shall fight with that Pridam le Noire in God's quarrel and yours. Then that lady was not a little glad, and sent word that she was purveyed, and that night Bors had good cheer; but in no bed he would come, but laid him on the floor, nor never would do otherwise till that he had met with the quest of the Sangreal.

### **CHAPTER VIII. Of an advision which Sir Bors had that night, and how he fought and overcame his adversary.**

AND anon as he was asleep him befell a vision, that there came to him two birds, the one as white as a swan, and the other was marvellous black; but it was not so great as the other, but in the likeness of a Raven. Then the white bird came to him, and said: An thou wouldst give me meat and serve me I should give thee all the riches of the world, and I shall make thee as fair and as white as I am. So the white bird departed, and there came the black bird to him, and said: An thou wilt, serve me to-morrow and have me in no despite though I be black, for wit thou well that more availeth my blackness than the other's whiteness. And then he departed.

And he had another vision: him thought that he came to a great place which seemed a chapel, and there he found a chair set on the left side, which was worm-eaten and feeble. And on the right hand were two flowers like a lily, and the one would have benome the other's whiteness, but a good man departed them that the one touched not the other; and then out of every flower came out many flowers, and fruit great plenty. Then him thought the good man said: Should not he do great folly that would let these two flowers perish for to succour the rotten tree, that it fell not to the earth? Sir, said he, it seemeth me that this wood might not avail. Now keep thee, said the good man, that thou never see such adventure befall thee.

Then he awaked and made a sign of the cross in midst of the forehead, and so rose and clothed him. And there came the lady of the place, and she saluted him, and he her again, and so went to a chapel and heard their service. And there came a company of knights, that the lady had sent for, to lead Sir Bors unto battle. Then asked he his arms. And when he was armed she prayed him to take a little morsel to dine. Nay, madam, said he, that shall I not do till I have done my battle, by the grace of God. And so he leapt upon his horse, and departed, all the knights and men with him. And as soon as these two ladies met together, she which Bors should fight for complained her, and said: Madam, ye have done me

wrong to bereave me of my lands that King Aniause gave me, and full loath I am there should be any battle. Ye shall not choose, said the other lady, or else your knight withdraw him.

Then there was the cry made, which party had the better of the two knights, that his lady should rejoice all the land. Now departed the one knight here, and the other there. Then they came together with such a raundon that they pierced their shields and their hauberks, and the spears flew in pieces, and they wounded either other sore. Then hurtled they together, so that they fell both to the earth, and their horses betwixt their legs; and anon they arose, and set hands to their swords, and smote each one other upon the heads, that they made great wounds and deep, that the blood went out of their bodies. For there found Sir Bors greater defence in that knight more than he weened. For that Pridam was a passing good knight, and he wounded Sir Bors full evil, and he him again; but ever this Pridam held the stour in like hard. That perceived Sir Bors, and suffered him till he was nigh attaint. And then he ran upon him more and more, and the other went back for dread of death. So in his withdrawing he fell upright, and Sir Bors drew his helm so strongly that he rent it from his head, and gave him great strokes with the flat of his sword upon the visage, and bade him yield him or he should slay him. Then he cried him mercy and said: Fair knight, for God's love slay me not, and I shall ensure thee never to war against thy lady, but be alway toward her. Then Bors let him be; then the old lady fled with all her knights.

### **CHAPTER IX. How the lady was returned to her lands by the battle of Sir Bors, and of his departing, and how he met Sir Lionel taken and beaten with**

thorns, and also of a maid which should have been devoured.

SO then came Bors to all those that held lands of his lady, and said he should destroy them but if they did such service unto her as longed to their lands. So they did their homage, and they that would not were chased out of their lands. Then befell that young lady to come to her estate again, by the mighty prowess of Sir Bors de Ganis. So when all the country was well set in peace, then Sir Bors took his leave and departed; and she thanked him greatly, and would have given him great riches, but he refused it.

Then he rode all that day till night, and came to an harbour to a lady which knew him well enough, and made of him great Joy. Upon the morn, as soon as the day appeared, Bors departed from thence, and so rode into a forest unto the hour of midday, and there befell him a marvellous adventure. So he met at the departing of the two ways two knights that led Lionel, his brother, all naked,

bounden upon a strong hackney, and his hands bounden to-fore his breast. And everych of them held in his hands thorns wherewith they went beating him so sore that the blood trailed down more than in an hundred places of his body, so that he was all blood to-fore and behind, but he said never a word; as he which was great of heart he suffered all that ever they did to him, as though he had felt none anguish.

Anon Sir Bors dressed him to rescue him that was his brother; and so he looked upon the other side of him, and saw a knight which brought a fair gentlewoman, and would have set her in the thickest place of the forest for to have been the more surer out of the way from them that sought him. And she which was nothing assured cried with an high voice: Saint Mary succour your maid. And anon she espied where Sir Bors came riding. And when she came nigh him she deemed him a knight of the Round Table, whereof she hoped to have some comfort; and then she conjured him: By the faith that he ought unto Him in whose service thou art entered in, and for the faith ye owe unto the high order of knighthood, and for the noble King Arthur's sake, that I suppose made thee knight, that thou help me, and suffer me not to be shamed of this knight. When Bors heard her say thus he had so much sorrow there he nist not what to do. For if I let my brother be in adventure he must be slain, and that would I not for all the earth. And if I help not the maid she is shamed for ever, and also she shall lose her virginity the which she shall never get again. Then lift he up his eyes and said weeping: Fair sweet Lord Jesu Christ, whose liege man I am, keep Lionel, my brother, that these knights slay him not, and for pity of you, and for Mary's sake, I shall succour this maid.

#### **CHAPTER X. How Sir Bors left to rescue his brother, and rescued the damosel; and how it was told him that Lionel was dead.**

THEN dressed he him unto the knight the which had the gentlewoman, and then he cried: Sir knight, let your hand off that maiden, or ye be but dead. And then he set down the maiden, and was armed at all pieces save he lacked his spear. Then he dressed his shield, and drew out his sword, and Bors smote him so hard that it went through his shield and habergeon on the left shoulder. And through great strength he beat him down to the earth, and at the pulling out of Bors' spear there he swooned. Then came Bors to the maid and said: How seemeth it you? of this knight ye be delivered at this time. Now sir, said she, I pray you lead me thereas this knight had me. So shall I do gladly: and took the horse of the wounded knight, and set the gentlewoman upon him, and so brought her as she desired. Sir knight, said she, ye have better sped than ye weened, for an I had lost my maidenhead, five hundred men should have died for it. What

knight was he that had you in the forest? By my faith, said she, he is my cousin. So wot I never with what engine the fiend enchafed him, for yesterday he took me from my father privily; for I, nor none of my father's men, mistrusted him not, and if he had had my maidenhead he should have died for the sin, and his body shamed and dishonoured for ever. Thus as she stood talking with him there came twelve knights seeking after her, and anon she told them all how Bors had delivered her; then they made great joy, and besought him to come to her father, a great lord, and he should be right welcome. Truly, said Bors, that may not be at this time, for I have a great adventure to do in this country. So he commended them unto God and departed.

Then Sir Bors rode after Lionel, his brother, by the trace of their horses, thus he rode seeking a great while. Then he overtook a man clothed in a religious clothing; and rode on a strong black horse blacker than a berry, and said: Sir knight, what seek you? Sir, said he, I seek my brother that I saw within a while beaten with two knights. Ah, Bors, discomfort you not, nor fall into no wanhope; for I shall tell you tidings such as they be, for truly he is dead. Then showed he him a new slain body lying in a bush, and it seemed him well that it was the body of Lionel, and then he made such a sorrow that he fell to the earth all in a swoon, and lay a great while there. And when he came to himself he said: Fair brother, sith the company of you and me is departed shall I never have joy in my heart, and now He which I have taken unto my master, He be my help. And when he had said thus he took his body lightly in his arms, and put it upon the arson of his saddle. And then he said to the man: Canst thou tell me unto some chapel where that I may bury this body? Come on, said he, here is one fast by; and so long they rode till they saw a fair tower, and afore it there seemed an old feeble chapel. And then they alighted both, and put him into a tomb of marble.

### **CHAPTER XI. How Sir Bors told his dream to a priest, which he had dreamed, and of the counsel that the priest gave to him.**

NOW leave we him here, said the good man, and go we to our harbour till to-morrow; we will come here again to do him service. Sir, said Bors, be ye a priest? Yea forsooth, said he. Then I pray you tell me a dream that befell to me the last night. Say on, said he. Then he began so much to tell him of the great bird in the forest, and after told him of his birds, one white, another black, and of the rotten tree, and of the white flowers. Sir, I shall tell you a part now, and the other deal to-morrow. The white fowl betokeneth a gentlewoman, fair and rich, which loved thee paramours, and hath loved thee long; and if thou warn her love she shall go die anon, if thou have no pity on her. That signifieth the great bird, the which shall make thee to warn her. Now for no fear that thou hast, ne for no

dread that thou hast of God, thou shalt not warn her, but thou wouldst not do it for to be holden chaste, for to conquer the loos of the vain glory of the world; for that shall befall thee now an thou warn her, that Launcelot, the good knight, thy cousin, shall die. And therefore men shall now say that thou art a manslayer, both of thy brother, Sir Lionel, and of thy cousin, Sir Launcelot du Lake, the which thou mightest have saved and rescued easily, but thou weenedst to rescue a maid which pertaineth nothing to thee. Now look thou whether it had been greater harm of thy brother's death, or else to have suffered her to have lost her maidenhood. Then asked he him: Hast thou heard the tokens of thy dream the which I have told to you? Yea forsooth, said Sir Bors, all your exposition and declaring of my dream I have well understood and heard. Then said the man in this black clothing: Then is it in thy default if Sir Launcelot, thy cousin, die. Sir, said Bors, that were me loath, for wit ye well there is nothing in the world but I had liefer do it than to see my lord, Sir Launcelot du Lake, to die in my default. Choose ye now the one or the other, said the good man.

And then he led Sir Bors into an high tower, and there he found knights and ladies: those ladies said he was welcome, and so they unarmed him. And when he was in his doublet men brought him a mantle furred with ermine, and put it about him; and then they made him such cheer that he had forgotten all his sorrow and anguish, and only set his heart in these delights and dainties, and took no thought more for his brother, Sir Lionel, neither of Sir Launcelot du Lake, his cousin. And anon came out of a chamber to him the fairest lady than ever he saw, and more richer beseen than ever he saw Queen Guenever or any other estate. Lo, said they, Sir Bors, here is the lady unto whom we owe all our service, and I trow she be the richest lady and the fairest of all the world, and the which loveth you best above all other knights, for she will have no knight but you. And when he understood that language he was abashed. Not for then she saluted him, and he her; and then they sat down together and spake of many things, in so much that she besought him to be her love, for she had loved him above all earthly men, and she should make him richer than ever was man of his age. When Bors understood her words he was right evil at ease, which in no manner would not break chastity, so wist not he how to answer her.

## **CHAPTER XII. How the devil in a woman's likeness would have had Sir Bors to have lain by her, and how by God's grace he escaped.**

ALAS, said she, Bors, shall ye not do my will? Madam, said Bors, there is no lady in the world whose will I will fulfil as of this thing, for my brother lieth dead which was slain right late. Ah Bors, said she, I have loved you long for the great beauty I have seen in you, and the great hardiness that I have heard of you,

that needs ye must lie by me this night, and therefore I pray you grant it me. Truly, said he, I shall not do it in no manner wise. Then she made him such sorrow as though she would have died. Well Bors, said she, unto this have ye brought me, nigh to mine end. And therewith she took him by the hand, and bade him behold her. And ye shall see how I shall die for your love. Ah, said then he, that shall I never see.

Then she departed and went up into an high battlement, and led with her twelve gentlewomen; and when they were above, one of the gentlewomen cried, and said: Ah, Sir Bors, gentle knight have mercy on us all, and suffer my lady to have her will, and if ye do not we must suffer death with our lady, for to fall down off this high tower, and if ye suffer us thus to die for so little a thing all ladies and gentlewomen will say of you dishonour. Then looked he upward, they seemed all ladies of great estate, and richly and well beseen. Then had he of them great pity; not for that he was uncounselled in himself that liefer he had they all had lost their souls than he his, and with that they fell adown all at once unto the earth. And when he saw that, he was all abashed, and had thereof great marvel. With that he blessed his body and his visage. And anon he heard a great noise and a great cry, as though all the fiends of hell had been about him; and therewith he saw neither tower, nor lady, nor gentlewoman, nor no chapel where he brought his brother to. Then held he up both his hands to the heaven, and said: Fair Father God, I am grievously escaped; and then he took his arms and his horse and rode on his way.

Then he heard a clock smite on his right hand; and thither he came to an abbey on his right hand, closed with high walls, and there was let in. Then they supposed that he was one of the quest of the Sangreal, so they led him into a chamber and unarmed him. Sirs, said Sir Bors, if there be any holy man in this house I pray you let me speak with him. Then one of them led him unto the Abbot, which was in a chapel. And then Sir Bors saluted him, and he him again. Sir, said Bors, I am a knight-errant; and told him all the adventure which he had seen. Sir Knight, said the Abbot, I wot not what ye be, for I weened never that a knight of your age might have been so strong in the grace of our Lord Jesu Christ. Not for then ye shall go unto your rest, for I will not counsel you this day, it is too late, and to-morrow I shall counsel you as I can.

### **CHAPTER XIII. Of the holy communication of an Abbot to Sir Bors, and how the Abbot counselled him.**

AND that night was Sir Bors served richly; and on the morn early he heard mass, and the Abbot came to him, and bade him good morrow, and Bors to him again. And then he told him he was a fellow of the quest of the Sangreal, and



how he had charge of the holy man to eat bread and water. Then [said the Abbot]: Our Lord Jesu Christ showed him unto you in the likeness of a soul that suffered great anguish for us, since He was put upon the cross, and bled His heart-blood for mankind: there was the token and the likeness of the Sangreal that appeared afore you, for the blood that the great fowl bled revived the chickens from death to life. And by the bare tree is betokened the world which is naked and without fruit but if it come of Our Lord. Also the lady for whom ye fought for, and King Aniause which was lord thereto-fore, betokeneth Jesu Christ which is the King of the world. And that ye fought with the champion for the lady, this it betokeneth: for when ye took the battle for the lady, by her shall ye understand the new law of Jesu Christ and Holy Church; and by the other lady ye shall understand the old law and the fiend, which all day warreth against Holy Church, therefore ye did your battle with right. For ye be Jesu Christ's knights, therefore ye ought to be defenders of Holy Church. And by the black bird might ye understand Holy Church, which sayeth I am black, but he is fair. And by the white bird might men understand the fiend, and I shall tell you how the swan is white without-forth, and black within: it is hypocrisy which is without yellow or pale, and seemeth without-forth the servants of Jesu Christ, but they be within so horrible of filth and sin, and beguile the world evil. Also when the fiend appeared to thee in likeness of a man of religion, and blamed thee that thou left thy brother for a lady, so led thee where thou seemed thy brother was slain, but he is yet alive; and all was for to put thee in error, and bring thee unto wanhope and lechery, for he knew thou were tender hearted, and all was for thou shouldst not find the blessed adventure of the Sangreal. And the third fowl betokeneth the strong battle against the fair ladies which were all devils. Also the dry tree and the white lily: the dry tree betokeneth thy brother Lionel, which is dry without virtue, and therefore many men ought to call him the rotten tree, and the worm-eaten tree, for he is a murderer and doth contrary to the order of knighthood. And the two white flowers signify two maidens, the one is a knight which was wounded the other day, and the other is the gentlewoman which ye rescued; and why the other flower drew nigh the other, that was the knight which would have defouled her and himself both. And Sir Bors, ye had been a great fool and in great peril for to have seen those two flowers perish for to succour the rotten tree, for an they had sinned together they had been damned; and for that ye rescued them both, men might call you a very knight and servant of Jesu Christ.

**CHAPTER XIV. How Sir Bors met with his brother Sir Lionel, and how Sir Lionel would have slain Sir Bors.**

THEN went Sir Bors from thence and commended the Abbot unto God. And then he rode all that day, and harboured with an old lady. And on the morn he rode to a castle in a valley, and there he met with a yeoman going a great pace toward a forest. Say me, said Sir Bors, canst thou tell me of any adventure? Sir, said he, here shall be under this castle a great and a marvellous tournament. Of what folks shall it be? said Sir Bors. The Earl of Plains shall be in the one party, and the lady's nephew of Hervin on the other party. Then Bors thought to be there if he might meet with his brother Sir Lionel, or any other of his fellowship, which were in the quest of the Sangreal. And then he turned to an hermitage that was in the entry of the forest.

And when he was come thither he found there Sir Lionel, his brother, which sat all armed at the entry of the chapel door for to abide there harbour till on the morn that the tournament shall be. And when Sir Bors saw him he had great joy of him, that it were marvel to tell of his joy. And then he alighted off his horse, and said: Fair sweet brother, when came ye hither? Anon as Lionel saw him he said: Ah Bors, ye may not make none avaunt, but as for you I might have been slain; when ye saw two knights leading me away beating me, ye left me for to succour a gentlewoman, and suffered me in peril of death; for never erst ne did no brother to another so great an untruth. And for that misdeed now I ensure you but death, for well have ye deserved it; therefore keep thee from henceforward, and that shall ye find as soon as I am armed. When Sir Bors understood his brother's wrath he kneeled down to the earth and cried him mercy, holding up both his hands, and prayed him to forgive him his evil will. Nay, said Lionel, that shall never be an I may have the higher hand, that I make mine avow to God, thou shalt have death for it, for it were pity ye lived any longer.

Right so he went in and took his harness, and mounted upon his horse, and came to-fore him and said: Bors, keep thee from me, for I shall do to thee as I would to a felon or a traitor, for ye be the untruest knight that ever came out of so worthy an house as was King Bors de Ganis which was our father, therefore start upon thy horse, and so shall ye be most at your advantage. And but if ye will I will run upon you thereas ye stand upon foot, and so the shame shall be mine and the harm yours, but of that shame ne reck I nought.

When Sir Bors saw that he must fight with his brother or else to die, he nist what to do; then his heart counselled him not thereto, inasmuch as Lionel was born or he, wherefore he ought to bear him reverence; yet kneeled he down afore Lionel's horse's feet, and said: Fair sweet brother, have mercy upon me and slay me not, and have in remembrance the great love which ought to be between us twain. What Sir Bors said to Lionel he rought not, for the fiend had brought him in such a will that he should slay him. Then when Lionel saw he would none

other, and that he would not have risen to give him battle, he rashed over him so that he smote Bors with his horse, feet upward, to the earth, and hurt him so sore that he swooned of distress, the which he felt in himself to have died without confession. So when Lionel saw this, he alighted off his horse to have smitten off his head. And so he took him by the helm, and would have rent it from his head. Then came the hermit running unto him, which was a good man and of great age, and well had heard all the words that were between them, and so fell down upon Sir Bors.

### **CHAPTER XV. How Sir Colgrevice fought against Sir Lionel for to save Sir Bors, and how the hermit was slain.**

THEN he said to Lionel: Ah gentle knight, have mercy upon me and on thy brother, for if thou slay him thou shalt be dead of sin, and that were sorrowful, for he is one of the worthiest knights of the world, and of the best conditions. So God help me, said Lionel, sir priest, but if ye flee from him I shall slay you, and he shall never the sooner be quit. Certes, said the good man, I have liefer ye slay me than him, for my death shall not be great harm, not half so much as of his. Well, said Lionel, I am greed; and set his hand to his sword and smote him so hard that his head yede backward. Not for that he restrained him of his evil will, but took his brother by the helm, and unlaced it to have stricken off his head, and had slain him without fail. But so it happed, Colgrevice a fellow of the Round Table, came at that time thither as Our Lord's will was. And when he saw the good man slain he marvelled much what it might be. And then he beheld Lionel would have slain his brother, and knew Sir Bors which he loved right well. Then stert he down and took Lionel by the shoulders, and drew him strongly aback from Bors, and said: Lionel, will ye slay your brother, the worthiest knight of the world one? and that should no good man suffer. Why, said Lionel, will ye let me? therefore if ye entermete you in this I shall slay you, and him after. Why, said Colgrevice, is this sooth that ye will slay him? Slay him will I, said he, whoso say the contrary, for he hath done so much against me that he hath well deserved it. And so ran upon him, and would have smitten him through the head, and Sir Colgrevice ran betwixt them, and said: An ye be so hardy to do so more, we two shall meddle together.

When Lionel understood his words he took his shield afore him, and asked him what that he was. And he told him, Colgrevice, one of his fellows. Then Lionel defied him, and gave him a great stroke through the helm. Then he drew his sword, for he was a passing good knight, and defended him right manfully. So long dured the battle that Bors rose up all anguishly, and beheld [how] Colgrevice, the good knight, fought with his brother for his quarrel; then was

he full sorry and heavy, and thought if Colgrevice slew him that was his brother he should never have joy; and if his brother slew Colgrevice the shame should ever be mine. Then would he have risen to have departed them, but he had not so much might to stand on foot; so he abode him so long till Colgrevice had the worse, for Lionel was of great chivalry and right hardy, for he had pierced the hauberk and the helm, that he abode but death, for he had lost much of his blood that it was marvel that he might stand upright. Then beheld he Sir Bors which sat dressing him upward and said: Ah, Bors, why come ye not to cast me out of peril of death, wherein I have put me to succour you which were right now nigh the death? Certes, said Lionel, that shall not avail you, for none of you shall bear others warrant, but that ye shall die both of my hand. When Bors heard that, he did so much, he rose and put on his helm. Then perceived he first the hermit-priest which was slain, then made he a marvellous sorrow upon him.

#### **CHAPTER XVI. How Sir Lionel slew Sir Colgrevice, and how after he would have slain Sir Bors.**

THEN oft Colgrevice cried upon Sir Bors: Why will ye let me die here for your sake? if it please you that I die for you the death, it will please me the better for to save a worthy man. With that word Sir Lionel smote off the helm from his head. Then Colgrevice saw that he might not escape; then he said: Fair sweet Jesu, that I have misdone have mercy upon my soul, for such sorrow that my heart suffereth for goodness, and for alms deed that I would have done here, be to me aligement of penance unto my soul's health. At these words Lionel smote him so sore that he bare him to the earth. So he had slain Colgrevice he ran upon his brother as a fiendly man, and gave him such a stroke that he made him stoop. And he that was full of humility prayed him for God's love to leave this battle: For an it befell, fair brother, that I slew you or ye me, we should be dead of that sin. Never God me help but if I have on you mercy, an I may have the better hand. Then drew Bors his sword, all weeping, and said: Fair brother, God knoweth mine intent. Ah, fair brother, ye have done full evil this day to slay such an holy priest the which never trespassed. Also ye have slain a gentle knight, and one of our fellows. And well wot ye that I am not afeard of you greatly, but I dread the wrath of God, and this is an unkindly war, therefore God show miracle upon us both. Now God have mercy upon me though I defend my life against my brother: with that Bors lift up his hand and would have smitten his brother.

#### **CHAPTER XVII. How there came a voice which charged Sir Bors to touch him not, and of a cloud that came between them.**

AND then he heard a voice that said: Flee Bors, and touch him not, or else thou shalt slay him. Right so alighted a cloud betwixt them in likeness of a fire and a marvellous flame, that both their two shields brent. Then were they sore afraid, that they fell both to the earth, and lay there a great while in a swoon. And when they came to themself, Bors saw that his brother had no harm; then he held up both his hands, for he dread God had taken vengeance upon him. With that he heard a voice say: Bors, go hence, and bear thy brother no longer fellowship, but take thy way anon right to the sea, for Sir Percivale abideth thee there. Then he said to his brother: Fair sweet brother, forgive me for God's love all that I have trespassed unto you. Then he answered: God forgive it thee and I do gladly.

So Sir Bors departed from him and rode the next way to the sea. And at the last by fortune he came to an abbey which was nigh the sea. That night Bors rested him there; and in his sleep there came a voice to him and bade him go to the sea. Then he stert up and made a sign of the cross in the midst of his forehead, and took his harness, and made ready his horse, and mounted upon him; and at a broken wall he rode out, and rode so long till that he came to the sea. And on the strand he found a ship covered all with white samite, and he alighted, and betook him to Jesu Christ. And as soon as he entered into the ship, the ship departed into the sea, and went so fast that him seemed the ship went flying, but it was soon dark so that he might know no man, and so he slept till it was day. Then he awaked, and saw in midst of the ship a knight lie all armed save his helm. Then knew he that it was Sir Percivale of Wales, and then he made of him right great joy; but Sir Percivale was abashed of him, and he asked him what he was. Ah, fair sir, said Bors, know ye me not? Certes, said he, I marvel how ye came hither, but if Our Lord brought ye hither Himself. Then Sir Bors smiled and did off his helm. Then Percivale knew him, and either made great joy of other, that it was marvel to hear. Then Bors told him how he came into the ship, and by whose admonishment; and either told other of their temptations, as ye have heard to-forehand. So went they downward in the sea, one while backward, another while forward, and everych comforted other, and oft were in their prayers. Then said Sir Percivale: We lack nothing but Galahad, the good knight.

*And thus endeth the sixteenth book, which is of Sir Gawaine, Ector de Maris, and Sir Bors de Ganis, and Sir Percivale. And here followeth the seven-teenth book, which is of the noble knight Sir Galahad.*

## BOOK XVII

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### **CHAPTER I. How Sir Galahad fought at a tournament, and how he was known of Sir Gawaine and Sir Ector de Maris.**

NOW saith this story, when Galahad had rescued Percivale from the twenty knights, he yede tho into a waste forest wherein he rode many journeys; and he found many adventures the which he brought to an end, whereof the story maketh here no mention. Then he took his way to the sea on a day, and it befell as he passed by a castle where was a wonder tournament, but they without had done so much that they within were put to the worse, yet were they within good knights enough. When Galahad saw that those within were at so great a mischief that men slew them at the entry of the castle, then he thought to help them, and put a spear forth and smote the first that he fell to the earth, and the spear brake to pieces. Then he drew his sword and smote thereas they were thickest, and so he did wonderful deeds of arms that all they marvelled. Then it happed that Gawaine and Sir Ector de Maris were with the knights without. But when they espied the white shield with the red cross the one said to the other: Yonder is the good knight, Sir Galahad, the haut prince: now he should be a great fool which should meet with him to fight. So by adventure he came by Sir Gawaine, and he smote him so hard that he clave his helm and the coif of iron unto his head, so that Gawaine fell to the earth; but the stroke was so great that it slanted down to the earth and carved the horse's shoulder in two.

When Ector saw Gawaine down he drew him aside, and thought it no wisdom for to abide him, and also for natural love, that he was his uncle. Thus through his great hardiness he beat aback all the knights without. And then they within came out and chased them all about. But when Galahad saw there would none turn again he stole away privily, so that none wist where he was become. Now by my head, said Gawaine to Ector, now are the wonders true that were said of Launcelot du Lake, that the sword which stuck in the stone should give me such a buffet that I would not have it for the best castle in this world; and soothly now it is proved true, for never ere had I such a stroke of man's hand. Sir, said Ector, meseemeth your quest is done. And yours is not done, said Gawaine, but mine is done, I shall seek no further. Then Gawaine was borne into

a castle and unarmed him, and laid him in a rich bed, and a leech found that he might live, and to be whole within a month. Thus Gawaine and Ector abode together, for Sir Ector would not away till Gawaine were whole.

And the good knight, Galahad, rode so long till he came that night to the Castle of Carboneck; and it befell him thus that he was benighted in an hermitage. So the good man was fain when he saw he was a knight-errant. Tho when they were at rest there came a gentlewoman knocking at the door, and called Galahad, and so the good man came to the door to wit what she would. Then she called the hermit: Sir Ulfen, I am a gentlewoman that would speak with the knight which is with you. Then the good man awaked Galahad, and bade him: Arise, and speak with a gentlewoman that seemeth hath great need of you. Then Galahad went to her and asked her what she would. Galahad, said she, I will that ye arm you, and mount upon your horse and follow me, for I shall show you within these three days the highest adventure that ever any knight saw. Anon Galahad armed him, and took his horse, and commended him to God, and bade the gentlewoman go, and he would follow thereas she liked.

## **CHAPTER II. How Sir Galahad rode with a damosel, and came to the ship whereas Sir Bors and Sir Percivale were in.**

SO she rode as fast as her palfrey might bear her, till that she came to the sea, the which was called Collibe. And at the night they came unto a castle in a valley, closed with a running water, and with strong walls and high; and so she entered into the castle with Galahad, and there had he great cheer, for the lady of that castle was the damosel's lady. So when he was unarmed, then said the damosel: Madam, shall we abide here all this day? Nay, said she, but till he hath dined and till he hath slept a little. So he ate and slept a while till that the maid called him, and armed him by torchlight. And when the maid was horsed and he both, the lady took Galahad a fair child and rich; and so they departed from the castle till they came to the seaside; and there they found the ship where Bors and Percivale were in, the which cried on the ship's board: Sir Galahad, ye be welcome, we have abiden you long. And when he heard them he asked them what they were. Sir, said she, leave your horse here, and I shall leave mine; and took their saddles and their bridles with them, and made a cross on them, and so entered into the ship. And the two knights received them both with great joy, and everych knew other; and so the wind arose, and drove them through the sea in a marvellous pace. And within a while it dawned.

Then did Galahad off his helm and his sword, and asked of his fellows from whence came that fair ship. Truly, said they, ye wot as well as we, but of God's grace; and then they told everych to other of all their hard adventures, and of

their great temptations. Truly, said Galahad, ye are much bounden to God, for ye have escaped great adventures; and had not the gentlewoman been I had not come here, for as for you I weened never to have found you in these strange countries. Ah Galahad, said Bors, if Launcelot, your father, were here then were we well at ease, for then meseemed we failed nothing. That may not be, said Galahad, but if it pleased Our Lord.

By then the ship went from the land of Logris, and by adventure it arrived up betwixt two rocks passing great and marvellous; but there they might not land, for there was a swallow of the sea, save there was another ship, and upon it they might go without danger. Go we thither, said the gentlewoman, and there shall we see adventures, for so is Our Lord's will. And when they came thither they found the ship rich enough, but they found neither man nor woman therein. But they found in the end of the ship two fair letters written, which said a dreadful word and a marvellous: Thou man, which shall enter into this ship, beware thou be in steadfast belief, for I am Faith, and therefore beware how thou enterest, for an thou fail I shall not help thee. Then said the gentlewoman: Percivale, wot ye what I am? Certes, said he, nay, to my witting. Wit ye well, said she, that I am thy sister, which am daughter of King Pellinore, and therefore wit ye well ye are the man in the world that I most love; and if ye be not in perfect belief of Jesu Christ enter not in no manner of wise, for then should ye perish the ship, for he is so perfect he will suffer no sinner in him. When Percivale understood that she was his very sister he was inwardly glad, and said: Fair sister, I shall enter therein, for if I be a miscreature or an untrue knight there shall I perish.

### **CHAPTER III. How Sir Galahad entered into the ship, and of a fair bed therein, with other marvellous things, and of a sword.**

IN the meanwhile Galahad blessed him, and entered therein; and then next the gentlewoman, and then Sir Bors and Sir Percivale. And when they were in, it was so marvellous fair and rich that they marvelled; and in midst of the ship was a fair bed, and Galahad went thereto, and found there a crown of silk. And at the feet was a sword, rich and fair, and it was drawn out of the sheath half a foot and more; and the sword was of divers fashions, and the pommel was of stone, and there was in him all manner of colours that any man might find, and everych of the colours had divers virtues; and the scales of the haft were of two ribs of divers beasts, the one beast was a serpent which was conversant in Calidone, and is called the Serpent of the fiend; and the bone of him is of such a virtue that there is no hand that handleth him shall never be weary nor hurt. And the other beast is a fish which is not right great, and haunteth the flood of Euphrates; and that fish is called Ertanax, and his bones be of such a manner of kind that who



that handleth them shall have so much will that he shall never be weary, and he shall not think on joy nor sorrow that he hath had but only that thing that he beholdeth before him. And as for this sword there shall never man begrip him at the handles but one; but he shall pass all other. In the name of God, said Percivale, I shall assay to handle it. So he set his hand to the sword, but he might not begrip it. By my faith, said he, now have I failed. Bors set his hand thereto and failed.

Then Galahad beheld the sword and saw letters like blood that said: Let see who shall assay to draw me out of my sheath, but if he be more hardier than any other; and who that draweth me, wit ye well that he shall never fail of shame of his body, or to be wounded to the death. By my faith, said Galahad, I would draw this sword out of the sheath, but the offending is so great that I shall not set my hand thereto. Now sirs, said the gentlewoman, wit ye well that the drawing of this sword is warned to all men save all only to you. Also this ship arrived in the realm of Logris; and that time was deadly war between King Labor, which was father unto the maimed king, and King Hurlame, which was a Saracen. But then was he newly christened, so that men held him afterward one of the wittiest men of the world. And so upon a day it befell that King Labor and King Hurlame had assembled their folk upon the sea where this ship was arrived; and there King Hurlame was discomfit, and his men slain; and he was afeard to be dead, and fled to his ship, and there found this sword and drew it, and came out and found King Labor, the man in the world of all Christendom in whom was then the greatest faith. And when King Hurlame saw King Labor he dressed this sword, and smote him upon the helm so hard that he clave him and his horse to the earth with the first stroke of his sword. And it was in the realm of Logris; and so befell great pestilence and great harm to both realms. For sithen increased neither corn, nor grass, nor well-nigh no fruit, nor in the water was no fish; wherefore men call it the lands of the two marches, the waste land, for that dolorous stroke. And when King Hurlame saw this sword so carving, he turned again to fetch the scabbard, and so came into this ship and entered, and put up the sword in the sheath. And as soon as he had done it he fell down dead afore the bed. Thus was the sword proved, that none ne drew it but he were dead or maimed. So lay he there till a maiden came into the ship and cast him out, for there was no man so hardy of the world to enter into that ship for the defence.

#### **CHAPTER IV. Of the marvels of the sword and of the scabbard.**

AND then beheld they the scabbard, it seemed to be of a serpent's skin, and thereon were letters of gold and silver. And the girdle was but poorly to come to, and not able to sustain such a rich sword. And the letters said: He which shall

wield me sought to be more harder than any other, if he bear me as truly as me ought to be borne. For the body of him which I ought to hang by, he shall not be shamed in no place while he is girt with this girdle, nor never none be so hardy to do away this girdle; for it ought not be done away but by the hands of a maid, and that she be a king's daughter and queen's, and she must be a maid all the days of her life, both in will and in deed. And if she break her virginity she shall die the most villainous death that ever died any woman. Sir, said Percivale, turn this sword that we may see what is on the other side. And it was red as blood, with black letters as any coal, which said: He that shall praise me most, most shall he find me to blame at a great need; and to whom I should be most debonair shall I be most felon, and that shall be at one time.

Fair brother, said she to Percivale, it befell after a forty year after the passion of Jesu Christ that Nacien, the brother-in-law of King Mordrains, was borne into a town more than fourteen days' journey from his country, by the commandment of Our Lord, into an isle, into the parts of the West, that men cleped the Isle of Turnance. So befell it that he found this ship at the entry of a rock, and he found the bed and this sword as we have heard now. Not for then he had not so much hardiness to draw it; and there he dwelled an eight days, and at the ninth day there fell a great wind which departed him out of the isle, and brought him to another isle by a rock, and there he found the greatest giant that ever man might see. Therewith came that horrible giant to slay him; and then he looked about him and might not flee, and he had nothing to defend him with. So he ran to his sword, and when he saw it naked he praised it much, and then he shook it, and therewith he brake it in the midst. Ah, said Nacien, the thing that I most praised ought I now most to blame, and therewith he threw the pieces of his sword over his bed. And after he leapt over the board to fight with the giant, and slew him.

And anon he entered into the ship again, and the wind arose, and drove him through the sea, that by adventure he came to another ship where King Mordrains was, which had been tempted full evil with a fiend in the Port of Perilous Rock. And when that one saw the other they made great joy of other, and either told other of their adventure, and how the sword failed him at his most need. When Mordrains saw the sword he praised it much: But the breaking was not to do but by wickedness of thy selfward, for thou art in some sin. And there he took the sword, and set the pieces together, and they soldered as fair as ever they were to-fore; and there put he the sword in the sheath, and laid it down on the bed. Then heard they a voice that said: Go out of this ship a little while, and enter into the other, for dread ye fall in deadly sin, for and ye be found in deadly sin ye may not escape but perish: and so they went into the other ship. And as Nacien went over the board he was smitten with a sword on the right foot, that

he fell down noseling to the ship's board; and therewith he said: O God, how am I hurt. And then there came a voice and said: Take thou that for thy forfeit that thou didst in drawing of this sword, therefore thou receivest a wound, for thou were never worthy to handle it, as the writing maketh mention. In the name of God, said Galahad, ye are right wise of these works.

**CHAPTER V. How King Pelles was smitten through both thighs because he drew the sword, and other marvellous histories.**

SIR, said she, there was a king that hight Pelles, the maimed king. And while he might ride he supported much Christendom and Holy Church. So upon a day he hunted in a wood of his which lasted unto the sea; and at the last he lost his hounds and his knights save only one: and there he and his knight went till that they came toward Ireland, and there he found the ship. And when he saw the letters and understood them, yet he entered, for he was right perfect of his life, but his knight had none hardiness to enter; and there found he this sword, and drew it out as much as ye may see. So therewith entered a spear wherewith he was smitten him through both the thighs, and never sith might he be healed, nor nought shall to-fore we come to him. Thus, said she, was not King Pelles, your grandsire, maimed for his hardiness? In the name of God, damosel, said Galahad.

So they went toward the bed to behold all about it, and above the head there hung two swords. Also there were two spindles which were as white as any snow, and other that were as red as blood, and other above green as any emerald: of these three colours were the spindles, and of natural colour within, and without any painting. These spindles, said the damosel, were when sinful Eve came to gather fruit, for which Adam and she were put out of paradise, she took with her the bough on which the apple hung on. Then perceived she that the branch was fair and green, and she remembered her the loss which came from the tree. Then she thought to keep the branch as long as she might. And for she had no coffer to keep it in, she put it in the earth. So by the will of Our Lord the branch grew to a great tree within a little while, and was as white as any snow, branches, boughs, and leaves: that was a token a maiden planted it. But after God came to Adam, and bade him know his wife fleshly as nature required. So lay Adam with his wife under the same tree; and anon the tree which was white was full green as any grass, and all that came out of it; and in the same time that they medled together there was Abel begotten: thus was the tree long of green colour. And so it befell many days after, under the same tree Caym slew Abel, whereof befell great marvel. For anon as Abel had received the death under the green tree, it lost the green colour and became red; and that was in tokening of

the blood. And anon all the plants died thereof, but the tree grew and waxed marvellously fair, and it was the fairest tree and the most delectable that any man might behold and see; and so died the plants that grew out of it to-fore that Abel was slain under it. So long dured the tree till that Solomon, King David's son, reigned, and held the land after his father. This Solomon was wise and knew all the virtues of stones and trees, and so he knew the course of the stars, and many other divers things. This Solomon had an evil wife, wherethrough he weened that there had been no good woman, and so he despised them in his books. So answered a voice him once: Solomon, if heaviness come to a man by a woman, ne reck thou never; for yet shall there come a woman whereof there shall come greater joy to man an hundred times more than this heaviness giveth sorrow; and that woman shall be born of thy lineage. Tho when Solomon heard these words he held himself but a fool, and the truth he perceived by old books. Also the Holy Ghost showed him the coming of the glorious Virgin Mary. Then asked he of the voice, if it should be in the yerde of his lineage. Nay, said the voice, but there shall come a man which shall be a maid, and the last of your blood, and he shall be as good a knight as Duke Josua, thy brother-in-law.

#### **CHAPTER VI. How Solomon took David's sword by the counsel of his wife, and of other matters marvellous.**

NOW have I certified thee of that thou stoodest in doubt. Then was Solomon glad that there should come any such of his lineage; but ever he marvelled and studied who that should be, and what his name might be. His wife perceived that he studied, and thought she would know it at some season; and so she waited her time, and asked of him the cause of his studying, and there he told her altogether how the voice told him. Well, said she, I shall let make a ship of the best wood and most durable that men may find. So Solomon sent for all the carpenters of the land, and the best. And when they had made the ship the lady said to Solomon: Sir, said she, since it is so that this knight ought to pass all knights of chivalry which have been to-fore him and shall come after him, moreover I shall tell you, said she, ye shall go into Our Lord's temple, where is King David's sword, your father, the which is the marvelloust and the sharpest that ever was taken in any knight's hand. Therefore take that, and take off the pommel, and thereto make ye a pommel of precious stones, that it be so subtly made that no man perceive it but that they be all one; and after make there an hilt so marvellously and wonderly that no man may know it; and after make a marvellous sheath. And when ye have made all this I shall let make a girdle thereto, such as shall please me.

All this King Solomon did let make as she devised, both the ship and all the

remnant. And when the ship was ready in the sea to sail, the lady let make a great bed and marvellous rich, and set her upon the bed's head, covered with silk, and laid the sword at the feet, and the girdles were of hemp, and therewith the king was angry. Sir, wit ye well, said she, that I have none so high a thing which were worthy to sustain so high a sword, and a maid shall bring other knights thereto, but I wot not when it shall be, nor what time. And there she let make a covering to the ship, of cloth of silk that should never rot for no manner of weather. Yet went that lady and made a carpenter to come to the tree which Abel was slain under. Now, said she, carve me out of this tree as much wood as will make me a spindle. Ah madam, said he, this is the tree the which our first mother planted. Do it, said she, or else I shall destroy thee. Anon as he began to work there came out drops of blood; and then would he have left, but she would not suffer him, and so he took away as much wood as might make a spindle: and so she made him to take as much of the green tree and of the white tree. And when these three spindles were shapen she made them to be fastened upon the selar of the bed. When Solomon saw this, he said to his wife: Ye have done marvellously, for though all the world were here right now, he could not devise wherefore all this was made, but Our Lord Himself; and thou that hast done it wottest not what it shall betoken. Now let it be, said she, for ye shall hear tidings sooner than ye ween. Now shall ye hear a wonderful tale of King Solomon and his wife.

#### **CHAPTER VII. A wonderful tale of King Solomon and his wife.**

THAT night lay Solomon before the ship with little fellowship. And when he was asleep him thought there came from heaven a great company of angels, and alighted into the ship, and took water which was brought by an angel, in a vessel of silver, and sprent all the ship. And after he came to the sword, and drew letters on the hilt. And after went to the ship's board, and wrote there other letters which said: Thou man that wilt enter within me, beware that thou be full within the faith, for I ne am but Faith and Belief. When Solomon espied these letters he was abashed, so that he durst not enter, and so drew him aback; and the ship was anon shoven in the sea, and he went so fast that he lost sight of him within a little while. And then a little voice said: Solomon, the last knight of thy lineage shall rest in this bed. Then went Solomon and awaked his wife, and told her of the adventures of the ship.

Now saith the history that a great while the three fellows beheld the bed and the three spindles. Then they were at certain that they were of natural colours without painting. Then they lift up a cloth which was above the ground, and there found a rich purse by seeming. And Percivale took it, and found therein a

writ and so he read it, and devised the manner of the spindles and of the ship, whence it came, and by whom it was made. Now, said Galahad, where shall we find the gentlewoman that shall make new girdles to the sword? Fair sir, said Percivale's sister, dismay you not, for by the leave of God I shall let make a girdle to the sword, such one as shall long thereto. And then she opened a box, and took out girdles which were seemly wrought with golden threads, and upon that were set full precious stones, and a rich buckle of gold. Lo, lords, said she, here is a girdle that ought to be set about the sword. And wit ye well the greatest part of this girdle was made of my hair, which I loved well while that I was a woman of the world. But as soon as I wist that this adventure was ordained me I clipped off my hair, and made this girdle in the name of God. Ye be well found, said Sir Bors, for certes ye have put us out of great pain, wherein we should have entered ne had your tidings been.

Then went the gentlewoman and set it on the girdle of the sword. Now, said the fellowship, what is the name of the sword, and what shall we call it? Truly, said she, the name of the sword is the Sword with the Strange Girdles; and the sheath, Mover of Blood; for no man that hath blood in him ne shall never see the one part of the sheath which was made of the Tree of Life. Then they said to Galahad: In the name of Jesu Christ, and pray you that ye gird you with this sword which hath been desired so much in the realm of Logris. Now let me begin, said Galahad, to grip this sword for to give you courage; but wit ye well it longeth no more to me than it doth to you. And then he gripped about it with his fingers a great deal; and then she girt him about the middle with the sword. Now reck I not though I die, for now I hold me one of the blessed maidens of the world, which hath made the worthiest knight of the world. Damosel, said Galahad, ye have done so much that I shall be your knight all the days of my life.

Then they went from that ship, and went to the other. And anon the wind drove them into the sea a great pace, but they had no victuals: but it befell that they came on the morn to a castle that men call Carteloise, that was in the marches of Scotland. And when they had passed the port, the gentlewoman said: Lords, here be men arriven that, an they wist that ye were of King Arthur's court, ye should be assailed anon. Damosel, said Galahad, He that cast us out of the rock shall deliver us from them.

### **CHAPTER VIII. How Galahad and his fellows came to a castle, and how they were fought withal, and how they slew their adversaries, and other matters.**

SO it befell as they spoke thus there came a squire by them, and asked what

they were; and they said they were of King Arthur's house. Is that sooth? said he. Now by my head, said he, ye be ill arrayed; and then turned he again unto the cliff fortress. And within a while they heard an horn blow. Then a gentlewoman came to them, and asked them of whence they were; and they told her. Fair lords, said she, for God's love turn again if ye may, for ye be come unto your death. Nay, they said, we will not turn again, for He shall help us in whose service we be entered in. Then as they stood talking there came knights well armed, and bade them yield them or else to die. That yielding, said they, shall be noyous to you. And therewith they let their horses run, and Sir Percivale smote the foremost to the earth, and took his horse, and mounted thereupon, and the same did Galahad. Also Bors served another so, for they had no horses in that country, for they left their horses when they took their ship in other countries. And so when they were horsed then began they to set upon them; and they of the castle fled into the strong fortress, and the three knights after them into the castle, and so alighted on foot, and with their swords slew them down, and gat into the hall.

Then when they beheld the great multitude of people that they had slain, they held themselves great sinners. Certes, said Bors, I ween an God had loved them that we should not have had power to have slain them thus. But they have done so much against Our Lord that He would not suffer them to reign no longer. Say ye not so, said Galahad, for if they misdid against God, the vengeance is not ours, but to Him which hath power thereof.

So came there out of a chamber a good man which was a priest, and bare God's body in a cup. And when he saw them which lay dead in the hall he was all abashed; and Galahad did off his helm and kneeled down, and so did his two fellows. Sir, said they, have ye no dread of us, for we be of King Arthur's court. Then asked the good man how they were slain so suddenly, and they told it him. Truly, said the good man, an ye might live as long as the world might endure, ne might ye have done so great an alms-deed as this. Sir, said Galahad, I repent me much, inasmuch as they were christened. Nay, repent you not, said he, for they were not christened, and I shall tell you how that I wot of this castle. Here was Lord Earl Hernox not but one year, and he had three sons, good knights of arms, and a daughter, the fairest gentlewoman that men knew. So those three knights loved their sister so sore that they brent in love, and so they lay by her, maugre her head. And for she cried to her father they slew her, and took their father and put him in prison, and wounded him nigh to the death, but a cousin of hers rescued him. And then did they great untruth: they slew clerks and priests, and made beat down chapels, that Our Lord's service might not be served nor said. And this same day her father sent to me for to be confessed and houseled; but

such shame had never man as I had this day with the three brethren, but the earl bade me suffer, for he said they should not long endure, for three servants of Our Lord should destroy them, and now it is brought to an end. And by this may ye wit that Our Lord is not displeased with your deeds. Certes, said Galahad, an it had not pleased Our Lord, never should we have slain so many men in so little a while.

And then they brought the Earl Hernox out of prison into the midst of the hall, that knew Galahad anon, and yet he saw him never afore but by revelation of Our Lord.

### **CHAPTER IX. How the three knights, with Percivale's sister, came unto the same forest, and of an hart and four lions, and other things.**

THEN began he to weep right tenderly, and said: Long have I abiden your coming, but for God's love hold me in your arms, that my soul may depart out of my body in so good a man's arms as ye be. Gladly, said Galahad. And then one said on high, that all heard: Galahad, well hast thou avenged me on God's enemies. Now behoveth thee to go to the Maimed King as soon as thou mayest, for he shall receive by thee health which he hath abiden so long. And therewith the soul departed from the body, and Galahad made him to be buried as him ought to be.

Right so departed the three knights, and Percivale's sister with them. And so they came into a waste forest, and there they saw afore them a white hart which four lions led. Then they took them to assent for to follow after for to know whither they repaired; and so they rode after a great pace till that they came to a valley, and thereby was an hermitage where a good man dwelled, and the hart and the lions entered also. So when they saw all this they turned to the chapel, and saw the good man in a religious weed and in the armour of Our Lord, for he would sing mass of the Holy Ghost; and so they entered in and heard mass. And at the secrets of the mass they three saw the hart become a man, the which marvelled them, and set him upon the altar in a rich siege; and saw the four lions were changed, the one to the form of a man, the other to the form of a lion, and the third to an eagle, and the fourth was changed unto an ox. Then took they their siege where the hart sat, and went out through a glass window, and there was nothing perished nor broken; and they heard a voice say: In such a manner entered the Son of God in the womb of a maid Mary, whose virginity ne was perished ne hurt. And when they heard these words they fell down to the earth and were astonied; and therewith was a great clearness.

And when they were come to theirself again they went to the good man and prayed him that he would say them truth. What thing have ye seen? said he. And



they told him all that they had seen. Ah lords, said he, ye be welcome; now wot I well ye be the good knights the which shall bring the Sangreal to an end; for ye be they unto whom Our Lord shall shew great secrets. And well ought Our Lord be signified to an hart, for the hart when he is old he waxeth young again in his white skin. Right so cometh again Our Lord from death to life, for He lost earthly flesh that was the deadly flesh, which He had taken in the womb of the blessed Virgin Mary; and for that cause appeared Our Lord as a white hart without spot. And the four that were with Him is to understand the four evangelists which set in writing a part of Jesu Christ's deeds that He did sometime when He was among you an earthly man; for wit ye well never erst ne might no knight know the truth, for ofttimes or this Our Lord showed Him unto good men and unto good knights, in likeness of an hart, but I suppose from henceforth ye shall see no more. And then they joyed much, and dwelled there all that day. And upon the morrow when they had heard mass they departed and commended the good man to God: and so they came to a castle and passed by. So there came a knight armed after them and said: Lords, hark what I shall say to you.

**CHAPTER X. How they were desired of a strange custom, the which they would not obey; wherefore they fought and slew many knights.**

THIS gentlewoman that ye lead with you is a maid? Sir, said she, a maid I am. Then he took her by the bridle and said: By the Holy Cross, ye shall not escape me to-fore ye have yolden the custom of this castle. Let her go, said Percivale, ye be not wise, for a maid in what place she cometh is free. So in the meanwhile there came out a ten or twelve knights armed, out of the castle, and with them came gentlewomen which held a dish of silver. And then they said: This gentlewoman must yield us the custom of this castle. Sir, said a knight, what maid passeth hereby shall give this dish full of blood of her right arm. Blame have ye, said Galahad, that brought up such customs, and so God me save, I ensure you of this gentlewoman ye shall fail while that I live. So God me help, said Percivale, I had liefer be slain. And I also, said Sir Bors. By my troth, said the knight, then shall ye die, for ye may not endure against us though ye were the best knights of the world.

Then let they run each to other, and the three fellows beat the ten knights, and then set their hands to their swords and beat them down and slew them. Then there came out of the castle a three score knights armed. Fair lords, said the three fellows, have mercy on yourself and have not ado with us. Nay, fair lords, said the knights of the castle, we counsel you to withdraw you, for ye be the best knights of the world, and therefore do no more, for ye have done enough. We

will let you go with this harm, but we must needs have the custom. Certes, said Galahad, for nought speak ye. Well, said they, will ye die? We be not yet come thereto, said Galahad. Then began they to meddle together, and Galahad, with the strange girdles, drew his sword, and smote on the right hand and on the left hand, and slew what that ever abode him, and did such marvels that there was none that saw him but weened he had been none earthly man, but a monster. And his two fellows halp him passing well, and so they held the journey everych in like hard till it was night: then must they needs depart.

So came in a good knight, and said to the three fellows: If ye will come in to-night and take such harbour as here is ye shall be right welcome, and we shall ensure you by the faith of our bodies, and as we be true knights, to leave you in such estate to-morrow as we find you, without any falsehood. And as soon as ye know of the custom we dare say ye will accord therefore. For God's love, said the gentlewoman, go thither and spare not for me. Go we, said Galahad; and so they entered into the chapel. And when they were alighted they made great joy of them. So within a while the three knights asked the custom of the castle and wherefore it was. What it is, said they, we will say you sooth.

#### **CHAPTER XI. How Sir Percivale's sister bled a dish full of blood for to heal a lady, wherefore she died; and how that the body was put in a ship.**

THERE is in this castle a gentlewoman which we and this castle is hers, and many other. So it befell many years agone there fell upon her a malady; and when she had lain a great while she fell unto a measle, and of no leech she could have no remedy. But at the last an old man said an she might have a dish full of blood of a maid and a clean virgin in will and in work, and a king's daughter, that blood should be her health, and for to anoint her withal; and for this thing was this custom made. Now, said Percivale's sister, fair knights, I see well that this gentlewoman is but dead. Certes, said Galahad, an ye bleed so much ye may die. Truly, said she, an I die for to heal her I shall get me great worship and soul's health, and worship to my lineage, and better is one harm than twain. And therefore there shall be no more battle, but to-morn I shall yield you your custom of this castle. And then there was great joy more than there was to-fore, for else had there been mortal war upon the morn; notwithstanding she would none other, whether they wold or nold.

That night were the three fellows eased with the best; and on the morn they heard mass, and Sir Percivale's sister bade bring forth the sick lady. So she was, the which was evil at ease. Then said she: Who shall let me blood? So one came forth and let her blood, and she bled so much that the dish was full. Then she lift up her hand and blessed her; and then she said to the lady: Madam, I am come to

the death for to make you whole, for God's love pray for me. With that she fell in a swoon. Then Galahad and his two fellows start up to her, and lift her up and staunched her, but she had bled so much that she might not live. Then she said when she was awaked: Fair brother Percivale, I die for the healing of this lady, so I require you that ye bury me not in this country, but as soon as I am dead put me in a boat at the next haven, and let me go as adventure will lead me; and as soon as ye three come to the City of Sarras, there to enchieve the Holy Grail, ye shall find me under a tower arrived, and there bury me in the spiritual place; for I say you so much, there Galahad shall be buried, and ye also, in the same place.

Then Percivale understood these words, and granted it her, weeping. And then said a voice: Lords and fellows, to-morrow at the hour of prime ye three shall depart everych from other, till the adventure bring you to the Maimed King. Then asked she her Saviour; and as soon as she had received it the soul departed from the body. So the same day was the lady healed, when she was anointed withal. Then Sir Percivale made a letter of all that she had holpen them as in strange adventures, and put it in her right hand, and so laid her in a barge, and covered it with black silk; and so the wind arose, and drove the barge from the land, and all knights beheld it till it was out of their sight. Then they drew all to the castle, and so forthwith there fell a sudden tempest and a thunder, lightning, and rain, as all the earth would have broken. So half the castle turned up-so-down. So it passed evensong or the tempest was ceased.

Then they saw afore them a knight armed and wounded hard in the body and in the head, that said: O God, succour me for now it is need. After this knight came another knight and a dwarf, which cried to them afar: Stand, ye may not escape. Then the wounded knight held up his hands to God that he should not die in such tribulation. Truly, said Galahad, I shall succour him for His sake that he calleth upon. Sir, said Bors, I shall do it, for it is not for you, for he is but one knight. Sir, said he, I grant. So Sir Bors took his horse, and commended him to God, and rode after, to rescue the wounded knight. Now turn we to the two fellows.

## **CHAPTER XII. How Galahad and Percivale found in a castle many tombs of maidens that had bled to death.**

NOW saith the story that all night Galahad and Percivale were in a chapel in their prayers, for to save Sir Bors. So on the morrow they dressed them in their harness toward the castle, to wit what was fallen of them therein. And when they came there they found neither man nor woman that he ne was dead by the vengeance of Our Lord. With that they heard a voice that said: This vengeance is for blood-shedding of maidens. Also they found at the end of the chapel a

churchyard, and therein might they see a three score fair tombs, and that place was so fair and so delectable that it seemed them there had been none tempest, for there lay the bodies of all the good maidens which were martyred for the sick lady's sake. Also they found the names of everych, and of what blood they were come, and all were of kings' blood, and twelve of them were kings' daughters. Then they departed and went into a forest. Now, said Percivale unto Galahad, we must depart, so pray we Our Lord that we may meet together in short time: then they did off their helms and kissed together, and wept at their departing.

### **CHAPTER XIII. How Sir Launcelot entered into the ship where Sir Percivale's sister lay dead, and how he met with Sir Galahad, his son.**

NOW saith the history, that when Launcelot was come to the water of Mortoise, as it is rehearsed before, he was in great peril, and so he laid him down and slept, and took the adventure that God would send him. So when he was asleep there came a vision unto him and said: Launcelot, arise up and take thine armour, and enter into the first ship that thou shalt find. And when he heard these words he start up and saw great clearness about him. And then he lift up his hand and blessed him, and so took his arms and made him ready; and so by adventure he came by a strand, and found a ship the which was without sail or oar. And as soon as he was within the ship there he felt the most sweetness that ever he felt, and he was fulfilled with all thing that he thought on or desired. Then he said: Fair sweet Father, Jesu Christ, I wot not in what joy I am, for this joy passeth all earthly joys that ever I was in. And so in this joy he laid him down to the ship's board, and slept till day. And when he awoke he found there a fair bed, and therein lying a gentlewoman dead, the which was Sir Percivale's sister. And as Launcelot devised her, he espied in her right hand a writ, the which he read, the which told him all the adventures that ye have heard to-fore, and of what lineage she was come. So with this gentlewoman Sir Launcelot was a month and more. If ye would ask how he lived, He that fed the people of Israel with manna in the desert, so was he fed; for every day when he had said his prayers he was sustained with the grace of the Holy Ghost.

So on a night he went to play him by the water side, for he was somewhat weary of the ship. And then he listened and heard an horse come, and one riding upon him. And when he came nigh he seemed a knight. And so he let him pass, and went thereas the ship was; and there he alighted, and took the saddle and the bridle and put the horse from him, and went into the ship. And then Launcelot dressed unto him, and said: Ye be welcome. And he answered and saluted him again, and asked him: What is your name? for much my heart giveth unto you. Truly, said he, my name is Launcelot du Lake. Sir, said he, then be ye welcome,

for ye were the beginner of me in this world. Ah, said he, are ye Galahad? Yea, forsooth, said he; and so he kneeled down and asked him his blessing, and after took off his helm and kissed him. And there was great joy between them, for there is no tongue can tell the joy that they made either of other, and many a friendly word spoken between, as kin would, the which is no need here to be rehearsed. And there everych told other of their adventures and marvels that were befallen to them in many journeys sith that they departed from the court.

Anon, as Galahad saw the gentlewoman dead in the bed, he knew her well enough, and told great worship of her, that she was the best maid living, and it was great pity of her death. But when Launcelot heard how the marvellous sword was gotten, and who made it, and all the marvels rehearsed afore, then he prayed Galahad, his son, that he would show him the sword, and so he did; and anon he kissed the pommel, and the hilt, and the scabbard. Truly, said Launcelot, never erst knew I of so high adventures done, and so marvellous and strange. So dwelt Launcelot and Galahad within that ship half a year, and served God daily and nightly with all their power; and often they arrived in isles far from folk, where there repaired none but wild beasts, and there they found many strange adventures and perilous, which they brought to an end; but for those adventures were with wild beasts, and not in the quest of the Sangreal, therefore the tale maketh here no mention thereof, for it would be too long to tell of all those adventures that befell them.

#### **CHAPTER XIV. How a knight brought unto Sir Galahad a horse, and bade him come from his father, Sir Launcelot.**

SO after, on a Monday, it befell that they arrived in the edge of a forest tofore a cross; and then saw they a knight armed all in white, and was richly horsed, and led in his right hand a white horse; and so he came to the ship, and saluted the two knights on the High Lord's behalf, and said: Galahad, sir, ye have been long enough with your father, come out of the ship, and start upon this horse, and go where the adventures shall lead thee in the quest of the Sangreal. Then he went to his father and kissed him sweetly, and said: Fair sweet father, I wot not when I shall see you more till I see the body of Jesu Christ. I pray you, said Launcelot, pray ye to the High Father that He hold me in His service. And so he took his horse, and there they heard a voice that said: Think for to do well, for the one shall never see the other before the dreadful day of doom. Now, son Galahad, said Launcelot, since we shall depart, and never see other, I pray to the High Father to conserve me and you both. Sir, said Galahad, no prayer availeth so much as yours And therewith Galahad entered into the forest.

And the wind arose, and drove Launcelot more than a month throughout the

sea, where he slept but little, but prayed to God that he might see some tidings of the Sangreal. So it befell on a night, at midnight, he arrived afore a castle, on the back side, which was rich and fair, and there was a postern opened toward the sea, and was open without any keeping, save two lions kept the entry; and the moon shone clear. Anon Sir Launcelot heard a voice that said: Launcelot, go out of this ship and enter into the castle, where thou shalt see a great part of thy desire. Then he ran to his arms, and so armed him, and so went to the gate and saw the lions. Then set he hand to his sword and drew it. Then there came a dwarf suddenly, and smote him on the arm so sore that the sword fell out of his hand. Then heard he a voice say: O man of evil faith and poor belief, wherefore trowest thou more on thy harness than in thy Maker, for He might more avail thee than thine armour, in whose service that thou art set. Then said Launcelot: Fair Father Jesu Christ, I thank thee of Thy great mercy that Thou reprovest me of my misdeed; now see I well that ye hold me for your servant. Then took he again his sword and put it up in his sheath, and made a cross in his forehead, and came to the lions, and they made semblaunt to do him harm. Notwithstanding he passed by them without hurt, and entered into the castle to the chief fortress, and there were they all at rest. Then Launcelot entered in so armed, for he found no gate nor door but it was open. And at the last he found a chamber whereof the door was shut, and he set his hand thereto to have opened it, but he might not.

#### **CHAPTER XV. How Sir Launcelot was to-fore the door of the chamber wherein the Holy Sangreal was.**

THEN he enforced him mickle to undo the door. Then he listened and heard a voice which sang so sweetly that it seemed none earthly thing; and him thought the voice said: Joy and honour be to the Father of Heaven. Then Launcelot kneeled down to-fore the chamber, for well wist he that there was the Sangreal within that chamber. Then said he: Fair sweet Father, Jesu Christ, if ever I did thing that pleased Thee, Lord for Thy pity never have me not in despite for my sins done aforetime, and that Thou show me something of that I seek. And with that he saw the chamber door open, and there came out a great clearness, that the house was as bright as all the torches of the world had been there.

So came he to the chamber door, and would have entered. And anon a voice said to him: Flee, Launcelot, and enter not, for thou oughtest not to do it; and if thou enter thou shalt forthink it. Then he withdrew him aback right heavy. Then looked he up in the midst of the chamber, and saw a table of silver, and the Holy Vessel, covered with red samite, and many angels about it, whereof one held a candle of wax burning, and the other held a cross, and the ornaments of an altar. And before the Holy Vessel he saw a good man clothed as a priest. And it

seemed that he was at the sacring of the mass. And it seemed to Launcelot that above the priest's hands were three men, whereof the two put the youngest by likeness between the priest's hands; and so he lift it up right high, and it seemed to show so to the people. And then Launcelot marvelled not a little, for him thought the priest was so greatly charged of the figure that him seemed that he should fall to the earth. And when he saw none about him that would help him, then came he to the door a great pace, and said: Fair Father Jesu Christ, ne take it for no sin though I help the good man which hath great need of help.

Right so entered he into the chamber, and came toward the table of silver; and when he came nigh he felt a breath, that him thought it was intermeddled with fire, which smote him so sore in the visage that him thought it brent his visage; and therewith he fell to the earth, and had no power to arise, as he that was so araged, that had lost the power of his body, and his hearing, and his seeing. Then felt he many hands about him, which took him up and bare him out of the chamber door, without any amending of his swoon, and left him there, seeming dead to all people.

So upon the morrow when it was fair day they within were arisen, and found Launcelot lying afore the chamber door. All they marvelled how that he came in, and so they looked upon him, and felt his pulse to wit whether there were any life in him; and so they found life in him, but he might not stand nor stir no member that he had. And so they took him by every part of the body, and bare him into a chamber, and laid him in a rich bed, far from all folk; and so he lay four days. Then the one said he was alive, and the other said, Nay. In the name of God, said an old man, for I do you verily to wit he is not dead, but he is so full of life as the mightiest of you all; and therefore I counsel you that he be well kept till God send him life again.

#### **CHAPTER XVI. How Sir launcelot had lain four-and-twenty days and as many nights as a dead man, and other divers matters.**

IN such manner they kept Launcelot four-and-twenty days and all so many nights, that ever he lay still as a dead man; and at the twenty-fifth day befell him after midday that he opened his eyes. And when he saw folk he made great sorrow, and said: Why have ye awaked me, for I was more at ease than I am now. O Jesu Christ, who might be so blessed that might see openly thy great marvels of secretness there where no sinner may be! What have ye seen? said they about him. I have seen, said he, so great marvels that no tongue may tell, and more than any heart can think, and had not my son been here afore me I had seen much more.

Then they told him how he had lain there four-and-twenty days and nights.

Then him thought it was punishment for the four-and-twenty years that he had been a sinner, wherefore Our Lord put him in penance four-and-twenty days and nights. Then looked Sir Launcelot afore him, and saw the hair which he had borne nigh a year, for that he for-thought him right much that he had broken his promise unto the hermit, which he had avowed to do. Then they asked how it stood with him. Forsooth, said he, I am whole of body, thanked be Our Lord; therefore, sirs, for God's love tell me where I am. Then said they all that he was in the castle of Carbonek.

Therewith came a gentlewoman and brought him a shirt of small linen cloth, but he changed not there, but took the hair to him again. Sir, said they, the quest of the Sangreal is achieved now right in you, that never shall ye see of the Sangreal no more than ye have seen. Now I thank God, said Launcelot, of His great mercy of that I have seen, for it sufficeth me; for as I suppose no man in this world hath lived better than I have done to enchieve that I have done. And therewith he took the hair and clothed him in it, and above that he put a linen shirt, and after a robe of scarlet, fresh and new. And when he was so arrayed they marvelled all, for they knew him that he was Launcelot, the good knight. And then they said all: O my lord Sir Launcelot, be that ye? And he said: Truly I am he.

Then came word to King Pelles that the knight that had lain so long dead was Sir Launcelot. Then was the king right glad, and went to see him. And when Launcelot saw him come he dressed him against him, and there made the king great joy of him. And there the king told him tidings that his fair daughter was dead. Then Launcelot was right heavy of it, and said: Sir, me forthinketh the death of your daughter, for she was a full fair lady, fresh and young. And well I wot she bare the best knight that is now on the earth, or that ever was sith God was born. So the king held him there four days, and on the morrow he took his leave at King Pelles and at all the fellowship, and thanked them of their great labour.

Right so as they sat at their dinner in the chief salle, then was so befallen that the Sangreal had fulfilled the table with all manner of meats that any heart might think. So as they sat they saw all the doors and the windows of the place were shut without man's hand, whereof they were all abashed, and none wist what to do.

And then it happed suddenly a knight came to the chief door and knocked, and cried: Undo the door. But they would not. And ever he cried: Undo; but they would not. And at last it noyed them so much that the king himself arose and came to a window there where the knight called. Then he said: Sir knight, ye shall not enter at this time while the Sangreal is here, and therefore go into



another; for certes ye be none of the knights of the quest, but one of them which hath served the fiend, and hast left the service of Our Lord: and he was passing wroth at the king's words. Sir knight, said the king, sith ye would so fain enter, say me of what country ye be. Sir, said he, I am of the realm of Logris, and my name is Ector de Maris, and brother unto my lord, Sir Launcelot. In the name of God, said the king, me forthinketh of what I have said, for your brother is here within. And when Ector de Maris understood that his brother was there, for he was the man in the world that he most dread and loved, and then he said: Ah God, now doubleth my sorrow and shame. Full truly said the good man of the hill unto Gawaine and to me of our dreams. Then went he out of the court as fast as his horse might, and so throughout the castle.

### **CHAPTER XVII. How Sir Launcelot returned towards Logris, and of other adventures which he saw in the way.**

THEN King Pelles came to Sir Launcelot and told him tidings of his brother, whereof he was sorry, that he wist not what to do. So Sir Launcelot departed, and took his arms, and said he would go see the realm of Logris, which I have not seen in twelve months. And there with he commended the king to God, and so rode through many realms. And at the last he came to a white abbey, and there they made him that night great cheer; and on the morn he rose and heard mass. And afore an altar he found a rich tomb, which was newly made; and then he took heed, and saw the sides written with gold which said: Here lieth King Bagdemagus of Gore, which King Arthur's nephew slew; and named him, Sir Gawaine. Then was not he a little sorry, for Launcelot loved him much more than any other, and had it been any other than Gawaine he should not have escaped from death to life; and said to himself: Ah Lord God, this is a great hurt unto King Arthur's court, the loss of such a man. And then he departed and came to the abbey where Galahad did the adventure of the tombs, and won the white shield with the red cross; and there had he great cheer all that night.

And on the morn he turned unto Camelot, where he found King Arthur and the queen. But many of the knights of the Round Table were slain and destroyed, more than half. And so three were come home, Ector, Gawaine, and Lionel, and many other that need not to be rehearsed. And all the court was passing glad of Sir Launcelot, and the king asked him many tidings of his son Galahad. And there Launcelot told the king of his adventures that had befallen him since he departed. And also he told him of the adventures of Galahad, Percivale, and Bors, which that he knew by the letter of the dead damosel, and as Galahad had told him. Now God would, said the king, that they were all three here. That shall never be, said Launcelot, for two of them shall ye never see, but one of them

shall come again.

Now leave we this story and speak of Galahad.

### **CHAPTER XVIII. How Galahad came to King Mordrains, and of other matters and adventures.**

NOW, saith the story, Galahad rode many journeys in vain. And at the last he came to the abbey where King Mordrains was, and when he heard that, he thought he would abide to see him. And upon the morn, when he had heard mass, Galahad came unto King Mordrains, and anon the king saw him, which had lain blind of long time. And then he dressed him against him, and said: Galahad, the servant of Jesu Christ, whose coming I have abiden so long, now embrace me and let me rest on thy breast, so that I may rest between thine arms, for thou art a clean virgin above all knights, as the flower of the lily in whom virginity is signified, and thou art the rose the which is the flower of all good virtues, and in colour of fire. For the fire of the Holy Ghost is taken so in thee that my flesh which was all dead of oldness is become young again. Then Galahad heard his words, then he embraced him and all his body. Then said he: Fair Lord Jesu Christ, now I have my will. Now I require thee, in this point that I am in, thou come and visit me. And anon Our Lord heard his prayer: therewith the soul departed from the body.

And then Galahad put him in the earth as a king ought to be, and so departed and so came into a perilous forest where he found the well the which boileth with great waves, as the tale telleth to-fore. And as soon as Galahad set his hand thereto it ceased, so that it brent no more, and the heat departed. For that it brent it was a sign of lechery, the which was that time much used. But that heat might not abide his pure virginity. And this was taken in the country for a miracle. And so ever after was it called Galahad's well.

Then by adventure he came into the country of Gore, and into the abbey where Launcelot had been to-forehand, and found the tomb of King Bagdemagus, but he was founder thereof, Joseph of Aramathie's son; and the tomb of Simeon where Launcelot had failed. Then he looked into a croft under the minster, and there he saw a tomb which brent full marvellously. Then asked he the brethren what it was. Sir, said they, a marvellous adventure that may not be brought unto none end but by him that passeth of bounty and of knighthood all them of the Round Table. I would, said Galahad, that ye would lead me thereto. Gladly, said they, and so led him till a cave. And he went down upon greses, and came nigh the tomb. And then the flaming failed, and the fire stauched, the which many a day had been great. Then came there a voice that said: Much are ye beholden to thank Our Lord, the which hath given you a good

hour, that ye may draw out the souls of earthly pain, and to put them into the joys of paradise. I am of your kindred, the which hath dwelled in this heat this three hundred winter and four-and-fifty to be purged of the sin that I did against Joseph of Aramathie. Then Galahad took the body in his arms and bare it into the minster. And that night lay Galahad in the abbey; and on the morn he gave him service, and put him in the earth afore the high altar.

### **CHAPTER XIX. How Sir Percivale and Sir Bors met with Sir Galahad, and how they came to the castle of Carbonek, and other matters.**

SO departed he from thence, and commended the brethren to God; and so he rode five days till that he came to the Maimed King. And ever followed Percivale the five days, asking where he had been; and so one told him how the adventures of Logris were enchieved. So on a day it befell that they came out of a great forest, and there they met at traverse with Sir Bors, the which rode alone. It is none need to tell if they were glad; and then he saluted, and they yielded him honour and good adventure, and everych told other. Then said Bors: It is mo than a year and an half that I ne lay ten times where men dwelled, but in wild forests and in mountains, but God was ever my comfort.

Then rode they a great while till that they came to the castle of Carbonek. And when they were entered within the castle King Pelles knew them; then there was great joy, for they wist well by their coming that they had fulfilled the quest of the Sangreal. Then Eliazar, King Pelles' son, brought to-fore them the broken sword wherewith Joseph was stricken through the thigh. Then Bors set his hand thereto, if that he might have soldered it again; but it would not be. Then he took it to Percivale, but he had no more power thereto than he. Now have ye it again, said Percivale to Galahad, for an it be ever enchieved by any bodily man ye must do it. And then he took the pieces and set them together, and they seemed that they had never been broken, and as well as it had been first forged. And when they within espied that the adventure of the sword was enchieved, then they gave the sword to Bors, for it might not be better set; for he was a good knight and a worthy man.

And a little afore even the sword arose great and marvellous, and was full of great heat that many men fell for dread. And anon alighted a voice among them, and said: They that ought not to sit at the table of Jesu Christ arise, for now shall very knights be fed. So they went thence, all save King Pelles and Eliazar, his son, the which were holy men, and a maid which was his niece; and so these three fellows and they three were there, no mo. Anon they saw knights all armed came in at the hall door, and did off their helms and their arms, and said unto Galahad: Sir, we have hied right much for to be with you at this table where the

holy meat shall be departed. Then said he: Ye be welcome, but of whence be ye? So three of them said they were of Gaul, and other three said they were of Ireland, and the other three said they were of Denmark. So as they sat thus there came out a bed of tree, of a chamber, the which four gentlewomen brought; and in the bed lay a good man sick, and a crown of gold upon his head; and there in the midst of the place they set him down, and went again their way. Then he lift up his head, and said: Galahad, Knight, ye be welcome, for much have I desired your coming, for in such pain and in such anguish I have been long. But now I trust to God the term is come that my pain shall be allayed, that I shall pass out of this world so as it was promised me long ago. Therewith a voice said: There be two among you that be not in the quest of the Sangreal, and therefore depart ye.

### **CHAPTER XX How Galahad and his fellows were fed of the Holy Sangreal, and how Our Lord appeared to them, and other things.**

THEN King Pelles and his son departed. And therewithal beseemed them that there came a man, and four angels from heaven, clothed in likeness of a bishop, and had a cross in his hand; and these four angels bare him up in a chair, and set him down before the table of silver where upon the Sangreal was; and it seemed that he had in midst of his forehead letters the which said: See ye here Joseph, the first bishop of Christendom, the same which Our Lord succoured in the city of Sarras in the spiritual place. Then the knights marvelled, for that bishop was dead more than three hundred year to-fore. O knights, said he, marvel not, for I was sometime an earthly man. With that they heard the chamber door open, and there they saw angels; and two bare candles of wax, and the third a towel, and the fourth a spear which bled marvellously, that three drops fell within a box which he held with his other hand. And they set the candles upon the table, and the third the towel upon the vessel, and the fourth the holy spear even upright upon the vessel. And then the bishop made semblaunt as though he would have gone to the sacring of the mass. And then he took an ubblie which was made in likeness of bread. And at the lifting up there came a figure in likeness of a child, and the visage was as red and as bright as any fire, and smote himself into the bread, so that they all saw it that the bread was formed of a fleshly man; and then he put it into the Holy Vessel again, and then he did that longed to a priest to do to a mass. And then he went to Galahad and kissed him, and bade him go and kiss his fellows: and so he did anon. Now, said he, servants of Jesu Christ, ye shall be fed afore this table with sweet meats that never knights tasted. And when he had said, he vanished away. And they set them at the table in great dread, and made their prayers.

Then looked they and saw a man come out of the Holy Vessel, that had all the signs of the passion of Jesu Christ, bleeding all openly, and said: My knights, and my servants, and my true children, which be come out of deadly life into spiritual life, I will now no longer hide me from you, but ye shall see now a part of my secrets and of my hidden things: now hold and receive the high meat which ye have so much desired. Then took he himself the Holy Vessel and came to Galahad; and he kneeled down, and there he received his Saviour, and after him so received all his fellows; and they thought it so sweet that it was marvellous to tell. Then said he to Galahad: Son, wottest thou what I hold betwixt my hands? Nay, said he, but if ye will tell me. This is, said he, the holy dish wherein I ate the lamb on Sheer-Thursday. And now hast thou seen that thou most desired to see, but yet hast thou not seen it so openly as thou shalt see it in the city of Sarras in the spiritual place. Therefore thou must go hence and bear with thee this Holy Vessel; for this night it shall depart from the realm of Logris, that it shall never be seen more here. And wottest thou wherefore? For he is not served nor worshipped to his right by them of this land, for they be turned to evil living; therefore I shall disherit them of the honour which I have done them. And therefore go ye three to-morrow unto the sea, where ye shall find your ship ready, and with you take the sword with the strange girdles, and no more with you but Sir Percivale and Sir Bors. Also I will that ye take with you of the blood of this spear for to anoint the Maimed King, both his legs and all his body, and he shall have his health. Sir, said Galahad, why shall not these other fellows go with us? For this cause: for right as I departed my apostles one here and another there, so I will that ye depart; and two of you shall die in my service, but one of you shall come again and tell tidings. Then gave he them his blessing and vanished away.

### **CHAPTER XXI. How Galahad anointed with the blood of the spear the Maimed King, and of other adventures.**

AND Galahad went anon to the spear which lay upon the table, and touched the blood with his fingers, and came after to the Maimed King and anointed his legs. And therewith he clothed him anon, and start upon his feet out of his bed as an whole man, and thanked Our Lord that He had healed him. And that was not to the worldward, for anon he yielded him to a place of religion of white monks, and was a full holy man. That same night about midnight came a voice among them which said: My sons and not my chief sons, my friends and not my warriors, go ye hence where ye hope best to do and as I bade you. Ah, thanked' be Thou, Lord, that Thou wilt vouchsafe to call us, Thy sinners. Now may we well prove that we have not lost our pains. And anon in all haste they took their

harness and departed. But the three knights of Gaul, one of them hight Claudine, King Claudas' son, and the other two were great gentlemen. Then prayed Galahad to everych of them, that if they come to King Arthur's court that they should salute my lord, Sir Launcelot, my father, and all the fellowship (1) of the Round Table; and prayed them if that they came on that part that they should not forget it.

Right so departed Galahad, Percivale and Bors with him; and so they rode three days, and then they came to a rivage, and found the ship whereof the tale speaketh of

1 So W. de Worde; Caxton "of them."

to-fore. And when they came to the board they found in the midst the table of silver which they had left with the Maimed King, and the Sangreal which was covered with red samite. Then were they glad to have such things in their fellowship; and so they entered and made great reverence thereto; and Galahad fell in his prayer long time to Our Lord, that at what time he asked, that he should pass out of this world. So much he prayed till a voice said to him: Galahad, thou shalt have thy request; and when thou askest the death of thy body thou shalt have it, and then shalt thou find the life of the soul. Percivale heard this, and prayed him, of fellowship that was between them, to tell him wherefore he asked such things. That shall I tell you, said Galahad; the other day when we saw a part of the adventures of the Sangreal I was in such a joy of heart, that I trow never man was that was earthly. And therefore I wot well, when my body is dead my soul shall be in great joy to see the blessed Trinity every day, and the majesty of Our Lord, Jesu Christ.

So long were they in the ship that they said to Galahad: Sir, in this bed ought ye to lie, for so saith the scripture. And so he laid him down and slept a great while; and when he awaked he looked afore him and saw the city of Sarras. And as they would have landed they saw the ship wherein Percivale had put his sister in. Truly, said Percivale, in the name of God, well hath my sister holden us covenant. Then took they out of the ship the table of silver, and he took it to Percivale and to Bors, to go to-fore, and Galahad came behind. And right so they went to the city, and at the gate of the city they saw an old man crooked. Then Galahad called him and bade him help to bear this heavy thing. Truly, said the old man, it is ten year ago that I might not go but with crutches. Care thou not, said Galahad, and arise up and shew thy good will. And so he assayed, and found himself as whole as ever he was. Than ran he to the table, and took one part against Galahad. And anon arose there great noise in the city, that a cripple was made whole by knights marvellous that entered into the city.

Then anon after, the three knights went to the water, and brought up into the palace Percivale's sister, and buried her as richly as a king's daughter ought to be. And when the king of the city, which was cleped Estorausse, saw the fellowship, he asked them of whence they were, and what thing it was that they had brought upon the table of silver. And they told him the truth of the Sangreal, and the power which that God had sent there. Then the king was a tyrant, and was come of the line of paynims, and took them and put them in prison in a deep hole.

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## **CHAPTER XXII. How they were fed with the Sangreal while they were in prison, and how Galahad was made king.**

BUT as soon as they were there Our Lord sent them the Sangreal, through whose grace they were always fulfilled while that they were in prison. So at the year's end it befell that this King Estorausse lay sick, and felt that he should die. Then he sent for the three knights, and they came afore him; and he cried them mercy of that he had done to them, and they forgave it him goodly; and he died anon. When the king was dead all the city was dismayed, and wist not who might be their king. Right so as they were in counsel there came a voice among them, and bade them choose the youngest knight of them three to be their king: For he shall well maintain you and all yours. So they made Galahad king by all the assent of the holy city, and else they would have slain him. And when he was come to behold the land, he let make above the table of silver a chest of gold and of precious stones, that hilled the Holy Vessel. And every day early the three fellows would come afore it, and make their prayers.

Now at the year's end, and the self day after Galahad had borne the crown of gold, he arose up early and his fellows, and came to the palace, and saw to-fore them the Holy Vessel, and a man kneeling on his knees in likeness of a bishop, that had about him a great fellowship of angels, as it had been Jesu Christ himself; and then he arose and began a mass of Our Lady. And when he came to the sacrament of the mass, and had done, anon he called Galahad, and said to him: Come forth the servant of Jesu Christ, and thou shalt see that thou hast much desired to see. And then he began to tremble right hard when the deadly flesh began to behold the spiritual things. Then he held up his hands toward heaven and said: Lord, I thank thee, for now I see that that hath been my desire

many a day. Now, blessed Lord, would I not longer live, if it might please thee, Lord. And therewith the good man took Our Lord's body betwixt his hands, and proffered it to Galahad, and he received it right gladly and meekly. Now wottest thou what I am? said the good man. Nay, said Galahad. I am Joseph of Aramathie, the which Our Lord hath sent here to thee to bear thee fellowship; and wottest thou wherefore that he hath sent me more than any other? For thou hast resembled me in two things; in that thou hast seen the marvels of the Sangreal, in that thou hast been a clean maiden, as I have been and am.

And when he had said these words Galahad went to Percivale and kissed him, and commended him to God; and so he went to Sir Bors and kissed him, and commended him to God, and said: Fair lord, salute me to my lord, Sir Launcelot, my father, and as soon as ye see him, bid him remember of this unstable world. And therewith he kneeled down to-fore the table and made his prayers, and then suddenly his soul departed to Jesu Christ, and a great multitude of angels bare his soul up to heaven, that the two fellows might well behold it. Also the two fellows saw come from heaven an hand, but they saw not the body. And then it came right to the Vessel, and took it and the spear, and so bare it up to heaven. Sithen was there never man so hardy to say that he had seen the Sangreal.

### **CHAPTER XXIII. Of the sorrow that Percivale and Bors made when Galahad was dead: and of Percivale how he died, and other matters.**

WHEN Percivale and Bors saw Galahad dead they made as much sorrow as ever did two men. And if they had not been good men they might lightly have fallen in despair. And the people of the country and of the city were right heavy. And then he was buried; and as soon as he was buried Sir Percivale yielded him to an hermitage out of the city, and took a religious clothing. And Bors was alway with him, but never changed he his secular clothing, for that he purposed him to go again into the realm of Logris. Thus a year and two months lived Sir Percivale in the hermitage a full holy life, and then passed out of this world; and Bors let bury him by his sister and by Galahad in the spiritualities.

When Bors saw that he was in so far countries as in the parts of Babylon he departed from Sarras, and armed him and came to the sea, and entered into a ship; and so it befell him in good adventure he came into the realm of Logris; and he rode so fast till he came to Camelot where the king was. And then was there great joy made of him in the court, for they weened all he had been dead, forasmuch as he had been so long out of the country. And when they had eaten, the king made great clerks to come afore him, that they should chronicle of the high adventures of the good knights. When Bors had told him of the adventures



of the Sangreal, such as had befallen him and his three fellows, that was Launcelot, Percivale, Galahad, and himself, there Launcelot told the adventures of the Sangreal that he had seen. All this was made in great books, and put up in almeries at Salisbury. And anon Sir Bors said to Sir Launcelot: Galahad, your own son, saluted you by me, and after you King Arthur and all the court, and so did Sir Percivale, for I buried them with mine own hands in the city of Sarras. Also, Sir Launcelot, Galahad prayed you to remember of this unsiker world as ye behight him when ye were together more than half a year. This is true, said Launcelot; now I trust to God his prayer shall avail me.

Then Launcelot took Sir Bors in his arms, and said: Gentle cousin, ye are right welcome to me, and all that ever I may do for you and for yours ye shall find my poor body ready at all times, while the spirit is in it, and that I promise you faithfully, and never to fail. And wit ye well, gentle cousin, Sir Bors, that ye and I will never depart asunder whilst our lives may last. Sir, said he, I will as ye will.

*Thus endeth the history of the Sangreal, that was briefly drawn out of French into English, the which is a story chronicled for one of the truest and the holiest that is in this world, the which is the xvii book.*

*And here followeth the eighteenth book.*

## BOOK XVIII

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### **CHAPTER I. Of the joy King Arthur and the queen had of the achievement of the Sangreal; and how Launcelot fell to his old love again.**

SO after the quest of the Sangreal was fulfilled, and all knights that were left alive were come again unto the Table Round, as the book of the Sangreal maketh mention, then was there great joy in the court; and in especial King Arthur and Queen Guenever made great joy of the remnant that were come home, and passing glad was the king and the queen of Sir Launcelot and of Sir Bors, for they had been passing long away in the quest of the Sangreal.

Then, as the book saith, Sir Launcelot began to resort unto Queen Guenever again, and forgat the promise and the perfection that he made in the quest. For, as the book saith, had not Sir Launcelot been in his privy thoughts and in his mind so set inwardly to the queen as he was in seeming outward to God, there had no knight passed him in the quest of the Sangreal; but ever his thoughts were privily on the queen, and so they loved together more hotter than they did beforehand, and had such privy draughts together, that many in the court spake of it, and in especial Sir Agravaine, Sir Gawaine's brother, for he was ever open-mouthed.

So befell that Sir Launcelot had many resorts of ladies and damosels that daily resorted unto him, that besought him to be their champion, and in all such matters of right Sir Launcelot applied him daily to do for the pleasure of Our Lord, Jesu Christ. And ever as much as he might he withdrew him from the company and fellowship of Queen Guenever, for to eschew the slander and noise; wherefore the queen waxed wroth with Sir Launcelot. And upon a day she called Sir Launcelot unto her chamber, and said thus: Sir Launcelot, I see and feel daily that thy love beginneth to slake, for thou hast no joy to be in my presence, but ever thou art out of this court, and quarrels and matters thou hast nowadays for ladies and gentlewomen more than ever thou wert wont to have aforehand.

Ah madam, said Launcelot, in this ye must hold me excused for divers causes; one is, I was but late in the quest of the Sangreal; and I thank God of his great mercy, and never of my desert, that I saw in that my quest as much as ever

saw any sinful man, and so was it told me. And if I had not had my privy thoughts to return to your love again as I do, I had seen as great mysteries as ever saw my son Galahad, outhere Percivale, or Sir Bors; and therefore, madam, I was but late in that quest. Wit ye well, madam, it may not be yet lightly forgotten the high service in whom I did my diligent labour. Also, madam, wit ye well that there be many men speak of our love in this court, and have you and me greatly in await, as Sir Agravaine and Sir Mordred; and madam, wit ye well I dread them more for your sake than for any fear I have of them myself, for I may happen to escape and rid myself in a great need, where ye must abide all that will be said unto you. And then if that ye fall in any distress through wilful folly, then is there none other remedy or help but by me and my blood. And wit ye well, madam, the boldness of you and me will bring us to great shame and slander; and that were me loath to see you dishonoured. And that is the cause I take upon me more for to do for damosels and maidens than ever I did to-fore, that men should understand my joy and my delight is my pleasure to have ado for damosels and maidens.

## **CHAPTER II. How the queen commanded Sir Launcelot to avoid the court, and of the sorrow that Launcelot made.**

ALL this while the queen stood still and let Sir Launcelot say what he would. And when he had all said she brast out a-weeping, and so she sobbed and wept a great while. And when she might speak she said: Launcelot, now I well understand that thou art a false recreant knight and a common lecher, and lovest and holdest other ladies, and by me thou hast disdain and scorn. For wit thou well, she said, now I understand thy falsehood, and therefore shall I never love thee no more. And never be thou so hardy to come in my sight; and right here I discharge thee this court, that thou never come within it; and I forfend thee my fellowship, and upon pain of thy head that thou see me no more. Right so Sir Launcelot departed with great heaviness, that unnethe he might sustain himself for great dole-making.

Then he called Sir Bors, Sir Ector de Maris, and Sir Lionel, and told them how the queen had forfended him the court, and so he was in will to depart into his own country. Fair sir, said Sir Bors de Ganis, ye shall not depart out of this land by mine advice. Ye must remember in what honour ye are renowned, and called the noblest knight of the world; and many great matters ye have in hand. And women in their hastiness will do oftentimes that sore repenteth them; and therefore by mine advice ye shall take your horse, and ride to the good hermitage here beside Windsor, that sometime was a good knight, his name is Sir Brasias, and there shall ye abide till I send you word of better tidings. Brother, said Sir

Launcelot, wit ye well I am full loath to depart out of this realm, but the queen hath defended me so highly, that meseemeth she will never be my good lady as she hath been. Say ye never so, said Sir Bors, for many times or this time she hath been wroth with you, and after it she was the first that repented it. Ye say well, said Launcelot, for now will I do by your counsel, and take mine horse and my harness, and ride to the hermit Sir Brasias, and there will I repose me until I hear some manner of tidings from you; but, fair brother, I pray you get me the love of my lady, Queen Guenever, an ye may Sir, said Sir Bors, ye need not to move me of such matters, for well ye wot I will do what I may to please you.

And then the noble knight, Sir Launcelot, departed with right heavy cheer suddenly, that none earthly creature wist of him, nor where he was become, but Sir Bors. So when Sir Launcelot was departed, the queen outward made no manner of sorrow in showing to none of his blood nor to none other. But wit ye well, inwardly, as the book saith, she took great thought, but she bare it out with a proud countenance as though she felt nothing nor danger.

### **CHAPTER III. How at a dinner that the queen made there was a knight enpoisoned, which Sir Mador laid on the queen.**

AND then the queen let make a privy dinner in London unto the knights of the Round Table. And all was for to show outward that she had as great joy in all other knights of the Table Round as she had in Sir Launcelot. All only at that dinner she had Sir Gawaine and his brethren, that is for to say Sir Agravaire, Sir Gaheris, Sir Gareth, and Sir Mordred. Also there was Sir Bors de Ganis, Sir Blamore de Ganis, Sir Bleoberis de Ganis, Sir Galihud, Sir Galihodin, Sir Ector de Maris, Sir Lionel, Sir Palomides, Safere his brother, Sir La Cote Male Taile, Sir Persant, Sir Ironside, Sir Brandiles, Sir Kay le Seneschal, Sir Mador de la Porte, Sir Patrise, a knight of Ireland, Aliduk, Sir Astamore, and Sir Pinel le Savage, the which was cousin to Sir Lamorak de Galis, the good knight that Sir Gawaine and his brethren slew by treason. And so these four-and-twenty knights should dine with the queen in a privy place by themselves, and there was made a great feast of all manner of dainties.

But Sir Gawaine had a custom that he used daily at dinner and at supper, that he loved well all manner of fruit, and in especial apples and pears. And therefore whosomever dined or feasted Sir Gawaine would commonly purvey for good fruit for him, and so did the queen for to please Sir Gawaine; she let purvey for him all manner of fruit, for Sir Gawaine was a passing hot knight of nature. And this Pinel hated Sir Gawaine because of his kinsman Sir Lamorak de Galis; and therefore for pure envy and hate Sir Pinel enpoisoned certain apples for to enpoison Sir Gawaine. And so this was well unto the end of the meat; and so it

befell by misfortune a good knight named Patrise, cousin unto Sir Mador de la Porte, to take a poisoned apple. And when he had eaten it he swelled so till he brast, and there Sir Patrise fell down suddenly dead among them.

Then every knight leapt from the board ashamed, and araged for wrath, nigh out of their wits. For they wist not what to say; considering Queen Guenever made the feast and dinner, they all had suspicion unto her. My lady, the queen, said Gawaine, wit ye well, madam, that this dinner was made for me, for all folks that know my condition understand that I love well fruit, and now I see well I had near been slain; therefore, madam, I dread me lest ye will be shamed. Then the queen stood still and was sore abashed, that she nist not what to say. This shall not so be ended, said Sir Mador de la Porte, for here have I lost a full noble knight of my blood; and therefore upon this shame and despite I will be revenged to the utterance. And there openly Sir Mador appealed the queen of the death of his cousin, Sir Patrise. Then stood they all still, that none would speak a word against him, for they all had great suspicion unto the queen because she let make that dinner. And the queen was so abashed that she could none other ways do, but wept so heartily that she fell in a swoon. With this noise and cry came to them King Arthur, and when he wist of that trouble he was a passing heavy man.

#### **CHAPTER IV. How Sir Mador appeached the queen of treason, and there was no knight would fight for her at the first time.**

AND ever Sir Mador stood still afore the king, and ever he appealed the queen of treason; for the custom was such that time that all manner of shameful death was called treason. Fair lords, said King Arthur, me repenteth of this trouble, but the case is so I may not have ado in this matter, for I must be a rightful judge; and that repenteth me that I may not do battle for my wife, for as I deem this deed came never by her. And therefore I suppose she shall not be all distained, but that some good knight shall put his body in jeopardy for my queen rather than she shall be brent in a wrong quarrel. And therefore, Sir Mador, be not so hasty, for it may happen she shall not be all friendless; and therefore desire thou thy day of battle, and she shall purvey her of some good knight that shall answer you, or else it were to me great shame, and to all my court.

My gracious lord, said Sir Mador, ye must hold me excused, for though ye be our king in that degree, ye are but a knight as we are, and ye are sworn unto knighthood as well as we; and therefore I beseech you that ye be not displeased, for there is none of the four-and-twenty knights that were bidden to this dinner but all they have great suspicion unto the queen. What say ye all, my lords? said Sir Mador. Then they answered by and by that they could not excuse the queen; for why she made the dinner, and either it must come by her or by her servants.

Alas, said the queen, I made this dinner for a good intent, and never for none evil, so Almighty God me help in my right, as I was never purposed to do such evil deeds, and that I report me unto God.

My lord, the king, said Sir Mador, I require you as ye be a righteous king give me a day that I may have justice. Well, said the king, I give the day this day fifteen days that thou be ready armed on horseback in the meadow beside Westminster. And if it so fall that there be any knight to encounter with you, there mayst thou do the best, and God speed the right. And if it so fall that there be no knight at that day, then must my queen be burnt, and there she shall be ready to have her judgment. I am answered, said Sir Mador. And every knight went where it liked them.

So when the king and the queen were together the king asked the queen how this case befell. The queen answered: So God me help, I wot not how or in what manner. Where is Sir Launcelot? said King Arthur; an he were here he would not grudge to do battle for you. Sir, said the queen, I wot not where he is, but his brother and his kinsmen deem that he be not within this realm. That me repenteth, said King Arthur, for an he were here he would soon stint this strife. Then I will counsel you, said the king, and unto Sir Bors: That ye will do battle for her for Sir Launcelot's sake, and upon my life he will not refuse you. For well I see, said the king, that none of these four-and-twenty knights that were with you at your dinner where Sir Patrise was slain, that will do battle for you, nor none of them will say well of you, and that shall be a great slander for you in this court. Alas, said the queen, and I may not do withal, but now I miss Sir Launcelot, for an he were here he would put me soon to my heart's ease. What aileth you, said the king, ye cannot keep Sir Launcelot upon your side? For wit ye well, said the king, who that hath Sir Launcelot upon his part hath the most man of worship in the world upon his side. Now go your way, said the king unto the queen, and require Sir Bors to do battle for you for Sir Launcelot's sake.

#### **CHAPTER V. How the queen required Sir Bors to fight for her, and how he granted upon condition; and how he warned Sir Launcelot thereof.**

SO the queen departed from the king, and sent for Sir Bors into her chamber. And when he was come she besought him of succour. Madam, said he, what would ye that I did? for I may not with my worship have ado in this matter, because I was at the same dinner, for dread that any of those knights would have me in suspicion. Also, madam, said Sir Bors, now miss ye Sir Launcelot, for he would not have failed you neither in right nor in wrong, as ye have well proved when ye have been in danger; and now ye have driven him out of this country, by whom ye and all we were daily worshipped by; therefore, madam, I marvel

how ye dare for shame require me to do any thing for you, in so much ye have chased him out of your country by whom we were borne up and honoured. Alas, fair knight, said the queen, I put me wholly in your grace, and all that is done amiss I will amend as ye will counsel me. And therewith she kneeled down upon both her knees, and besought Sir Bors to have mercy upon her: Outher I shall have a shameful death, and thereto I never offended.

Right so came King Arthur, and found the queen kneeling afore Sir Bors; then Sir Bors pulled her up, and said: Madam, ye do me great dishonour. Ah, gentle knight, said the king, have mercy upon my queen, courteous knight, for I am now in certain she is untruly defamed. And therefore, courteous knight, said the king, promise her to do battle for her, I require you for the love of Sir Launcelot. My lord, said Sir Bors, ye require me the greatest thing that any man may require me; and wit ye well if I grant to do battle for the queen I shall wrath many of my fellowship of the Table Round. But as for that, said Bors, I will grant my lord that for my lord Sir Launcelot's sake, and for your sake I will at that day be the queen's champion unless that there come by adventure a better knight than I am to do battle for her. Will ye promise me this, said the king, by your faith? Yea sir, said Sir Bors, of that I will not fail you, nor her both, but if there come a better knight than I am, and then shall he have the battle. Then was the king and the queen passing glad, and so departed, and thanked him heartily.

So then Sir Bors departed secretly upon a day, and rode unto Sir Launcelot thereas he was with the hermit, Sir Brasias, and told him of all their adventure. Ah Jesu, said Sir Launcelot, this is come happily as I would have it, and therefore I pray you make you ready to do battle, but look that ye tarry till ye see me come, as long as ye may. For I am sure Mador is an hot knight when he is enchafed, for the more ye suffer him the hastier will he be to battle. Sir, said Bors, let me deal with him, doubt ye not ye shall have all your will. Then departed Sir Bors from him and came to the court again. Then was it noised in all the court that Sir Bors should do battle for the queen; wherefore many knights were displeased with him, that he would take upon him to do battle in the queen's quarrel; for there were but few knights in all the court but they deemed the queen was in the wrong, and that she had done that treason.

So Sir Bors answered thus to his fellows of the Table Round: Wit ye well, my fair lords, it were shame to us all an we suffered to see the most noble queen of the world to be shamed openly, considering her lord and our lord is the man of most worship in the world, and most christened, and he hath ever worshipped us all in all places. Many answered him again: As for our most noble King Arthur, we love him and honour him as well as ye do, but as for Queen Guenever we love her not, because she is a destroyer of good knights. Fair lords,

said Sir Bors, meseemeth ye say not as ye should say, for never yet in my days knew I never nor heard say that ever she was a destroyer of any good knight. But at all times as far as ever I could know she was a maintainer of good knights; and ever she hath been large and free of her goods to all good knights, and the most bounteous lady of her gifts and her good grace, that ever I saw or heard speak of. And therefore it were shame, said Sir Bors, to us all to our most noble king's wife, an we suffered her to be shamefully slain. And wit ye well, said Sir Bors, I will not suffer it, for I dare say so much, the queen is not guilty of Sir Patrise's death, for she owed him never none ill will, nor none of the four-and-twenty knights that were at that dinner; for I dare say for good love she bade us to dinner, and not for no mal engine, and that I doubt not shall be proved hereafter, for howsomever the game goeth, there was treason among us. Then some said to Sir Bors: We may well believe your words. And so some of them were well pleased, and some were not so.

#### **CHAPTER VI. How at the day Sir Bors made him ready for to fight for the queen; and when he would fight how another discharged him.**

THE day came on fast until the even that the battle should be. Then the queen sent for Sir Bors and asked him how he was disposed. Truly madam, said he, I am disposed in likewise as I promised you, that is for to say I shall not fail you, unless by adventure there come a better knight than I am to do battle for you, then, madam, am I discharged of my promise. Will ye, said the queen, that I tell my lord Arthur thus? Do as it shall please you, madam. Then the queen went unto the king and told him the answer of Sir Bors. Have ye no doubt, said the king, of Sir Bors, for I call him now one of the best knights of the world, and the most profitablest man. And thus it passed on until the morn, and the king and the queen and all manner of knights that were there at that time drew them unto the meadow beside Westminster where the battle should be. And so when the king was come with the queen and many knights of the Round Table, then the queen was put there in the Constable's ward, and a great fire made about an iron stake, that an Sir Mador de la Porte had the better, she should be burnt: such custom was used in those days, that neither for favour, neither for love nor affinity, there should be none other but righteous judgment, as well upon a king as upon a knight, and as well upon a queen as upon another poor lady.

So in this meanwhile came in Sir Mador de la Porte, and took his oath afore the king, that the queen did this treason until his cousin Sir Patrise, and unto his oath he would prove it with his body, hand for hand, who that would say the contrary. Right so came in Sir Bors de Ganis, and said: That as for Queen Guenever she is in the right, and that will I make good with my hands that she is



not culpable of this treason that is put upon her. Then make thee ready, said Sir Mador, and we shall prove whether thou be in the right or I. Sir Mador, said Sir Bors, wit thou well I know you for a good knight. Not for then I shall not fear you so greatly, but I trust to God I shall be able to withstand your malice. But this much have I promised my lord Arthur and my lady the queen, that I shall do battle for her in this case to the uttermost, unless that there come a better knight than I am and discharge me. Is that all? said Sir Mador, either come thou off and do battle with me, or else say nay. Take your horse, said Sir Bors, and as I suppose, ye shall not tarry long but ye shall be answered.

Then either departed to their tents and made them ready to horseback as they thought best. And anon Sir Mador came into the field with his shield on his shoulder and his spear in his hand; and so rode about the place crying unto Arthur: Bid your champion come forth an he dare. Then was Sir Bors ashamed and took his horse and came to the lists' end. And then was he ware where came from a wood there fast by a knight all armed, upon a white horse, with a strange shield of strange arms; and he came riding all that he might run, and so he came to Sir Bors, and said thus: Fair knight, I pray you be not displeased, for here must a better knight than ye are have this battle, therefore I pray you withdraw you. For wit ye well I have had this day a right great journey, and this battle ought to be mine, and so I promised you when I spake with you last, and with all my heart I thank you of your good will. Then Sir Bors rode unto King Arthur and told him how there was a knight come that would have the battle for to fight for the queen. What knight is he? said the king. I wot not, said Sir Bors, but such covenant he made with me to be here this day. Now my lord, said Sir Bors, here am I discharged.

### **CHAPTER VII How Sir Launcelot fought against Sir Mador for the queen, and how he overcame Sir Mador, and discharged the queen.**

THEN the king called to that knight, and asked him if he would fight for the queen. Then he answered to the king: Therefore came I hither, and therefore, sir king, he said, tarry me no longer, for I may not tarry. For anon as I have finished this battle I must depart hence, for I have ado many matters elsewhere. For wit you well, said that knight, this is dishonour to you all knights of the Round Table, to see and know so noble a lady and so courteous a queen as Queen Guenever is, thus to be rebuked and shamed amongst you. Then they all marvelled what knight that might be that so took the battle upon him. For there was not one that knew him, but if it were Sir Bors.

Then said Sir Mador de la Porte unto the king: Now let me wit with whom I shall have ado withal. And then they rode to the lists' end, and there they

couched their spears, and ran together with all their might, and Sir Mador's spear brake all to pieces, but the other's spear held, and bare Sir Mador's horse and all backward to the earth a great fall. But mightily and suddenly he avoided his horse and put his shield afore him, and then drew his sword, and bade the other knight alight and do battle with him on foot. Then that knight descended from his horse lightly like a valiant man, and put his shield afore him and drew his sword; and so they came eagerly unto battle, and either gave other many great strokes, tracing and traversing, racing and foining, and hurtling together with their swords as it were wild boars. Thus were they fighting nigh an hour, for this Sir Mador was a strong knight, and mightily proved in many strong battles. But at the last this knight smote Sir Mador grovelling upon the earth, and the knight stepped near him to have pulled Sir Mador flatling upon the ground; and therewith suddenly Sir Mador arose, and in his rising he smote that knight through the thick of the thighs that the blood ran out fiercely. And when he felt himself so wounded, and saw his blood, he let him arise upon his feet. And then he gave him such a buffet upon the helm that he fell to the earth flatling, and therewith he strode to him to have pulled off his helm off his head. And then Sir Mador prayed that knight to save his life, and so he yielded him as overcome, and released the queen of his quarrel. I will not grant thee thy life, said that knight, only that thou freely release the queen for ever, and that no mention be made upon Sir Patrise's tomb that ever Queen Guenever consented to that treason. All this shall be done, said Sir Mador, I clearly discharge my quarrel for ever.

Then the knights parters of the lists took up Sir Mador, and led him to his tent, and the other knight went straight to the stair-foot where sat King Arthur; and by that time was the queen come to the king, and either kissed other heartily. And when the king saw that knight, he stooped down to him, and thanked him, and in likewise did the queen; and the king prayed him to put off his helmet, and to repose him, and to take a sop of wine. And then he put off his helm to drink, and then every knight knew him that it was Sir Launcelot du Lake. Anon as the king wist that, he took the queen in his hand, and yode unto Sir Launcelot, and said: Sir, grant mercy of your great travail that ye have had this day for me and for my queen. My lord, said Sir Launcelot, wit ye well I ought of right ever to be in your quarrel, and in my lady the queen's quarrel, to do battle; for ye are the man that gave me the high order of knighthood, and that day my lady, your queen, did me great worship, and else I had been shamed; for that same day ye made me knight, through my hastiness I lost my sword, and my lady, your queen, found it, and lapped it in her train, and gave me my sword when I had need thereto, and else had I been shamed among all knights; and therefore, my

lord Arthur, I promised her at that day ever to be her knight in right outhur in wrong. Grant mercy, said the king, for this journey; and wit ye well, said the king, I shall acquit your goodness.

And ever the queen beheld Sir Launcelot, and wept so tenderly that she sank almost to the ground for sorrow that he had done to her so great goodness where she shewed him great unkindness. Then the knights of his blood drew unto him, and there either of them made great joy of other. And so came all the knights of the Table Round that were there at that time, and welcomed him. And then Sir Mador was had to leech-craft, and Sir Launcelot was healed of his wound. And then there was made great joy and mirths in that court.

### **CHAPTER VIII. How the truth was known by the Maiden of the Lake, and of divers other matters.**

AND so it befell that the damosel of the lake, her name was Nimue, the which wedded the good knight Sir Pelleas, and so she came to the court; for ever she did great goodness unto King Arthur and to all his knights through her sorcery and enchantments. And so when she heard how the queen was angered for the death of Sir Patrise, then she told it openly that she was never guilty; and there she disclosed by whom it was done, and named him, Sir Pinel; and for what cause he did it, there it was openly disclosed; and so the queen was excused, and the knight Pinel fled into his country. Then was it openly known that Sir Pinel enpoisoned the apples at the feast to that intent to have destroyed Sir Gawaine, because Sir Gawaine and his brethren destroyed Sir Lamorak de Galis, to the which Sir Pinel was cousin unto. Then was Sir Patrise buried in the church of Westminster in a tomb, and thereupon was written: Here lieth Sir Patrise of Ireland, slain by Sir Pinel le Savage, that enpoisoned apples to have slain Sir Gawaine, and by misfortune Sir Patrise ate one of those apples, and then suddenly he brast. Also there was written upon the tomb that Queen Guenever was appealed of treason of the death of Sir Patrise, by Sir Mador de la Porte; and there was made mention how Sir Launcelot fought with him for Queen Guenever, and overcame him in plain battle. All this was written upon the tomb of Sir Patrise in excusing of the queen. And then Sir Mador sued daily and long, to have the queen's good grace; and so by the means of Sir Launcelot he caused him to stand in the queen's good grace, and all was forgiven

Thus it passed on till our Lady Day, Assumption. Within a fifteen days of that feast the king let cry a great jousts and a tournament that should be at that day at Camelot, that is Winchester; and the king let cry that he and the King of Scots would joust against all that would come against them. And when this cry was made, thither came many knights. So there came thither the King of

Northgalis, and King Anguish of Ireland, and the King with the Hundred Knights, and Galahad, the haut prince, and the King of Northumberland, and many other noble dukes and earls of divers countries. So King Arthur made him ready to depart to these jousts, and would have had the queen with him, but at that time she would not, she said, for she was sick and might not ride at that time. That me repenteth, said the king, for this seven year ye saw not such a noble fellowship together except at Whitsuntide when Galahad departed from the court. Truly, said the queen to the king, ye must hold me excused, I may not be there, and that me repenteth. And many deemed the queen would not be there because of Sir Launcelot du Lake, for Sir Launcelot would not ride with the king, for he said that he was not whole of the wound the which Sir Mador had given him; wherefore the king was heavy and passing wroth. And so he departed toward Winchester with his fellowship; and so by the way the king lodged in a town called Astolat, that is now in English called Guildford, and there the king lay in the castle.

So when the king was departed the queen called Sir Launcelot to her, and said thus: Sir Launcelot, ye are greatly to blame thus to hold you behind my lord; what, trow ye, what will your enemies and mine say and deem? nought else but, See how Sir Launcelot holdeth him ever behind the king, and so doth the queen, for that they would have their pleasure together. And thus will they say, said the queen to Sir Launcelot, have ye no doubt thereof.

#### **CHAPTER IX. How Sir Launcelot rode to Astolat, and received a sleeve to wear upon his helm at the request of a maid.**

MADAM, said Sir Launcelot, I allow your wit, it is of late come since ye were wise. And therefore, madam, at this time I will be ruled by your counsel, and this night I will take my rest, and to-morrow by time I will take my way toward Winchester. But wit you well, said Sir Launcelot to the queen, that at that jousts I will be against the king, and against all his fellowship. Ye may there do as ye list, said the queen, but by my counsel ye shall not be against your king and your fellowship. For therein be full many hard knights of your blood, as ye wot well enough, it needeth not to rehearse them. Madam, said Sir Launcelot, I pray you that ye be not displeased with me, for I will take the adventure that God will send me.

And so upon the morn early Sir Launcelot heard mass and brake his fast, and so took his leave of the queen and departed. And then he rode so much until he came to Astolat, that is Guildford; and there it happed him in the eventide he came to an old baron's place that hight Sir Bernard of Astolat. And as Sir Launcelot entered into his lodging, King Arthur espied him as he did walk in a

garden beside the castle, how he took his lodging, and knew him full well. It is well, said King Arthur unto the knights that were with him in that garden beside the castle, I have now espied one knight that will play his play at the jousts to the which we be gone toward; I undertake he will do marvels. Who is that, we pray you tell us? said many knights that were there at that time. Ye shall not wit for me, said the king, as at this time. And so the king smiled, and went to his lodging.

So when Sir Launcelot was in his lodging, and unarmed him in his chamber, the old baron and hermit came to him making his reverence, and welcomed him in the best manner; but the old knight knew not Sir Launcelot. Fair sir, said Sir Launcelot to his host, I would pray you to lend me a shield that were not openly known, for mine is well known. Sir, said his host, ye shall have your desire, for meseemeth ye be one of the likeliest knights of the world, and therefore I shall shew you friendship. Sir, wit you well I have two sons that were but late made knights, and the eldest hight Sir Tirre, and he was hurt that same day he was made knight, that he may not ride, and his shield ye shall have; for that is not known I dare say but here, and in no place else. And my youngest son hight Lavaine, and if it please you, he shall ride with you unto that jousts; and he is of his age strong and wight, for much my heart giveth unto you that ye should be a noble knight, therefore I pray you, tell me your name, said Sir Bernard. As for that, said Sir Launcelot, ye must hold me excused as at this time, and if God give me grace to speed well at the jousts I shall come again and tell you. But I pray you, said Sir Launcelot, in any wise let me have your son, Sir Lavaine, with me, and that I may have his brother's shield. All this shall be done, said Sir Bernard.

This old baron had a daughter that was called that time the Fair Maiden of Astolat. And ever she beheld Sir Launcelot wonderfully; and as the book saith, she cast such a love unto Sir Launcelot that she could never withdraw her love, wherefore she died, and her name was Elaine le Blank. So thus as she came to and fro she was so hot in her love that she besought Sir Launcelot to wear upon him at the jousts a token of hers. Fair damosel, said Sir Launcelot, an if I grant you that, ye may say I do more for your love than ever I did for lady or damosel. Then he remembered him he would go to the jousts disguised. And because he had never fore that time borne no manner of token of no damosel, then he bethought him that he would bear one of her, that none of his blood thereby might know him, and then he said: Fair maiden, I will grant you to wear a token of yours upon mine helmet, and therefore what it is, shew it me. Sir, she said, it is a red sleeve of mine, of scarlet, well embroidered with great pearls: and so she brought it him. So Sir Launcelot received it, and said: Never did I erst so much for no damosel. And then Sir Launcelot betook the fair maiden his shield in

keeping, and prayed her to keep that until that he came again; and so that night he had merry rest and great cheer, for ever the damosel Elaine was about Sir Launcelot all the while she might be suffered.

#### **CHAPTER X. How the tourney began at Winchester, and what knights were at the jousts; and other things.**

SO upon a day, on the morn, King Arthur and all his knights departed, for their king had tarried three days to abide his noble knights. And so when the king was ridden, Sir Launcelot and Sir Lavaine made them ready to ride, and either of them had white shields, and the red sleeve Sir Launcelot let carry with him. And so they took their leave at Sir Bernard, the old baron, and at his daughter, the Fair Maiden of Astolat. And then they rode so long till that they came to Camelot, that time called Winchester; and there was great press of kings, dukes earls, and barons, and many noble knights. But there Sir Launcelot was lodged privily by the means of Sir Lavaine with a rich burgess, that no man in that town was ware what they were. And so they reposed them there till our Lady Day, Assumption, as the great feast should be. So then trumpets blew unto the field, and King Arthur was set on high upon a scaffold to behold who did best. But as the French book saith, the king would not suffer Sir Gawaine to go from him, for never had Sir Gawaine the better an Sir Launcelot were in the field; and many times was Sir Gawaine rebuked when Launcelot came into any jousts disguised.

Then some of the kings, as King Anguish of Ireland and the King of Scots, were that time turned upon the side of King Arthur. And then on the other party was the King of Northgalis, and the King with the Hundred Knights, and the King of Northumberland, and Sir Galahad, the haut prince. But these three kings and this duke were passing weak to hold against King Arthur's party, for with him were the noblest knights of the world. So then they withdrew them either party from other, and every man made him ready in his best manner to do what he might.

Then Sir Launcelot made him ready, and put the red sleeve upon his head, and fastened it fast; and so Sir Launcelot and Sir Lavaine departed out of Winchester privily, and rode until a little leaved wood behind the party that held against King Arthur's party, and there they held them still till the parties smote together. And then came in the King of Scots and the King of Ireland on Arthur's party, and against them came the King of Northumberland, and the King with the Hundred Knights smote down the King of Northumberland, and the King with the Hundred Knights smote down King Anguish of Ireland. Then Sir Palomides that was on Arthur's party encountered with Sir Galahad, and either of

them smote down other, and either party help their lords on horseback again. So there began a strong assail upon both parties. And then came in Sir Brandiles, Sir Sagramore le Desirous, Sir Dodinas le Savage, Sir Kay le Seneschal, Sir Griflet le Fise de Dieu, Sir Mordred, Sir Meliot de Logris, Sir Ozanna le Cure Hardy, Sir Safere, Sir Epinogris, Sir Galleron of Galway. All these fifteen knights were knights of the Table Round. So these with more other came in together, and beat aback the King of Northumberland and the King of Northgalis. When Sir Launcelot saw this, as he hoved in a little leaved wood, then he said unto Sir Lavaine: See yonder is a company of good knights, and they hold them together as boars that were chafed with dogs. That is truth, said Sir Lavaine.

### **CHAPTER XI. How Sir Launcelot and Sir Lavaine entered in the field against them of King Arthur's court, and how Launcelot was hurt.**

NOW, said Sir Launcelot, an ye will help me a little, ye shall see yonder fellowship that chaseth now these men in our side, that they shall go as fast backward as they went forward. Sir, spare not, said Sir Lavaine, for I shall do what I may. Then Sir Launcelot and Sir Lavaine came in at the thickest of the press, and there Sir Launcelot smote down Sir Brandiles, Sir Sagramore, Sir Dodinas, Sir Kay, Sir Griflet, and all this he did with one spear; and Sir Lavaine smote down Sir Lucan le Butler and Sir Bedevere. And then Sir Launcelot gat another spear, and there he smote down Sir Agravaine, Sir Gaheris, and Sir Mordred, and Sir Meliot de Logris; and Sir Lavaine smote Ozanna le Cure Hardy. And then Sir Launcelot drew his sword, and there he smote on the right hand and on the left hand, and by great force he unhorsed Sir Safere, Sir Epinogris, and Sir Galleron; and then the knights of the Table Round withdrew them aback, after they had gotten their horses as well as they might. O mercy Jesu, said Sir Gawaine, what knight is yonder that doth so marvellous deeds of arms in that field? I wot well what he is, said King Arthur, but as at this time I will not name him. Sir, said Sir Gawaine, I would say it were Sir Launcelot by his riding and his buffets that I see him deal, but ever meseemeth it should not be he, for that he beareth the red sleeve upon his head; for I wist him never bear token at no jousts, of lady nor gentlewoman. Let him be, said King Arthur, he will be better known, and do more, or ever he depart.

Then the party that was against King Arthur were well comforted, and then they held them together that beforehand were sore rebuked. Then Sir Bors, Sir Ector de Maris, and Sir Lionel called unto them the knights of their blood, as Sir Blamore de Ganis, Sir Bleoberis, Sir Aliduke, Sir Galihud, Sir Galihodin, Sir Bellangere le Beuse. So these nine knights of Sir Launcelot's kin thrust in mightily, for they were all noble knights; and they, of great hate and despite that

they had unto him, thought to rebuke that noble knight Sir Launcelot, and Sir Lavaine, for they knew them not; and so they came hurling together, and smote down many knights of Northgalis and of Northumberland. And when Sir Launcelot saw them fare so, he gat a spear in his hand; and there encountered with him all at once Sir Bors, Sir Ector, and Sir Lionel, and all they three smote him at once with their spears. And with force of themselves they smote Sir Launcelot's horse to the earth; and by misfortune Sir Bors smote Sir Launcelot through the shield into the side, and the spear brake, and the head left still in his side.

When Sir Lavaine saw his master lie on the ground, he ran to the King of Scots and smote him to the earth; and by great force he took his horse, and brought him to Sir Launcelot, and maugre of them all he made him to mount upon that horse. And then Launcelot gat a spear in his hand, and there he smote Sir Bors, horse and man, to the earth. In the same wise he served Sir Ector and Sir Lionel; and Sir Lavaine smote down Sir Blamore de Ganis. And then Sir Launcelot drew his sword, for he felt himself so sore y-hurt that he weened there to have had his death. And then he smote Sir Bleoberis such a buffet on the helm that he fell down to the earth in a swoon. And in the same wise he served Sir Aliduke and Sir Galihud. And Sir Lavaine smote down Sir Bellangere, that was the son of Alisander le Orphelin.

And by this was Sir Bors horsed, and then he came with Sir Ector and Sir Lionel, and all they three smote with swords upon Sir Launcelot's helmet. And when he felt their buffets and his wound, the which was so grievous, then he thought to do what he might while he might endure. And then he gave Sir Bors such a buffet that he made him bow his head passing low; and therewithal he raced off his helm, and might have slain him; and so pulled him down, and in the same wise he served Sir Ector and Sir Lionel. For as the book saith he might have slain them, but when he saw their visages his heart might not serve him thereto, but left them there. And then afterward he hurled into the thickest press of them all, and did there the marvelloust deeds of arms that ever man saw or heard speak of, and ever Sir Lavaine, the good knight, with him. And there Sir Launcelot with his sword smote down and pulled down, as the French book maketh mention, mo than thirty knights, and the most part were of the Table Round; and Sir Lavaine did full well that day, for he smote down ten knights of the Table Round.

## **CHAPTER XII. How Sir Launcelot and Sir Lavaine departed out of the field, and in what jeopardy Launcelot was.**

MERCY Jesu, said Sir Gawaine to Arthur, I marvel what knight that he is



with the red sleeve. Sir, said King Arthur, he will be known or he depart. And then the king blew unto lodging, and the prize was given by heralds unto the knight with the white shield that bare the red sleeve. Then came the King with the Hundred Knights, the King of Northgalis, and the King of Northumberland, and Sir Galahad, the haut prince, and said unto Sir Launcelot: Fair knight, God thee bless, for much have ye done this day for us, therefore we pray you that ye will come with us that ye may receive the honour and the prize as ye have worshipfully deserved it. My fair lords, said Sir Launcelot, wit you well if I have deserved thanks I have sore bought it, and that me repenteth, for I am like never to escape with my life; therefore, fair lords, I pray you that ye will suffer me to depart where me liketh, for I am sore hurt. I take none force of none honour, for I had liefer to repose me than to be lord of all the world. And therewithal he groaned piteously, and rode a great wallop away-ward from them until he came under a wood's side.

And when he saw that he was from the field nigh a mile, that he was sure he might not be seen, then he said with an high voice: O gentle knight, Sir Lavaine, help me that this truncheon were out of my side, for it sticketh so sore that it nigh slayeth me. O mine own lord, said Sir Lavaine, I would fain do that might please you, but I dread me sore an I pull out the truncheon that ye shall be in peril of death. I charge you, said Sir Launcelot, as ye love me, draw it out. And therewithal he descended from his horse, and right so did Sir Lavaine; and forthwithal Sir Lavaine drew the truncheon out of his side, and he gave a great shriek and a marvellous grisly groan, and the blood brast out nigh a pint at once, that at the last he sank down upon his buttocks, and so swooned pale and deadly. Alas, said Sir Lavaine, what shall I do? And then he turned Sir Launcelot into the wind, but so he lay there nigh half an hour as he had been dead.

And so at the last Sir Launcelot cast up his eyes, and said: O Lavaine, help me that I were on my horse, for here is fast by within this two mile a gentle hermit that sometime was a full noble knight and a great lord of possessions. And for great goodness he hath taken him to wilful poverty, and forsaken many lands, and his name is Sir Baudwin of Brittany, and he is a full noble surgeon and a good leech. Now let see, help me up that I were there, for ever my heart giveth me that I shall never die of my cousin-germain's hands. And then with great pain Sir Lavaine halp him upon his horse. And then they rode a great wallop together, and ever Sir Launcelot bled that it ran down to the earth; and so by fortune they came to that hermitage the which was under a wood, and a great cliff on the other side, and a fair water running under it. And then Sir Lavaine beat on the gate with the butt of his spear, and cried fast: Let in for Jesu's sake.

And there came a fair child to them, and asked them what they would. Fair

son, said Sir Lavaine, go and pray thy lord, the hermit, for God's sake to let in here a knight that is full sore wounded; and this day tell thy lord I saw him do more deeds of arms than ever I heard say that any man did. So the child went in lightly, and then he brought the hermit, the which was a passing good man. When Sir Lavaine saw him he prayed him for God's sake of succour. What knight is he? said the hermit. Is he of the house of King Arthur, or not? I wot not, said Sir Lavaine, what is he, nor what is his name, but well I wot I saw him do marvellously this day as of deeds of arms. On whose party was he? said the hermit. Sir, said Sir Lavaine, he was this day against King Arthur, and there he won the prize of all the knights of the Round Table. I have seen the day, said the hermit, I would have loved him the worse because he was against my lord, King Arthur, for sometime I was one of the fellowship of the Round Table, but I thank God now I am otherwise disposed. But where is he? let me see him. Then Sir Lavaine brought the hermit to him.

### **CHAPTER XIII. How Launcelot was brought to an hermit for to be healed of his wound, and of other matters.**

AND when the hermit beheld him, as he sat leaning upon his saddle-bow ever bleeding piteously, and ever the knight-hermit thought that he should know him, but he could not bring him to knowledge because he was so pale for bleeding. What knight are ye, said the hermit, and where were ye born? My fair lord, said Sir Launcelot, I am a stranger and a knight adventurous, that laboureth throughout many realms for to win worship. Then the hermit advised him better, and saw by a wound on his cheek that he was Sir Launcelot. Alas, said the hermit, mine own lord why lain you your name from me? Forsooth I ought to know you of right, for ye are the most noblest knight of the world, for well I know you for Sir Launcelot. Sir, said he, sith ye know me, help me an ye may, for God's sake, for I would be out of this pain at once, either to death or to life. Have ye no doubt, said the hermit, ye shall live and fare right well. And so the hermit called to him two of his servants, and so he and his servants bare him into the hermitage, and lightly unarmed him, and laid him in his bed. And then anon the hermit staunched his blood, and made him to drink good wine, so that Sir Launcelot was well refreshed and knew himself; for in those days it was not the guise of hermits as is nowadays, for there were none hermits in those days but that they had been men of worship and of prowess; and those hermits held great household, and refreshed people that were in distress.

Now turn we unto King Arthur, and leave we Sir Launcelot in the hermitage. So when the kings were come together on both parties, and the great feast should be holden, King Arthur asked the King of Northgalis and their fellowship, where

was that knight that bare the red sleeve: Bring him afore me that he may have his laud, and honour, and the prize, as it is right. Then spake Sir Galahad, the haut prince, and the King with the Hundred Knights: We suppose that knight is mischieved, and that he is never like to see you nor none of us all, and that is the greatest pity that ever we wist of any knight. Alas, said Arthur, how may this be, is he so hurt? What is his name? said King Arthur. Truly, said they all, we know not his name, nor from whence he came, nor whither he would. Alas, said the king, this be to me the worst tidings that came to me this seven year, for I would not for all the lands I wield to know and wit it were so that that noble knight were slain. Know ye him? said they all. As for that, said Arthur, whether I know him or know him not, ye shall not know for me what man he is, but Almighty Jesu send me good tidings of him. And so said they all. By my head, said Sir Gawaine, if it so be that the good knight be so sore hurt, it is great damage and pity to all this land, for he is one of the noblest knights that ever I saw in a field handle a spear or a sword; and if he may be found I shall find him, for I am sure he nis not far from this town. Bear you well, said King Arthur, an ye may find him, unless that he be in such a plight that he may not wield himself. Jesu defend, said Sir Gawaine, but wit I shall what he is, an I may find him.

Right so Sir Gawaine took a squire with him upon hackneys, and rode all about Camelot within six or seven mile, but so he came again and could hear no word of him. Then within two days King Arthur and all the fellowship returned unto London again. And so as they rode by the way it happed Sir Gawaine at Astolat to lodge with Sir Bernard thereas was Sir Launcelot lodged. And so as Sir Gawaine was in his chamber to repose him Sir Bernard, the old baron, came unto him, and his daughter Elaine, to cheer him and to ask him what tidings, and who did best at that tournament of Winchester. So God me help, said Sir Gawaine, there were two knights that bare two white shields, but the one of them bare a red sleeve upon his head, and certainly he was one of the best knights that ever I saw joust in field. For I dare say, said Sir Gawaine, that one knight with the red sleeve smote down forty knights of the Table Round, and his fellow did right well and worshipfully. Now blessed be God, said the Fair Maiden of Astolat, that that knight sped so well, for he is the man in the world that I first loved, and truly he shall be last that ever I shall love. Now, fair maid, said Sir Gawaine, is that good knight your love? Certainly sir, said she, wit ye well he is my love. Then know ye his name? said Sir Gawaine. Nay truly, said the damosel, I know not his name nor from whence he cometh, but to say that I love him, I promise you and God that I love him. How had ye knowledge of him first? said Sir Gawaine.

**CHAPTER XIV. How Sir Gawaine was lodged with the lord of Astolat, and there had knowledge that it was Sir Launcelot that bare the red sleeve.**

THEN she told him as ye have heard to-fore, and how her father betook him her brother to do him service, and how her father lent him her brother's, Sir Tirre's, shield: And here with me he left his own shield. For what cause did he so? said Sir Gawaine. For this cause, said the damosel, for his shield was too well known among many noble knights. Ah fair damosel, said Sir Gawaine, please it you let me have a sight of that shield. Sir, said she, it is in my chamber, covered with a case, and if ye will come with me ye shall see it. Not so, said Sir Bernard till his daughter, let send for it.

So when the shield was come, Sir Gawaine took off the case, and when he beheld that shield he knew anon that it was Sir Launcelot's shield, and his own arms. Ah Jesu mercy, said Sir Gawaine, now is my heart more heavier than ever it was to-fore. Why? said Elaine. For I have great cause, said Sir Gawaine. Is that knight that oweth this shield your love? Yea truly, said she, my love he is, God would I were his love. So God me speed, said Sir Gawaine, fair damosel ye have right, for an he be your love ye love the most honourable knight of the world, and the man of most worship. So me thought ever, said the damosel, for never or that time, for no knight that ever I saw, loved I never none erst. God grant, said Sir Gawaine, that either of you may rejoice other, but that is in a great adventure. But truly, said Sir Gawaine unto the damosel, ye may say ye have a fair grace, for why I have known that noble knight this four-and-twenty year, and never or that day, I nor none other knight, I dare make good, saw nor heard say that ever he bare token or sign of no lady, gentlewoman, ne maiden, at no jousts nor tournament. And therefore fair maiden, said Sir Gawaine, ye are much beholden to him to give him thanks. But I dread me, said Sir Gawaine, that ye shall never see him in this world, and that is great pity that ever was of earthly knight. Alas, said she, how may this be, is he slain? I say not so, said Sir Gawaine, but wit ye well he is grievously wounded, by all manner of signs, and by men's sight more likelier to be dead than to be alive; and wit ye well he is the noble knight, Sir Launcelot, for by this shield I know him. Alas, said the Fair Maiden of Astolat, how may this be, and what was his hurt? Truly, said Sir Gawaine, the man in the world that loved him best hurt him so; and I dare say, said Sir Gawaine, an that knight that hurt him knew the very certainty that he had hurt Sir Launcelot, it would be the most sorrow that ever came to his heart.

Now fair father, said then Elaine, I require you give me leave to ride and to seek him, or else I wot well I shall go out of my mind, for I shall never stint till that I find him and my brother, Sir Lavaine. Do as it liketh you, said her father, for me sore repenteth of the hurt of that noble knight. Right so the maid made

her ready, and before Sir Gawaine, making great dole.

Then on the morn Sir Gawaine came to King Arthur, and told him how he had found Sir Launcelot's shield in the keeping of the Fair Maiden of Astolat. All that knew I aforehand, said King Arthur, and that caused me I would not suffer you to have ado at the great jousts, for I espied, said King Arthur, when he came in till his lodging full late in the evening in Astolat. But marvel have I, said Arthur, that ever he would bear any sign of any damosel, for or now I never heard say nor knew that ever he bare any token of none earthly woman. By my head, said Sir Gawaine, the Fair Maiden of Astolat loveth him marvellously well; what it meaneth I cannot say, and she is ridden after to seek him. So the king and all came to London, and there Sir Gawaine openly disclosed to all the court that it was Sir Launcelot that jousted best.

#### **CHAPTER XV. Of the sorrow that Sir Bors had for the hurt of Launcelot; and of the anger that the queen had because Launcelot bare the sleeve.**

AND when Sir Bors heard that, wit ye well he was an heavy man, and so were all his kinsmen. But when Queen Guenever wist that Sir Launcelot bare the red sleeve of the Fair Maiden of Astolat she was nigh out of her mind for wrath. And then she sent for Sir Bors de Ganis in all the haste that might be. So when Sir Bors was come to-fore the queen, then she said: Ah Sir Bors, have ye heard say how falsely Sir Launcelot hath betrayed me? Alas madam, said Sir Bors, I am afeard he hath betrayed himself and us all. No force, said the queen, though he be destroyed, for he is a false traitor-knight. Madam, said Sir Bors, I pray you say ye not so, for wit you well I may not hear such language of him. Why Sir Bors, said she, should I not call him traitor when he bare the red sleeve upon his head at Winchester, at the great jousts? Madam, said Sir Bors, that sleeve-bearing repenteth me sore, but I dare say he did it to none evil intent, but for this cause he bare the red sleeve that none of his blood should know him. For or then we, nor none of us all, never knew that ever he bare token or sign of maid, lady, ne gentlewoman. Fie on him, said the queen, yet for all his pride and bobaunce there ye proved yourself his better. Nay madam, say ye never more so, for he beat me and my fellows, and might have slain us an he had would. Fie on him, said the queen, for I heard Sir Gawaine say before my lord Arthur that it were marvel to tell the great love that is between the Fair Maiden of Astolat and him. Madam, said Sir Bors, I may not warn Sir Gawaine to say what it pleased him; but I dare say, as for my lord, Sir Launcelot, that he loveth no lady, gentlewoman, nor maid, but all he loveth in like much. And therefore madam, said Sir Bors, ye may say what ye will, but wit ye well I will haste me to seek

him, and find him wheresomever he be, and God send me good tidings of him. And so leave we them there, and speak we of Sir Launcelot that lay in great peril.

So as fair Elaine came to Winchester she sought there all about, and by fortune Sir Lavaine was ridden to play him, to enchafe his horse. And anon as Elaine saw him she knew him, and then she cried aloud until him. And when he heard her anon he came to her, and then she asked her brother how did my lord, Sir Launcelot. Who told you, sister, that my lord's name was Sir Launcelot? Then she told him how Sir Gawaine by his shield knew him. So they rode together till that they came to the hermitage, and anon she alighted.

So Sir Lavaine brought her in to Sir Launcelot; and when she saw him lie so sick and pale in his bed she might not speak, but suddenly she fell to the earth down suddenly in a swoon, and there she lay a great while. And when she was relieved, she shrieked and said: My lord, Sir Launcelot, alas why be ye in this plight? and then she swooned again. And then Sir Launcelot prayed Sir Lavaine to take her up: And bring her to me. And when she came to herself Sir Launcelot kissed her, and said: Fair maiden, why fare ye thus? ye put me to pain; wherefore make ye no more such cheer, for an ye be come to comfort me ye be right welcome; and of this little hurt that I have I shall be right hastily whole by the grace of God. But I marvel, said Sir Launcelot, who told you my name? Then the fair maiden told him all how Sir Gawaine was lodged with her father: And there by your shield he discovered your name. Alas, said Sir Launcelot, that me repenteth that my name is known, for I am sure it will turn unto anger. And then Sir Launcelot compassed in his mind that Sir Gawaine would tell Queen Guenever how he bare the red sleeve, and for whom; that he wist well would turn into great anger.

So this maiden Elaine never went from Sir Launcelot, but watched him day and night, and did such attendance to him, that the French book saith there was never woman did more kindlier for man than she. Then Sir Launcelot prayed Sir Lavaine to make aspies in Winchester for Sir Bors if he came there, and told him by what tokens he should know him, by a wound in his forehead. For well I am sure, said Sir Launcelot, that Sir Bors will seek me, for he is the same good knight that hurt me.

## **CHAPTER XVI. How Sir Bors sought Launcelot and found him in the hermitage, and of the lamentation between them.**

NOW turn we unto Sir Bors de Ganis that came unto Winchester to seek after his cousin Sir Launcelot. And so when he came to Winchester, anon there were men that Sir Lavaine had made to lie in a watch for such a man, and anon

Sir Lavaine had warning; and then Sir Lavaine came to Winchester and found Sir Bors, and there he told him what he was, and with whom he was, and what was his name. Now fair knight, said Sir Bors, I require you that ye will bring me to my lord, Sir Launcelot. Sir, said Sir Lavaine, take your horse, and within this hour ye shall see him. And so they departed, and came to the hermitage.

And when Sir Bors saw Sir Launcelot lie in his bed pale and discoloured, anon Sir Bors lost his countenance, and for kindness and pity he might not speak, but wept tenderly a great while. And then when he might speak he said thus: O my lord, Sir Launcelot, God you bless, and send you hasty recover; and full heavy am I of my misfortune and of mine unhappiness, for now I may call myself unhappy. And I dread me that God is greatly displeased with me, that he would suffer me to have such a shame for to hurt you that are all our leader, and all our worship; and therefore I call myself unhappy. Alas that ever such a caitiff-knight as I am should have power by unhappiness to hurt the most noblest knight of the world. Where I so shamefully set upon you and overcharged you, and where ye might have slain me, ye saved me; and so did not I, for I and your blood did to you our utterance. I marvel, said Sir Bors, that my heart or my blood would serve me, wherefore my lord, Sir Launcelot, I ask your mercy. Fair cousin, said Sir Launcelot, ye be right welcome; and wit ye well, overmuch ye say for to please me, the which pleaseth me not, for why I have the same I sought; for I would with pride have overcome you all, and there in my pride I was near slain, and that was in mine own default, for I might have given you warning of my being there. And then had I had no hurt, for it is an old said saw, there is hard battle thereas kin and friends do battle either against other, there may be no mercy but mortal war. Therefore, fair cousin, said Sir Launcelot, let this speech overpass, and all shall be welcome that God sendeth; and let us leave off this matter and let us speak of some rejoicing, for this that is done may not be undone; and let us find a remedy how soon that I may be whole.

Then Sir Bors leaned upon his bedside, and told Sir Launcelot how the queen was passing wroth with him, because he wore the red sleeve at the great jousts; and there Sir Bors told him all how Sir Gawaine discovered it: By your shield that ye left with the Fair Maiden of Astolat. Then is the queen wroth, said Sir Launcelot and therefore am I right heavy, for I deserved no wrath, for all that I did was because I would not be known. Right so excused I you, said Sir Bors, but all was in vain, for she said more largelier to me than I to you now. But is this she, said Sir Bors, that is so busy about you, that men call the Fair Maiden of Astolat? She it is, said Sir Launcelot, that by no means I cannot put her from me. Why should ye put her from you? said Sir Bors, she is a passing fair damosel, and a well beseen, and well taught; and God would, fair cousin, said Sir Bors,

that ye could love her, but as to that I may not, nor I dare not, counsel you. But I see well, said Sir Bors, by her diligence about you that she loveth you entirely. That me repenteth, said Sir Launcelot. Sir, said Sir Bors, she is not the first that hath lost her pain upon you, and that is the more pity: and so they talked of many more things. And so within three days or four Sir Launcelot was big and strong again.

### **CHAPTER XVII. How Sir Launcelot armed him to assay if he might bear arms, and how his wounds brast out again.**

THEN Sir Bors told Sir Launcelot how there was sworn a great tournament and jousts betwixt King Arthur and the King of Northgalis, that should be upon All Hallowmass Day, beside Winchester. Is that truth? said Sir Launcelot; then shall ye abide with me still a little while until that I be whole, for I feel myself right big and strong. Blessed be God, said Sir Bors. Then were they there nigh a month together, and ever this maiden Elaine did ever her diligent labour night and day unto Sir Launcelot, that there was never child nor wife more meeker to her father and husband than was that Fair Maiden of Astolat; wherefore Sir Bors was greatly pleased with her.

So upon a day, by the assent of Sir Launcelot, Sir Bors, and Sir Lavaine, they made the hermit to seek in woods for divers herbs, and so Sir Launcelot made fair Elaine to gather herbs for him to make him a bain. In the meanwhile Sir Launcelot made him to arm him at all pieces; and there he thought to assay his armour and his spear, for his hurt or not. And so when he was upon his horse he stirred him fiercely, and the horse was passing lusty and fresh because he was not laboured a month afore. And then Sir Launcelot couched that spear in the rest. That courser leapt mightily when he felt the spurs; and he that was upon him, the which was the noblest horse of the world, strained him mightily and stably, and kept still the spear in the rest; and therewith Sir Launcelot strained himself so straitly, with so great force, to get the horse forward, that the button of his wound brast both within and without; and therewithal the blood came out so fiercely that he felt himself so feeble that he might not sit upon his horse. And then Sir Launcelot cried unto Sir Bors: Ah, Sir Bors and Sir Lavaine, help, for I am come to mine end. And therewith he fell down on the one side to the earth like a dead corpse. And then Sir Bors and Sir Lavaine came to him with sorrow-making out of measure. And so by fortune the maiden Elaine heard their mourning, and then she came thither; and when she found Sir Launcelot there armed in that place she cried and wept as she had been wood; and then she kissed him, and did what she might to awake him. And then she rebuked her brother and Sir Bors, and called them false traitors, why they would take him out



of his bed; there she cried, and said she would appeal them of his death.

With this came the holy hermit, Sir Baudwin of Brittany, and when he found Sir Launcelot in that plight he said but little, but wit ye well he was wroth; and then he bade them: Let us have him in. And so they all bare him unto the hermitage, and unarmed him, and laid him in his bed; and evermore his wound bled piteously, but he stirred no limb of him. Then the knight-hermit put a thing in his nose and a little deal of water in his mouth. And then Sir Launcelot waked of his swoon, and then the hermit stanchd his bleeding. And when he might speak he asked Sir Launcelot why he put his life in jeopardy. Sir, said Sir Launcelot, because I weened I had been strong, and also Sir Bors told me that there should be at All Hallowmass a great jousts betwixt King Arthur and the King of Northgalis, and therefore I thought to assay it myself whether I might be there or not. Ah, Sir Launcelot, said the hermit, your heart and your courage will never be done until your last day, but ye shall do now by my counsel Let Sir Bors depart from you, and let him do at that tournament what he may: And by the grace of God, said the knight-hermit, by that the tournament be done and ye come hither again, Sir Launcelot shall be as whole as ye, so that he will be governed by me.

#### **CHAPTER XVIII. How Sir Bors returned and told tidings of Sir Launcelot; and of the tourney, and to whom the prize was given.**

THEN Sir Bors made him ready to depart from Sir Launcelot; and then Sir Launcelot said: Fair cousin, Sir Bors, recommend me unto all them unto whom me ought to recommend me unto. And I pray you, enforce yourself at that jousts that ye may be best, for my love; and here shall I abide you at the mercy of God till ye come again. And so Sir Bors departed and came to the court of King Arthur, and told them in what place he had left Sir Launcelot. That me repenteth, said the king, but since he shall have his life we all may thank God. And there Sir Bors told the queen in what jeopardy Sir Launcelot was when he would assay his horse. And all that he did, madam, was for the love of you, because he would have been at this tournament. Fie on him, recreant knight, said the queen, for wit ye well I am right sorry an he shall have his life. His life shall he have, said Sir Bors, and who that would otherwise, except you, madam, we that be of his blood should help to short their lives. But madam, said Sir Bors, ye have been oftentimes displeased with my lord, Sir Launcelot, but at all times at the end ye find him a true knight: and so he departed.

And then every knight of the Round Table that were there at that time present made them ready to be at that jousts at All Hallowmass, and thither drew many knights of divers countries. And as All Hallowmass drew near, thither

came the King of Northgalis, and the King with the Hundred Knights, and Sir Galahad, the haut prince, of Surluse, and thither came King Anguish of Ireland, and the King of Scots. So these three kings came on King Arthur's party. And so that day Sir Gawaine did great deeds of arms, and began first. And the heralds numbered that Sir Gawaine smote down twenty knights. Then Sir Bors de Ganis came in the same time, and he was numbered that he smote down twenty knights; and therefore the prize was given betwixt them both, for they began first and longest endured. Also Sir Gareth, as the book saith, did that day great deeds of arms, for he smote down and pulled down thirty knights. But when he had done these deeds he tarried not but so departed, and therefore he lost his prize. And Sir Palomides did great deeds of arms that day, for he smote down twenty knights, but he departed suddenly, and men deemed Sir Gareth and he rode together to some manner adventures.

So when this tournament was done Sir Bors departed and rode till he came to Sir Launcelot, his cousin; and then he found him walking on his feet, and there either made great joy of other; and so Sir Bors told Sir Launcelot of all the Jousts like as ye have heard. I marvel, said Sir Launcelot, that Sir Gareth, when he had done such deeds of arms, that he would not tarry. Thereof we marvelled all, said Sir Bors, for but if it were you, or Sir Tristram, or Sir Lamorak de Galis, I saw never knight bear down so many in so little a while as did Sir Gareth: and anon he was gone we wist not where. By my head, said Sir Launcelot, he is a noble knight, and a mighty man and well breathed; and if he were well assayed, said Sir Launcelot I would deem he were good enough for any knight that beareth the life; and he is a gentle knight, courteous, true, and bounteous, meek, and mild, and in him is no manner of mal engin, but plain, faithful, and true.

So then they made them ready to depart from the hermit. And so upon a morn they took their horses and Elaine le Blank with them; and when they came to Astolat there were they well lodged, and had great cheer of Sir Bernard, the old baron, and of Sir Tirre, his son. And so upon the morn when Sir Launcelot should depart, fair Elaine brought her father with her, and Sir Lavaine, and Sir Tirre, and thus she said:

#### **CHAPTER XIX. Of the great lamentation of the Fair Maid of Astolat when Launcelot should depart, and how she died for his love.**

MY lord, Sir Launcelot, now I see ye will depart; now fair knight and courteous knight, have mercy upon me, and suffer me not to die for thy love. What would ye that I did? said Sir Launcelot. I would have you to my husband, said Elaine. Fair damosel, I thank you, said Sir Launcelot, but truly, said he, I cast me never to be wedded man. Then, fair knight, said she, will ye be my

paramour? Jesu defend me, said Sir Launcelot, for then I rewarded your father and your brother full evil for their great goodness. Alas, said she, then must I die for your love. Ye shall not so, said Sir Launcelot, for wit ye well, fair maiden, I might have been married an I had would, but I never applied me to be married yet; but because, fair damosel, that ye love me as ye say ye do, I will for your good will and kindness show you some goodness, and that is this, that wheresomever ye will beset your heart upon some good knight that will wed you, I shall give you together a thousand pound yearly to you and to your heirs; thus much will I give you, fair madam, for your kindness, and always while I live to be your own knight. Of all this, said the maiden, I will none, for but if ye will wed me, or else be my paramour at the least, wit you well, Sir Launcelot, my good days are done. Fair damosel, said Sir Launcelot, of these two things ye must pardon me.

Then she shrieked shrilly, and fell down in a swoon; and then women bare her into her chamber, and there she made over much sorrow; and then Sir Launcelot would depart, and there he asked Sir Lavaine what he would do. What should I do, said Sir Lavaine, but follow you, but if ye drive me from you, or command me to go from you. Then came Sir Bernard to Sir Launcelot and said to him: I cannot see but that my daughter Elaine will die for your sake. I may not do withal, said Sir Launcelot, for that me sore repenteth, for I report me to yourself, that my proffer is fair; and me repenteth, said Sir Launcelot, that she loveth me as she doth; I was never the causer of it, for I report me to your son I early ne late proffered her bounte nor fair behests; and as for me, said Sir Launcelot, I dare do all that a knight should do that she is a clean maiden for me, both for deed and for will. And I am right heavy of her distress, for she is a full fair maiden, good and gentle, and well taught. Father, said Sir Lavaine, I dare make good she is a clean maiden as for my lord Sir Launcelot; but she doth as I do, for sithen I first saw my lord Sir Launcelot, I could never depart from him, nor nought I will an I may follow him.

Then Sir Launcelot took his leave, and so they departed, and came unto Winchester. And when Arthur wist that Sir Launcelot was come whole and sound the king made great joy of him, and so did Sir Gawaine and all the knights of the Round Table except Sir Agravaine and Sir Mordred. Also Queen Guenever was wood wroth with Sir Launcelot, and would by no means speak with him, but estranged herself from him; and Sir Launcelot made all the means that he might for to speak with the queen, but it would not be.

Now speak we of the Fair Maiden of Astolat that made such sorrow day and night that she never slept, ate, nor drank, and ever she made her complaint unto Sir Launcelot. So when she had thus endured a ten days, that she feebled so that

she must needs pass out of this world, then she shrived her clean, and received her Creator. And ever she complained still upon Sir Launcelot. Then her ghostly father bade her leave such thoughts. Then she said, why should I leave such thoughts? Am I not an earthly woman? And all the while the breath is in my body I may complain me, for my belief is I do none offence though I love an earthly man; and I take God to my record I loved never none but Sir Launcelot du Lake, nor never shall, and a clean maiden I am for him and for all other; and sithen it is the sufferance of God that I shall die for the love of so noble a knight, I beseech the High Father of Heaven to have mercy upon my soul, and upon mine innumerable pains that I suffered may be allegiance of part of my sins. For sweet Lord Jesu, said the fair maiden, I take Thee to record, on Thee I was never great offencer against thy laws; but that I loved this noble knight, Sir Launcelot, out of measure, and of myself, good Lord, I might not withstand the fervent love wherefore I have my death.

And then she called her father, Sir Bernard, and her brother, Sir Tirre, and heartily she prayed her father that her brother might write a letter like as she did indite it: and so her father granted her. And when the letter was written word by word like as she devised, then she prayed her father that she might be watched until she were dead. And while my body is hot let this letter be put in my right hand, and my hand bound fast with the letter until that I be cold; and let me be put in a fair bed with all the richest clothes that I have about me, and so let my bed and all my richest clothes be laid with me in a chariot unto the next place where Thames is; and there let me be put within a barget, and but one man with me, such as ye trust to steer me thither, and that my barget be covered with black samite over and over: thus father I beseech you let it be done. So her father granted it her faithfully, all things should be done like as she had devised. Then her father and her brother made great dole, for when this was done anon she died. And so when she was dead the corpse and the bed all was led the next way unto Thames, and there a man, and the corpse, and all, were put into Thames; and so the man steered the barget unto Westminster, and there he rowed a great while to and fro or any espied it.

**CHAPTER XX. How the corpse of the Maid of Astolat arrived to-fore King Arthur, and of the burying, and how Sir Launcelot offered the mass-penny.**

SO by fortune King Arthur and the Queen Guenever were speaking together at a window, and so as they looked into Thames they espied this black barget, and had marvel what it meant. Then the king called Sir Kay, and showed it him. Sir, said Sir Kay, wit you well there is some new tidings. Go thither, said the

king to Sir Kay, and take with you Sir Brandiles and Agravaine, and bring me ready word what is there. Then these four knights departed and came to the barget and went in; and there they found the fairest corpse lying in a rich bed, and a poor man sitting in the barget's end, and no word would he speak. So these four knights returned unto the king again, and told him what they found. That fair corpse will I see, said the king. And so then the king took the queen by the hand, and went thither.

Then the king made the barget to be holden fast, and then the king and the queen entered with certain knights with them; and there he saw the fairest woman lie in a rich bed, covered unto her middle with many rich clothes, and all was of cloth of gold, and she lay as though she had smiled. Then the queen espied a letter in her right hand, and told it to the king. Then the king took it and said: Now am I sure this letter will tell what she was, and why she is come hither. So then the king and the queen went out of the barget, and so commanded a certain man to wait upon the barget.

And so when the king was come within his chamber, he called many knights about him, and said that he would wit openly what was written within that letter. Then the king brake it, and made a clerk to read it, and this was the intent of the letter. Most noble knight, Sir Launcelot, now hath death made us two at debate for your love. I was your lover, that men called the Fair Maiden of Astolat; therefore unto all ladies I make my moan, yet pray for my soul and bury me at least, and offer ye my mass-penny: this is my last request. And a clean maiden I died, I take God to witness: pray for my soul, Sir Launcelot, as thou art peerless. This was all the substance in the letter. And when it was read, the king, the queen, and all the knights wept for pity of the doleful complaints. Then was Sir Launcelot sent for; and when he was come King Arthur made the letter to be read to him.

And when Sir Launcelot heard it word by word, he said: My lord Arthur, wit ye well I am right heavy of the death of this fair damosel: God knoweth I was never causer of her death by my willing, and that will I report me to her own brother: here he is, Sir Lavaine. I will not say nay, said Sir Launcelot, but that she was both fair and good, and much I was beholden unto her, but she loved me out of measure. Ye might have shewed her, said the queen, some bounty and gentleness that might have preserved her life. Madam, said Sir Launcelot, she would none other ways be answered but that she would be my wife, outhere else my paramour; and of these two I would not grant her, but I proffered her, for her good love that she shewed me, a thousand pound yearly to her, and to her heirs, and to wed any manner knight that she could find best to love in her heart. For madam, said Sir Launcelot, I love not to be constrained to love; for love must

arise of the heart, and not by no constraint. That is truth, said the king, and many knight's love is free in himself, and never will be bounden, for where he is bounden he looseth himself.

Then said the king unto Sir Launcelot: It will be your worship that ye oversee that she be interred worshipfully. Sir, said Sir Launcelot, that shall be done as I can best devise. And so many knights yede thither to behold that fair maiden. And so upon the morn she was interred richly, and Sir Launcelot offered her mass-penny; and all the knights of the Table Round that were there at that time offered with Sir Launcelot. And then the poor man went again with the barget. Then the queen sent for Sir Launcelot, and prayed him of mercy, for why that she had been wroth with him causeless. This is not the first time, said Sir Launcelot, that ye had been displeased with me causeless, but, madam, ever I must suffer you, but what sorrow I endure I take no force. So this passed on all that winter, with all manner of hunting and hawking, and jousts and tourneys were many betwixt many great lords, and ever in all places Sir Lavaine gat great worship, so that he was nobly renowned among many knights of the Table Round.

### **CHAPTER XXI. Of great jousts done all a Christmas, and of a great jousts and tourney ordained by King Arthur, and of Sir Launcelot.**

THUS it passed on till Christmas, and then every day there was jousts made for a diamond, who that jousted best should have a diamond. But Sir Launcelot would not joust but if it were at a great jousts cried. But Sir Lavaine jousted there all that Christmas passingly well, and best was praised, for there were but few that did so well. Wherefore all manner of knights deemed that Sir Lavaine should be made knight of the Table Round at the next feast of Pentecost. So after Christmas King Arthur let call unto him many knights, and there they advised together to make a party and a great tournament and jousts. And the King of Northgalis said to Arthur, he would have on his party King Anguish of Ireland, and the King with the Hundred Knights, and the King of Northumberland, and Sir Galahad, the haut prince. And so these four kings and this mighty duke took part against King Arthur and the knights of the Table Round. And the cry was made that the day of the jousts should be beside Westminster upon Candlemas Day, whereof many knights were glad, and made them ready to be at that jousts in the freshest manner.

Then Queen Guenever sent for Sir Launcelot, and said thus: I warn you that ye ride no more in no jousts nor tournaments but that your kinsmen may know you. And at these jousts that shall be ye shall have of me a sleeve of gold; and I pray you for my sake enforce yourself there, that men may speak of you

worship; but I charge you as ye will have my love, that ye warn your kinsmen that ye will bear that day the sleeve of gold upon your helmet. Madam, said Sir Launcelot, it shall be done. And so either made great joy of other. And when Sir Launcelot saw his time he told Sir Bors that he would depart, and have no more with him but Sir Lavaine, unto the good hermit that dwelt in that forest of Windsor; his name was Sir Brasias; and there he thought to repose him, and take all the rest that he might, because he would be fresh at that day of jousts.

So Sir Launcelot and Sir Lavaine departed, that no creature wist where he was become, but the noble men of his blood. And when he was come to the hermitage, wit ye well he had good cheer. And so daily Sir Launcelot would go to a well fast by the hermitage, and there he would lie down, and see the well spring and burble, and sometime he slept there. So at that time there was a lady dwelt in that forest, and she was a great huntress, and daily she used to hunt, and ever she bare her bow with her; and no men went never with her, but always women, and they were shooters, and could well kill a deer, both at the stalk and at the trest; and they daily bare bows and arrows, horns and wood-knives, and many good dogs they had, both for the string and for a bait. So it happed this lady the huntress had abated her dog for the bow at a barren hind, and so this barren hind took the flight over hedges and woods. And ever this lady and part of her women costed the hind, and checked it by the noise of the hounds, to have met with the hind at some water; and so it happed, the hind came to the well whereas Sir Launcelot was sleeping and slumbering. And so when the hind came to the well, for heat she went to soil, and there she lay a great while; and the dog came after, and umbecast about, for she had lost the very perfect feute of the hind. Right so came that lady the huntress, that knew by the dog that she had, that the hind was at the soil in that well; and there she came stiffly and found the hind, and she put a broad arrow in her bow, and shot at the hind, and over-shot the hind; and so by misfortune the arrow smote Sir Launcelot in the thick of the buttock, over the barbs. When Sir Launcelot felt himself so hurt, he hurled up woodly, and saw the lady that had smitten him. And when he saw she was a woman, he said thus: Lady or damosel, what that thou be, in an evil time bear ye a bow; the devil made you a shooter.

## **CHAPTER XXII. How Launcelot after that he was hurt of a gentlewoman came to an hermit, and of other matters.**

NOW mercy, fair sir, said the lady, I am a gentlewoman that useth here in this forest hunting, and God knoweth I saw ye not; but as here was a barren hind at the soil in this well, and I weened to have done well, but my hand swerved. Alas, said Sir Launcelot, ye have mischieved me. And so the lady departed, and

Sir Launcelot as he might pulled out the arrow, and left that head still in his buttock, and so he went weakly to the hermitage ever more bleeding as he went. And when Sir Lavaine and the hermit espied that Sir Launcelot was hurt, wit you well they were passing heavy, but Sir Lavaine wist not how that he was hurt nor by whom. And then were they wroth out of measure.

Then with great pain the hermit gat out the arrow's head out of Sir Launcelot's buttock, and much of his blood he shed, and the wound was passing sore, and unhappily smitten, for it was in such a place that he might not sit in no saddle. Have mercy, Jesu, said Sir Launcelot, I may call myself the most unhappiest man that liveth, for ever when I would fainest have worship there befalleth me ever some unhappy thing. Now so Jesu me help, said Sir Launcelot, and if no man would but God, I shall be in the field upon Candlemas Day at the jousts, whatsoever fall of it: so all that might be gotten to heal Sir Launcelot was had.

So when the day was come Sir Launcelot let devise that he was arrayed, and Sir Lavaine, and their horses, as though they had been Saracens; and so they departed and came nigh to the field. The King of Northgalis with an hundred knights with him, and the King of Northumberland brought with him an hundred good knights, and King Anguish of Ireland brought with him an hundred good knights ready to joust, and Sir Galahad, the haut prince, brought with him an hundred good knights, and the King with the Hundred Knights brought with him as many, and all these were proved good knights. Then came in King Arthur's party; and there came in the King of Scots with an hundred knights, and King Uriens of Gore brought with him an hundred knights, and King Howel of Brittany brought with him an hundred knights, and Chaleins of Clarence brought with him an hundred knights, and King Arthur himself came into the field with two hundred knights, and the most part were knights of the Table Round, that were proved noble knights; and there were old knights set in scaffolds for to judge, with the queen, who did best.

### **CHAPTER XXIII. How Sir Launcelot behaved him at the jousts, and other men also.**

THEN they blew to the field; and there the King of Northgalis encountered with the King of Scots, and there the King of Scots had a fall; and the King of Ireland smote down King Uriens; and the King of Northumberland smote down King Howel of Brittany; and Sir Galahad, the haut prince, smote down Chaleins of Clarence. And then King Arthur was wood wroth, and ran to the King with the Hundred Knights, and there King Arthur smote him down; and after with that same spear King Arthur smote down three other knights. And then when his



spear was broken King Arthur did passingly well; and so therewithal came in Sir Gawaine and Sir Gaheris, Sir Agravaire and Sir Mordred, and there everych of them smote down a knight, and Sir Gawaine smote down four knights; and then there began a strong medley, for then there came in the knights of Launcelot's blood, and Sir Gareth and Sir Palomides with them, and many knights of the Table Round, and they began to hold the four kings and the mighty duke so hard that they were discomfit; but this Duke Galahad, the haut prince, was a noble knight, and by his mighty prowess of arms he held the knights of the Table Round strait enough.

All this doing saw Sir Launcelot, and then he came into the field with Sir Lavaine as it had been thunder. And then anon Sir Bors and the knights of his blood espied Sir Launcelot, and said to them all: I warn you beware of him with the sleeve of gold upon his head, for he is himself Sir Launcelot du Lake; and for great goodness Sir Bors warned Sir Gareth. I am well apaid, said Sir Gareth, that I may know him. But who is he, said they all, that rideth with him in the same array? That is the good and gentle knight Sir Lavaine, said Sir Bors. So Sir Launcelot encountered with Sir Gawaine, and there by force Sir Launcelot smote down Sir Gawaine and his horse to the earth, and so he smote down Sir Agravaire and Sir Gaheris, and also he smote down Sir Mordred, and all this was with one spear. Then Sir Lavaine met with Sir Palomides, and either met other so hard and so fiercely that both their horses fell to the earth. And then were they horsed again, and then met Sir Launcelot with Sir Palomides, and there Sir Palomides had a fall; and so Sir Launcelot or ever he stint, as fast as he might get spears, he smote down thirty knights, and the most part of them were knights of the Table Round; and ever the knights of his blood withdrew them, and made them ado in other places where Sir Launcelot came not.

And then King Arthur was wroth when he saw Sir Launcelot do such deeds; and then the king called unto him Sir Gawaine, Sir Mordred, Sir Kay, Sir Griflet, Sir Lucan the Butler, Sir Bedivere, Sir Palomides, Sir Safere, his brother; and so the king with these nine knights made them ready to set upon Sir Launcelot, and upon Sir Lavaine. All this espied Sir Bors and Sir Gareth. Now I dread me sore, said Sir Bors, that my lord, Sir Launcelot, will be hard matched. By my head, said Sir Gareth, I will ride unto my lord Sir Launcelot, for to help him, fall of him what fall may, for he is the same man that made me knight. Ye shall not so, said Sir Bors, by my counsel, unless that ye were disguised. Ye shall see me disguised, said Sir Gareth; and therewithal he espied a Welsh knight where he was to repose him, and he was sore hurt afore by Sir Gawaine, and to him Sir Gareth rode, and prayed him of his knighthood to lend him his shield for his. I will well, said the Welsh knight. And when Sir Gareth had his shield, the book

saith it was green, with a maiden that seemed in it.

Then Sir Gareth came driving to Sir Launcelot all that he might and said: Knight, keep thyself, for yonder cometh King Arthur with nine noble knights with him to put you to a rebuke, and so I am come to bear you fellowship for old love ye have shewed me. Gramercy, said Sir Launcelot. Sir, said Sir Gareth, encounter ye with Sir Gawaine, and I shall encounter with Sir Palomides; and let Sir Lavaine match with the noble King Arthur. And when we have delivered them, let us three hold us sadly together. Then came King Arthur with his nine knights with him, and Sir Launcelot encountered with Sir Gawaine, and gave him such a buffet that the arson of his saddle brast, and Sir Gawaine fell to the earth. Then Sir Gareth encountered with the good knight Sir Palomides, and he gave him such a buffet that both his horse and he dashed to the earth. Then encountered King Arthur with Sir Lavaine, and there either of them smote other to the earth, horse and all, that they lay a great while. Then Sir Launcelot smote down Sir Agravaine, and Sir Gaheris, and Sir Mordred; and Sir Gareth smote down Sir Kay, and Sir Safere, and Sir Griflet. And then Sir Lavaine was horsed again, and he smote down Sir Lucan the Butler and Sir Bedevere and then there began great throng of good knights.

Then Sir Launcelot hurtled here and there, and raced and pulled off helms, so that at that time there might none sit him a buffet with spear nor with sword; and Sir Gareth did such deeds of arms that all men marvelled what knight he was with the green shield, for he smote down that day and pulled down mo than thirty knights. And, as the French book saith, Sir Launcelot marvelled; when he beheld Sir Gareth do such deeds, what knight he might be; and Sir Lavaine pulled down and smote down twenty knights. Also Sir Launcelot knew not Sir Gareth for an Sir Tristram de Liones, outhere Sir Lamorak de Galis had been alive, Sir Launcelot would have deemed he had been one of them twain. So ever as Sir Launcelot Sir Gareth, Sir Lavaine fought, and on the one side Sir Bors, Sir Ector de Maris, Sir Lionel, Sir Lamorak de Galis, Sir Bleoberis, Sir Galihud, Sir Galihodin, Sir Pelleas, and with mo other of King Ban's blood fought upon another party, and held the King with the Hundred Knights and the King of Northumberland right strait.

#### **CHAPTER XXIV. How King Arthur marvelled much of the jousting in the field, and how he rode and found Sir Launcelot.**

SO this tournament and this jousts dured long, till it was near night, for the knights of the Round Table relieved ever unto King Arthur; for the king was wroth out of measure that he and his knights might not prevail that day. Then Sir Gawaine said to the king: I marvel where all this day [be] Sir Bors de Ganis and

his fellowship of Sir Launcelot's blood, I marvel all this day they be not about you: it is for some cause said Sir Gawaine. By my head, said Sir Kay, Sir Bors is yonder all this day upon the right hand of this field, and there he and his blood do more worshipfully than we do. It may well be, said Sir Gawaine, but I dread me ever of guile; for on pain of my life, said Sir Gawaine, this knight with the red sleeve of gold is himself Sir Launcelot, I see well by his riding and by his great strokes; and the other knight in the same colours is the good young knight, Sir Lavaine. Also that knight with the green shield is my brother, Sir Gareth, and yet he hath disguised himself, for no man shall never make him be against Sir Launcelot, because he made him knight. By my head, said Arthur, nephew, I believe you; therefore tell me now what is your best counsel. Sir, said Sir Gawaine, ye shall have my counsel: let blow unto lodging, for an he be Sir Launcelot du Lake, and my brother, Sir Gareth, with him, with the help of that good young knight, Sir Lavaine, trust me truly it will be no boot to strive with them but if we should fall ten or twelve upon one knight, and that were no worship, but shame. Ye say truth, said the king; and for to say sooth, said the king, it were shame to us so many as we be to set upon them any more; for wit ye well, said King Arthur, they be three good knights, and namely that knight with the sleeve of gold.

So then they blew unto lodging; but forthwithal King Arthur let send unto the four kings, and to the mighty duke, and prayed them that the knight with the sleeve of gold depart not from them, but that the king may speak with him. Then forthwithal King Arthur alighted and unarmed him, and took a little hackney and rode after Sir Launcelot, for ever he had a spy upon him. And so he found him among the four kings and the duke; and there the king prayed them all unto supper, and they said they would with good will. And when they were unarmed then King Arthur knew Sir Launcelot, Sir Lavaine, and Sir Gareth. Ah, Sir Launcelot, said King Arthur, this day ye have heated me and my knights.

So they yede unto Arthur's lodging all together, and there was a great feast and great revel, and the prize was given unto Sir Launcelot; and by heralds they named him that he had smitten down fifty knights, and Sir Gareth five-and-thirty, and Sir Lavaine four-and-twenty knights. Then Sir Launcelot told the king and the queen how the lady huntress shot him in the forest of Windsor, in the buttock, with an broad arrow, and how the wound thereof was that time six inches deep, and in like long. Also Arthur blamed Sir Gareth because he left his fellowship and held with Sir Launcelot. My lord, said Sir Gareth, he made me a knight, and when I saw him so hard bestead, methought it was my worship to help him, for I saw him do so much, and so many noble knights against him; and when I understood that he was Sir Launcelot du Lake, I shamed to see so many

knights against him alone. Truly, said King Arthur unto Sir Gareth, ye say well, and worshipfully have ye done and to yourself great worship; and all the days of my life, said King Arthur unto Sir Gareth, wit you well I shall love you, and trust you the more better. For ever, said Arthur, it is a worshipful knight's deed to help another worshipful knight when he seeth him in a great danger; for ever a worshipful man will be loath to see a worshipful man shamed; and he that is of no worship, and fareth with cowardice, never shall he show gentleness, nor no manner of goodness where he seeth a man in any danger, for then ever will a coward show no mercy; and always a good man will do ever to another man as he would be done to himself. So then there were great feasts unto kings and dukes, and revel, game, and play, and all manner of noblesse was used; and he that was courteous, true, and faithful, to his friend was that time cherished.

#### **CHAPTER XXV. How true love is likened to summer.**

AND thus it passed on from Candlemass until after Easter, that the month of May was come, when every lusty heart beginneth to blossom, and to bring forth fruit; for like as herbs and trees bring forth fruit and flourish in May, in like wise every lusty heart that is in any manner a lover, springeth and flourisheth in lusty deeds. For it giveth unto all lovers courage, that lusty month of May, in something to constrain him to some manner of thing more in that month than in any other month, for divers causes. For then all herbs and trees renew a man and woman, and likewise lovers call again to their mind old gentleness and old service, and many kind deeds that were forgotten by negligence. For like as winter rasure doth alway arase and deface green summer, so fareth it by unstable love in man and woman. For in many persons there is no stability; for we may see all day, for a little blast of winter's rasure, anon we shall deface and lay apart true love for little or nought, that cost much thing; this is no wisdom nor stability, but it is feebleness of nature and great disworship, whosomever useth this. Therefore, like as May month flowereth and flourisheth in many gardens, so in like wise let every man of worship flourish his heart in this world, first unto God, and next unto the joy of them that he promised his faith unto; for there was never worshipful man or worshipful woman, but they loved one better than another; and worship in arms may never be foiled, but first reserve the honour to God, and secondly the quarrel must come of thy lady: and such love I call virtuous love.

But nowadays men can not love seven night but they must have all their desires: that love may not endure by reason; for where they be soon accorded and hasty heat, soon it cooleth. Right so fareth love nowadays, soon hot soon cold: this is no stability. But the old love was not so; men and women could love

together seven years, and no licours lusts were between them, and then was love, truth, and faithfulness: and lo, in like wise was used love in King Arthur's days. Wherefore I liken love nowadays unto summer and winter; for like as the one is hot and the other cold, so fareth love nowadays; therefore all ye that be lovers call unto your remembrance the month of May, like as did Queen Guenever, for whom I make here a little mention, that while she lived she was a true lover, and therefore she had a good end.

*Explicit liber Octodecimus. And here followeth liber xix.*

## BOOK XIX

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### **CHAPTER I. How Queen Guenever rode a-Maying with certain knights of the Round Table and clad all in green.**

SO it befell in the month of May, Queen Guenever called unto her knights of the Table Round; and she gave them warning that early upon the morrow she would ride a-Maying into woods and fields beside Westminster. And I warn you that there be none of you but that he be well horsed, and that ye all be clothed in green, outhere in silk outhere in cloth; and I shall bring with me ten ladies, and every knight shall have a lady behind him, and every knight shall have a squire and two yeomen; and I will that ye all be well horsed. So they made them ready in the freshest manner. And these were the names of the knights: Sir Kay le Seneschal, Sir Agravaire, Sir Brandiles, Sir Sagramore le Desirous, Sir Dodinas le Savage, Sir Ozanna le Cure Hardy, Sir Ladinas of the Forest Savage, Sir Persant of Inde, Sir Ironside, that was called the Knight of the Red Launds, and Sir Pelleas, the lover; and these ten knights made them ready in the freshest manner to ride with the queen. And so upon the morn they took their horses with the queen, and rode a-Maying in woods and meadows as it pleased them, in great joy and delights; for the queen had cast to have been again with King Arthur at the furthest by ten of the clock, and so was that time her purpose.

Then there was a knight that hight Meliagrance, and he was son unto King Bagdemagus, and this knight had at that time a castle of the gift of King Arthur within seven mile of Westminster. And this knight, Sir Meliagrance, loved passing well Queen Guenever, and so had he done long and many years. And the book saith he had lain in await for to steal away the queen, but evermore he forbore for because of Sir Launcelot; for in no wise he would meddle with the queen an Sir Launcelot were in her company, outhere else an he were near-hand her. And that time was such a custom, the queen rode never without a great fellowship of men of arms about her, and they were many good knights, and the most part were young men that would have worship; and they were called the Queen's Knights, and never in no battle, tournament, nor jousts, they bare none of them no manner of knowledging of their own arms, but plain white shields, and thereby they were called the Queen's Knights. And then when it happed any

of them to be of great worship by his noble deeds, then at the next Feast of Pentecost, if there were any slain or dead, as there was none year that there failed but some were dead, then was there chosen in his stead that was dead the most men of worship, that were called the Queen's Knights. And thus they came up all first, or they were renowned men of worship, both Sir Launcelot and all the remnant of them.

But this knight, Sir Meliagrance, had espied the queen well and her purpose, and how Sir Launcelot was not with her, and how she had no men of arms with her but the ten noble knights all arrayed in green for Maying. Then he purveyed him a twenty men of arms and an hundred archers for to destroy the queen and her knights, for he thought that time was best season to take the queen.

## **CHAPTER II. How Sir Meliagrance took the queen and her knights, which were sore hurt in fighting**

SO as the queen had Mayed and all her knights, all were bedashed with herbs, mosses and flowers, in the best manner and freshest. Right so came out of a wood Sir Meliagrance with an eight score men well harnessed, as they should fight in a battle of arrest, and bade the queen and her knights abide, for maugre their heads they should abide. Traitor knight, said Queen Guenever, what cast thou for to do? Wilt thou shame thyself? Bethink thee how thou art a king's son, and knight of the Table Round, and thou to be about to dishonour the noble king that made thee knight; thou shamest all knighthood and thyself, and me, I let thee wit, shalt thou never shame, for I had liefer cut mine own throat in twain rather than thou shouldest dishonour me. As for all this language, said Sir Meliagrance, be it as it be may, for wit you well, madam, I have loved you many a year, and never or now could I get you at such an advantage as I do now, and therefore I will take you as I find you.

Then spake all the ten noble knights at once and said: Sir Meliagrance, wit thou well ye are about to jeopard your worship to dishonour, and also ye cast to jeopard our persons howbeit we be unarmed. Ye have us at a great avail, for it seemeth by you that ye have laid watch upon us; but rather than ye should put the queen to a shame and us all, we had as lief to depart from our lives, for an if we other ways did, we were shamed for ever. Then said Sir Meliagrance: Dress you as well ye can, and keep the queen. Then the ten knights of the Table Round drew their swords, and the other let run at them with their spears, and the ten knights manly abode them, and smote away their spears that no spear did them none harm. Then they lashed together with swords, and anon Sir Kay, Sir Sagamore, Sir Agravaine, Sir Dodinas, Sir Ladinis, and Sir Ozanna were smitten to the earth with grimly wounds. Then Sir Brandiles, and Sir Persant, Sir

Ironside, Sir Pelleas fought long, and they were sore wounded, for these ten knights, or ever they were laid to the ground, slew forty men of the boldest and the best of them.

So when the queen saw her knights thus dolefully wounded, and needs must be slain at the last, then for pity and sorrow she cried Sir Meliagrance: Slay not my noble knights, and I will go with thee upon this covenant, that thou save them, and suffer them not to be no more hurt, with this, that they be led with me wheresomever thou ledest me, for I will rather slay myself than I will go with thee, unless that these my noble knights may be in my presence. Madam, said Meliagrance, for your sake they shall be led with you into mine own castle, with that ye will be ruled, and ride with me. Then the queen prayed the four knights to leave their fighting, and she and they would not depart. Madam, said Sir Pelleas, we will do as ye do, for as for me I take no force of my life nor death. For as the French book saith, Sir Pelleas gave such buffets there that none armour might hold him.

### **CHAPTER III. How Sir Launcelot had word how the queen was taken, and how Sir Meliagrance laid a bushment for Launcelot**

THEN by the queen's commandment they left battle, and dressed the wounded knights on horseback, some sitting, some overthwart their horses, that it was pity to behold them. And then Sir Meliagrance charged the queen and all her knights that none of all her fellowship should depart from her; for full sore he dread Sir Launcelot du Lake, lest he should have any knowledging. All this espied the queen, and privily she called unto her a child of her chamber that was swiftly horsed, to whom she said: Go thou, when thou seest thy time, and bear this ring unto Sir Launcelot du Lake, and pray him as he loveth me that he will see me and rescue me, if ever he will have joy of me; and spare not thy horse, said the queen, neither for water, neither for land. So the child espied his time, and lightly he took his horse with the spurs, and departed as fast as he might. And when Sir Meliagrance saw him so flee, he understood that it was by the queen's commandment for to warn Sir Launcelot. Then they that were best horsed chased him and shot at him, but from them all the child went suddenly. And then Sir Meliagrance said to the queen: Madam, ye are about to betray me, but I shall ordain for Sir Launcelot that he shall not come lightly at you. And then he rode with her, and they all, to his castle, in all the haste that they might. And by the way Sir Meliagrance laid in an embushment the best archers that he might get in his country, to the number of thirty, to await upon Sir Launcelot, charging them that if they saw such a manner of knight come by the way upon a white horse, that in any wise they slay his horse, but in no manner of wise have



not ado with him bodily, for he is over-hardy to be overcome.

So this was done, and they were come to his castle, but in no wise the queen would never let none of the ten knights and her ladies out of her sight, but always they were in her presence; for the book saith, Sir Meliagrance durst make no masteries, for dread of Sir Launcelot, insomuch he deemed that he had warning. So when the child was departed from the fellowship of Sir Meliagrance, within a while he came to Westminster, and anon he found Sir Launcelot. And when he had told his message, and delivered him the queen's ring: Alas, said Sir Launcelot, now I am shamed for ever, unless that I may rescue that noble lady from dishonour. Then eagerly he asked his armour; and ever the child told Sir Launcelot how the ten knights fought marvellously, and how Sir Pelleas, and Sir Ironside, and Sir Brandiles, and Sir Persant of Inde, fought strongly, but namely Sir Pelleas, there might none withstand him; and how they all fought till at the last they were laid to the earth; and then the queen made appointment for to save their lives, and go with Sir Meliagrance.

Alas, said Sir Launcelot, that most noble lady, that she should be so destroyed; I had liefer, said Sir Launcelot, than all France, that I had been there well armed. So when Sir Launcelot was armed and upon his horse, he prayed the child of the queen's chamber to warn Sir Lavaine how suddenly he was departed, and for what cause. And pray him as he loveth me, that he will hie him after me, and that he stint not until he come to the castle where Sir Meliagrance abideth, or dwelleth; for there, said Sir Launcelot, he shall hear of me an I am a man living, and rescue the queen and the ten knights the which he traitorously hath taken, and that shall I prove upon his head, and all them that hold with him.

#### **CHAPTER IV. How Sir Launcelot's horse was slain, and how Sir Launcelot rode in a cart for to rescue the queen**

THEN Sir Launcelot rode as fast as he might, and the book saith he took the water at Westminster Bridge, and made his horse to swim over Thames unto Lambeth. And then within a while he came to the same place thereas the ten noble knights fought with Sir Meliagrance. And then Sir Launcelot followed the track until that he came to a wood, and there was a straight way, and there the thirty archers bade Sir Launcelot turn again, and follow no longer that track. What commandment have ye thereto, said Sir Launcelot, to cause me that am a knight of the Round Table to leave my right way? This way shalt thou leave, other-else thou shalt go it on thy foot, for wit thou well thy horse shall be slain. That is little mastery, said Sir Launcelot, to slay mine horse; but as for myself, when my horse is slain, I give right nought for you, not an ye were five hundred more. So then they shot Sir Launcelot's horse, and smote him with many arrows;

and then Sir Launcelot avoided his horse, and went on foot; but there were so many ditches and hedges betwixt them and him that he might not meddle with none of them. Alas for shame, said Launcelot, that ever one knight should betray another knight; but it is an old saw, A good man is never in danger but when he is in the danger of a coward. Then Sir Launcelot went a while, and then he was foul cumbered of his armour, his shield, and his spear, and all that longed unto him. Wit ye well he was full sore annoyed, and full loath he was for to leave anything that longed unto him, for he dread sore the treason of Sir Meliagrance.

Then by fortune there came by him a chariot that came thither for to fetch wood. Say me, carter, said Sir Launcelot, what shall I give thee to suffer me to leap into thy chariot, and that thou bring me unto a castle within this two mile? Thou shalt not come within my chariot, said the carter, for I am sent for to fetch wood for my lord, Sir Meliagrance. With him would I speak. Thou shalt not go with me, said the carter. Then Sir Launcelot leapt to him, and gave him such a buffet that he fell to the earth stark dead. Then the other carter, his fellow, was afeard, and weened to have gone the same way; and then he cried: Fair lord, save my life, and I shall bring you where ye will. Then I charge thee, said Sir Launcelot, that thou drive me and this chariot even unto Sir Meliagrance's gate. Leap up into the chariot, said the carter, and ye shall be there anon. So the carter drove on a great wallop, and Sir Launcelot's horse followed the chariot, with more than a forty arrows broad and rough in him.

And more than an hour and an half Dame Guenever was awaiting in a bay window with her ladies, and espied an armed knight standing in a chariot. See, madam, said a lady, where rideth in a chariot a goodly armed knight; I suppose he rideth unto hanging. Where? said the queen. Then she espied by his shield that he was there himself, Sir Launcelot du Lake. And then she was ware where came his horse ever after that chariot, and ever he trod his guts and his paunch under his feet. Alas, said the queen, now I see well and prove, that well is him that hath a trusty friend. Ha, ha, most noble knight, said Queen Guenever, I see well thou art hard bestead when thou ridest in a chariot. Then she rebuked that lady that likened Sir Launcelot to ride in a chariot to hanging. It was foul mouthed, said the queen, and evil likened, so for to liken the most noble knight of the world unto such a shameful death. O Jesu defend him and keep him, said the queen, from all mischievous end. By this was Sir Launcelot come to the gates of that castle, and there he descended down, and cried, that all the castle rang of it: Where art thou, false traitor, Sir Meliagrance, and knight of the Table Round? now come forth here, thou traitor knight, thou and thy fellowship with thee; for here I am, Sir Launcelot du Lake, that shall fight with you. And therewithal he bare the gate wide open upon the porter, and smote him under his

ear with his gauntlet, that his neck brast a-sunder.

**CHAPTER V. How Sir Meliagrance required forgiveness of the queen,  
and how she appeased Sir Launcelot; and other matters**

WHEN Sir Meliagrance heard that Sir Launcelot was there he ran unto Queen Guenever, and fell upon his knee, and said: Mercy, madam, now I put me wholly into your grace. What aileth you now? said Queen Guenever; forsooth I might well wit some good knight would revenge me, though my lord Arthur wist not of this your work. Madam, said Sir Meliagrance, all this that is amiss on my part shall be amended right as yourself will devise, and wholly I put me in your grace. What would ye that I did? said the queen. I would no more, said Meliagrance, but that ye would take all in your own hands, and that ye will rule my lord Sir Launcelot; and such cheer as may be made him in this poor castle ye and he shall have until to-morn, and then may ye and all they return unto Westminster; and my body and all that I have I shall put in your rule. Ye say well, said the queen, and better is peace than ever war, and the less noise the more is my worship.

Then the queen and her ladies went down unto the knight, Sir Launcelot, that stood wroth out of measure in the inner court, to abide battle; and ever he bade: Thou traitor knight come forth. Then the queen came to him and said: Sir Launcelot, why be ye so moved? Ha, madam, said Sir Launcelot, why ask ye me that question? Meseemeth, said Sir Launcelot, ye ought to be more wroth than I am, for ye have the hurt and the dishonour, for wit ye well, madam, my hurt is but little for the killing of a mare's son, but the despite grieveth me much more than all my hurt. Truly, said the queen, ye say truth; but heartily I thank you, said the queen, but ye must come in with me peaceably, for all thing is put in my hand, and all that is evil shall be for the best, for the knight full sore repenteth him of the misadventure that is befallen him. Madam, said Sir Launcelot, sith it is so that ye been accorded with him, as for me I may not be again it, howbeit Sir Meliagrance hath done full shamefully to me, and cowardly. Ah madam, said Sir Launcelot, an I had wist ye would have been so soon accorded with him I would not have made such haste unto you. Why say ye so, said the queen, do ye forthink yourself of your good deeds? Wit you well, said the queen, I accorded never unto him for favour nor love that I had unto him, but for to lay down every shameful noise. Madam, said Sir Launcelot, ye understand full well I was never willing nor glad of shameful slander nor noise; and there is neither king, queen, nor knight, that beareth the life, except my lord King Arthur, and you, madam, should let me, but I should make Sir Meliagrance's heart full cold or ever I departed from hence. That wot I well, said the queen, but what will ye more? Ye

shall have all thing ruled as ye list to have it. Madam, said Sir Launcelot, so ye be pleased I care not, as for my part ye shall soon please.

Right so the queen took Sir Launcelot by the bare hand, for he had put off his gauntlet, and so she went with him till her chamber; and then she commanded him to be unarmed. And then Sir Launcelot asked where were the ten knights that were wounded sore; so she showed them unto Sir Launcelot, and there they made great joy of the coming of him, and Sir Launcelot made great dole of their hurts, and bewailed them greatly. And there Sir Launcelot told them how cowardly and traitorly Meliagrance set archers to slay his horse, and how he was fain to put himself in a chariot. Thus they complained everych to other; and full fain they would have been revenged, but they peaced themselves because of the queen. Then, as the French book saith, Sir Launcelot was called many a day after le Chevaler du Chariot, and did many deeds, and great adventures he had. And so leave we of this tale le Chevaler du Chariot, and turn we to this tale.

So Sir Launcelot had great cheer with the queen, and then Sir Launcelot made a promise with the queen that the same night Sir Launcelot should come to a window outward toward a garden; and that window was y-barred with iron, and there Sir Launcelot promised to meet her when all folks were asleep. So then came Sir Lavaine driving to the gates, crying: Where is my lord, Sir Launcelot du Lake? Then was he sent for, and when Sir Lavaine saw Sir Launcelot, he said: My lord, I found well how ye were hard bestead, for I have found your horse that was slain with arrows. As for that, said Sir Launcelot, I pray you, Sir Lavaine, speak ye of other matters, and let ye this pass, and we shall right it another time when we best may.

## **CHAPTER VI. How Sir Launcelot came in the night to the queen and lay with her, and how Sir Meliagrance appeached the queen of treason**

THEN the knights that were hurt were searched, and soft salves were laid to their wounds; and so it passed on till supper time, and all the cheer that might be made them there was done unto the queen and all her knights. Then when season was, they went unto their chambers, but in no wise the queen would not suffer the wounded knights to be from her, but that they were laid within draughts by her chamber, upon beds and pillows, that she herself might see to them, that they wanted nothing.

So when Sir Launcelot was in his chamber that was assigned unto him, he called unto him Sir Lavaine, and told him that night he must go speak with his lady, Dame Guenever. Sir, said Sir Lavaine, let me go with you an it please you, for I dread me sore of the treason of Sir Meliagrance. Nay, said Sir Launcelot, I thank you, but I will have nobody with me. Then Sir Launcelot took his sword in

his hand, and privily went to a place where he had espied a ladder to-forehand, and that he took under his arm, and bare it through the garden, and set it up to the window, and there anon the queen was ready to meet him. And then they made either to other their complaints of many divers things, and then Sir Launcelot wished that he might have come into her. Wit ye well, said the queen, I would as fain as ye, that ye might come in to me. Would ye, madam, said Sir Launcelot, with your heart that I were with you? Yea, truly, said the queen. Now shall I prove my might, said Sir Launcelot, for your love; and then he set his hands upon the bars of iron, and he pulled at them with such a might that he brast them clean out of the stone walls, and therewithal one of the bars of iron cut the brawn of his hands throughout to the bone; and then he leapt into the chamber to the queen. Make ye no noise, said the queen, for my wounded knights lie here fast by me. So, to pass upon this tale, Sir Launcelot went unto bed with the queen, and he took no force of his hurt hand, but took his pleasaunce and his liking until it was in the dawning of the day; and wit ye well he slept not but watched, and when he saw his time that he might tarry no longer he took his leave and departed at the window, and put it together as well as he might again, and so departed unto his own chamber; and there he told Sir Lavaine how he was hurt. Then Sir Lavaine dressed his hand and staunched it, and put upon it a glove, that it should not be espied; and so the queen lay long in her bed until it was nine of the clock.

Then Sir Meliagrance went to the queen's chamber, and found her ladies there ready clothed. Jesu mercy, said Sir Meliagrance, what aileth you, madam, that ye sleep thus long? And right therewithal he opened the curtain for to behold her; and then was he ware where she lay, and all the sheet and pillow was bebled with the blood of Sir Launcelot and of his hurt hand. When Sir Meliagrance espied that blood, then he deemed in her that she was false to the king, and that some of the wounded knights had lain by her all that night. Ah, madam, said Sir Meliagrance, now I have found you a false traitress unto my lord Arthur; for now I prove well it was not for nought that ye laid these wounded knights within the bounds of your chamber; therefore I will call you of treason before my lord, King Arthur. And now I have proved you, madam, with a shameful deed; and that they be all false, or some of them, I will make good, for a wounded knight this night hath lain by you. That is false, said the queen, and that I will report me unto them all. Then when the ten knights heard Sir Meliagrance's words, they spake all in one voice and said to Sir Meliagrance: Thou sayest falsely, and wrongfully putttest upon us such a deed, and that we will make good any of us; choose which thou list of us when we are whole of our wounds. Ye shall not, said Sir Meliagrance, away with your proud language, for here ye may all see,

said Sir Meliagrance, that by the queen this night a wounded knight hath lain. Then were they all ashamed when they saw that blood; and wit you well Sir Meliagrance was passing glad that he had the queen at such an advantage, for he deemed by that to hide his treason. So with this rumour came in Sir Launcelot, and found them all at a great array.

### **CHAPTER VII. How Sir Launcelot answered for the queen, and waged battle against Sir Meliagrance; and how Sir Launcelot was taken in a trap**

WHAT array is this? said Sir Launcelot. Then Sir Meliagrance told them what he had found, and showed them the queen's bed. Truly, said Sir Launcelot, ye did not your part nor knightly, to touch a queen's bed while it was drawn, and she lying therein; for I dare say my lord Arthur himself would not have displayed her curtains, she being within her bed, unless that it had pleased him to have lain down by her; and therefore ye have done unworshipfully and shamefully to yourself. I wot not what ye mean, said Sir Meliagrance, but well I am sure there hath one of her wounded knights lain by her this night, and therefore I will prove with my hands that she is a traitress unto my lord Arthur. Beware what ye do, said Launcelot, for an ye say so, an ye will prove it, it will be taken at your hands.

My lord, Sir Launcelot, said Sir Meliagrance, I rede you beware what ye do; for though ye are never so good a knight, as ye wot well ye are renowned the best knight of the world, yet should ye be advised to do battle in a wrong quarrel, for God will have a stroke in every battle. As for that, said Sir Launcelot, God is to be dread; but as to that I say nay plainly, that this night there lay none of these ten wounded knights with my lady Queen Guenever, and that will I prove with my hands, that ye say untruly in that now. Hold, said Sir Meliagrance, here is my glove that she is traitress unto my lord, King Arthur, and that this night one of the wounded knights lay with her. And I receive your glove, said Sir Launcelot. And so they were sealed with their signets, and delivered unto the ten knights. At what day shall we do battle together? said Sir Launcelot. This day ight days, said Sir Meliagrance, in the field beside Westminster. I am agreed, said Sir Launcelot. But now, said Sir Meliagrance, sithen it is so that we must fight together, I pray you, as ye be a noble knight, await me with no treason, nor none villainy the meanwhile, nor none for you. So God me help, said Sir Launcelot, ye shall right well wit I was never of no such conditions, for I report me to all knights that ever have known me, I fared never with no treason, nor I loved never the fellowship of no man that fared with treason. Then let us go to dinner, said Meliagrance, and after dinner ye and the queen and ye may ride all to Westminster. I will well, said Sir Launcelot.

Then Sir Meliagrance said to Sir Launcelot: Pleaseth it you to see the estures of this castle? With a good will, said Sir Launcelot. And then they went together from chamber to chamber, for Sir Launcelot dread no perils; for ever a man of worship and of prowess dreadeth least always perils, for they ween every man be as they be; but ever he that fareth with treason putteth oft a man in great danger. So it befell upon Sir Launcelot that no peril dread, as he went with Sir Meliagrance he trod on a trap and the board rolled, and there Sir Launcelot fell down more than ten fathom into a cave full of straw; and then Sir Meliagrance departed and made no fare as that he nist where he was.

And when Sir Launcelot was thus missed they marvelled where he was become; and then the queen and many of them deemed that he was departed as he was wont to do suddenly. For Sir Meliagrance made suddenly to put away aside Sir Lavaine's horse, that they might all understand that Sir Launcelot was departed suddenly. So it passed on till after dinner; and then Sir Lavaine would not stint until that he ordained litters for the wounded knights, that they might be laid in them; and so with the queen and them all, both ladies and gentlewomen and other, went unto Westminster; and there the knights told King Arthur how Meliagrance had appealed the queen of high treason, and how Sir Launcelot had received the glove of him: And this day eight days they shall do battle afore you. By my head, said King Arthur, I am afeard Sir Meliagrance hath taken upon him a great charge; but where is Sir Launcelot? said the king. Sir, said they all, we wot not where he is, but we deem he is ridden to some adventures, as he is oftentimes wont to do, for he hath Sir Lavaine's horse. Let him be, said the king, he will be founden, but if he be trapped with some treason.

### **CHAPTER VIII. How Sir Launcelot was delivered out of prison by a lady, and took a white courser and came for to keep his day**

SO leave we Sir Launcelot lying within that cave in great pain; and every day there came a lady and brought him his meat and his drink, and wooed him, to have lain by him; and ever the noble knight, Sir Launcelot, said her nay. Sir Launcelot, said she, ye are not wise, for ye may never out of this prison, but if ye have my help; and also your lady, Queen Guenever, shall be brent in your default, unless that ye be there at the day of battle. God defend, said Sir Launcelot, that she should be brent in my default; and if it be so, said Sir Launcelot, that I may not be there, it shall be well understood, both at the king and at the queen, and with all men of worship, that I am dead, sick, outhen in prison. For all men that know me will say for me that I am in some evil case an I be not there that day; and well I wot there is some good knight either of my blood, or some other that loveth me, that will take my quarrel in hand; and

therefore, said Sir Launcelot, wit ye well ye shall not fear me; and if there were no more women in all this land but ye, I will not have ado with you. Then art thou shamed, said the lady, and destroyed for ever. As for world's shame, Jesu defend me, and as for my distress, it is welcome whatsoever it be that God sendeth me.

So she came to him the same day that the battle should be, and said: Sir Launcelot, methinketh ye are too hard-hearted, but wouldest thou but kiss me once I should deliver thee, and thine armour, and the best horse that is within Sir Meliagrance's stable. As for to kiss you, said Sir Launcelot, I may do that and lose no worship; and wit ye well an I understood there were any disworship for to kiss you I would not do it. Then he kissed her, and then she gat him, and brought him to his armour. And when he was armed, she brought him to a stable, where stood twelve good coursers, and bade him choose the best. Then Sir Launcelot looked upon a white courser the which liked him best; and anon he commanded the keepers fast to saddle him with the best saddle of war that there was; and so it was done as he bade. Then gat he his spear in his hand, and his sword by his side, and commended the lady unto God, and said: Lady, for this good deed I shall do you service if ever it be in my power.

### **CHAPTER IX. How Sir Launcelot came the same time that Sir Meliagrance abode him in the field and dressed him to battle**

NOW leave we Sir Launcelot wallop all that he might, and speak we of Queen Guenever that was brought to a fire to be brent; for Sir Meliagrance was sure, him thought, that Sir Launcelot should not be at that battle; therefore he ever cried upon King Arthur to do him justice, other-else bring forth Sir Launcelot du Lake. Then was the king and all the court full sore abashed and shamed that the queen should be brent in the default of Sir Launcelot. My lord Arthur, said Sir Lavaine, ye may understand that it is not well with my lord Sir Launcelot, for an he were alive, so he be not sick outhere in prison, wit ye well he would be here; for never heard ye that ever he failed his part for whom he should do battle for. And therefore, said Sir Lavaine, my lord, King Arthur, I beseech you give me license to do battle here this day for my lord and master, and for to save my lady, the queen. Gramercy gentle Sir Lavaine, said King Arthur, for I dare say all that Sir Meliagrance putteth upon my lady the queen is wrong, for I have spoken with all the ten wounded knights, and there is not one of them, an he were whole and able to do battle, but he would prove upon Sir Meliagrance's body that it is false that he putteth upon my queen. So shall I, said Sir Lavaine, in the defence of my lord, Sir Launcelot, an ye will give me leave. Now I give you leave, said King Arthur, and do your best, for I dare well say there is some



treason done to Sir Launcelot

Then was Sir Lavaine armed and horsed, and suddenly at the lists' end he rode to perform this battle; and right as the heralds should cry: *Lesses les aler*, right so came in Sir Launcelot driving with all the force of his horse. And then Arthur cried: *Ho!* and *Abide!* Then was Sir Launcelot called on horseback tofore King Arthur, and there he told openly tofore the king and all, how Sir Meliagrance had served him first to last. And when the king, and the queen, and all the lords, knew of the treason of Sir Meliagrance they were all ashamed on his behalf. Then was Queen Guenever sent for, and set by the king in great trust of her champion. And then there was no more else to say, but Sir Launcelot and Sir Meliagrance dressed them unto battle, and took their spears; and so they came together as thunder, and there Sir Launcelot bare him down quite over his horse's croup. And then Sir Launcelot alighted and dressed his shield on his shoulder, with his sword in his hand, and Sir Meliagrance in the same wise dressed him unto him, and there they smote many great strokes together; and at the last Sir Launcelot smote him such a buffet upon the helmet that he fell on the one side to the earth. And then he cried upon him aloud: *Most noble knight, Sir Launcelot du Lake, save my life, for I yield me unto you, and I require you, as ye be a knight and fellow of the Table Round, slay me not, for I yield me as overcome; and whether I shall live or die I put me in the king's hands and yours.*

Then Sir Launcelot wist not what to do, for he had had liefer than all the good of the world he might have been revenged upon Sir Meliagrance; and Sir Launcelot looked up to the Queen Guenever, if he might espy by any sign or countenance what she would have done. And then the queen wagged her head upon Sir Launcelot, as though she would say: *Slay him.* Full well knew Sir Launcelot by the wagging of her head that she would have him dead; then Sir Launcelot bade him rise for shame and perform that battle to the utterance. Nay, said Sir Meliagrance, *I will never arise until ye take me as yolden and recreant. I shall proffer you large proffers,* said Sir Launcelot, *that is for to say, I shall unarm my head and my left quarter of my body, all that may be unarmed, and let bind my left hand behind me, so that it shall not help me, and right so I shall do battle with you.* Then Sir Meliagrance started up upon his legs, and said on high: *My lord Arthur, take heed to this proffer, for I will take it, and let him be disarmed and bounden according to his proffer. What say ye,* said King Arthur unto Sir Launcelot, *will ye abide by your proffer?* *Yea, my lord,* said Sir Launcelot, *I will never go from that I have once said.*

Then the knights parters of the field disarmed Sir Launcelot, first his head, and sithen his left arm, and his left side, and they bound his left arm behind his back, without shield or anything, and then they were put together. *Wit you well*

there was many a lady and knight marvelled that Sir Launcelot would jeopardy himself in such wise. Then Sir Meliagrance came with his sword all on high, and Sir Launcelot showed him openly his bare head and the bare left side; and when he weened to have smitten him upon the bare head, then lightly he avoided the left leg and the left side, and put his right hand and his sword to that stroke, and so put it on side with great sleight; and then with great force Sir Launcelot smote him on the helmet such a buffet that the stroke carved the head in two parts. Then there was no more to do, but he was drawn out of the field. And at the great instance of the knights of the Table Round, the king suffered him to be interred, and the mention made upon him, who slew him, and for what cause he was slain; and then the king and the queen made more of Sir Launcelot du Lake, and more he was cherished, than ever he was aforehand.

#### **CHAPTER X. How Sir Urre came into Arthur's court for to be healed of his wounds, and how King Arthur would begin to handle him**

THEN as the French book maketh mention, there was a good knight in the land of Hungary, his name was Sir Urre, and he was an adventurous knight, and in all places where he might hear of any deeds of worship there would he be. So it happened in Spain there was an earl's son, his name was Alphegus, and at a great tournament in Spain this Sir Urre, knight of Hungary, and Sir Alphegus of Spain encountered together for very envy; and so either undertook other to the utterance. And by fortune Sir Urre slew Sir Alphegus, the earl's son of Spain, but this knight that was slain had given Sir Urre, or ever he was slain, seven great wounds, three on the head, and four on his body and upon his left hand. And this Sir Alphegus had a mother, the which was a great sorceress; and she, for the despite of her son's death, wrought by her subtle crafts that Sir Urre should never be whole, but ever his wounds should one time fester and another time bleed, so that he should never be whole until the best knight of the world had searched his wounds; and thus she made her avaunt, wherethrough it was known that Sir Urre should never be whole.

Then his mother let make an horse litter, and put him therein under two palfreys; and then she took Sir Urre's sister with him, a full fair damosel, whose name was Felelolie; and then she took a page with him to keep their horses, and so they led Sir Urre through many countries. For as the French book saith, she led him so seven year through all lands christened, and never she could find no knight that might ease her son. So she came into Scotland and into the lands of England, and by fortune she came nigh the feast of Pentecost until King Arthur's court, that at that time was holden at Carlisle. And when she came there, then she made it openly to be known how that she was come into that land for to heal

her son.

Then King Arthur let call that lady, and asked her the cause why she brought that hurt knight into that land. My most noble king, said that lady, wit you well I brought him hither for to be healed of his wounds, that of all this seven year he might not be whole. And then she told the king where he was wounded, and of whom; and how his mother had discovered in her pride how she had wrought that by enchantment, so that he should never be whole until the best knight of the world had searched his wounds. And so I have passed through all the lands christened to have him healed, except this land. And if I fail to heal him here in this land, I will never take more pain upon me, and that is pity, for he was a good knight, and of great nobleness. What is his name? said Arthur My good and gracious lord, she said, his name is Sir Urre of the Mount. In good time, said the king, and sith ye are come into this land, ye are right welcome; and wit you well here shall your son be healed, an ever any Christian man may heal him. And for to give all other men of worship courage, I myself will assay to handle your son, and so shall all the kings, dukes, and earls that be here present with me at this time; thereto will I command them, and well I wot they shall obey and do after my commandment. And wit you well, said King Arthur unto Urre's sister, I shall begin to handle him, and search unto my power, not presuming upon me that I am so worthy to heal your son by my deeds, but I will courage other men of worship to do as I will do. And then the king commanded all the kings, dukes, and earls, and all noble knights of the Round Table that were there that time present, to come into the meadow of Carlisle. And so at that time there were but an hundred and ten of the Round Table, for forty knights were that time away; and so here we must begin at King Arthur, as is kindly to begin at him that was the most man of worship that was christened at that time.

#### **CHAPTER XI. How King Arthur handled Sir Urre, and after him many other knights of the Round Table**

THEN King Arthur looked upon Sir Urre, and the king thought he was a full likely man when he was whole; and then King Arthur made him to be taken down off the litter and laid him upon the earth, and there was laid a cushion of gold that he should kneel upon. And then noble Arthur said: Fair knight, me repenteth of thy hurt, and for to courage all other noble knights I will pray thee softly to suffer me to handle your wounds. Most noble christened king, said Urre, do as ye list, for I am at the mercy of God, and at your commandment. So then Arthur softly handled him, and then some of his wounds renewed upon bleeding. Then the King Clarence of Northumberland searched, and it would not be. And then Sir Barant le Apres that was called the King with the Hundred

Knights, he assayed and failed; and so did King Uriens of the land of Gore; so did King Anguish of Ireland; so did King Nentres of Garloth; so did King Carados of Scotland; so did the Duke Galahad, the haut prince; so did Constantine, that was Sir Carados' son of Cornwall; so did Duke Chaleins of Clarence; so did the Earl Ulbause; so did the Earl Lambaile; so did the Earl Aristause.

Then came in Sir Gawaine with his three sons, Sir Gingalin, Sir Florence, and Sir Lovel, these two were begotten upon Sir Brandiles' sister; and all they failed. Then came in Sir Agravaine, Sir Gaheris, Sir Mordred, and the good knight, Sir Gareth, that was of very knighthood worth all the brethren. So came knights of Launcelot's kin, but Sir Launcelot was not that time in the court, for he was that time upon his adventures. Then Sir Lionel, Sir Ector de Maris, Sir Bors de Ganis, Sir Blamore de Ganis, Sir Bleoberis de Ganis, Sir Gahalantine, Sir Galihodin, Sir Menaduke, Sir Villiars the Valiant, Sir Hebes le Renoumes. All these were of Sir Launcelot's kin, and all they failed. Then came in Sir Sagramore le Desirous, Sir Dodinas le Savage, Sir Dinadan, Sir Bruin le Noire, that Sir Kay named La Cote Male Taile, and Sir Kay le Seneschal, Sir Kay de Stranges, Sir Meliot de Logris, Sir Petipase of Winchelsea, Sir Galleron of Galway, Sir Melion of the Mountain, Sir Cardok, Sir Uwayne les Avoutres, and Sir Ozanna le Cure Hardy.

Then came in Sir Astamor, and Sir Gromere, Grummor's son, Sir Crosselm, Sir Servause le Breuse, that was called a passing strong knight, for as the book saith, the chief Lady of the Lake feasted Sir Launcelot and Servause le Breuse, and when she had feasted them both at sundry times she prayed them to give her a boon. And they granted it her. And then she prayed Sir Servause that he would promise her never to do battle against Sir Launcelot du Lake, and in the same wise she prayed Sir Launcelot never to do battle against Sir Servause, and so either promised her. For the French book saith, that Sir Servause had never courage nor lust to do battle against no man, but if it were against giants, and against dragons, and wild beasts. So we pass unto them that at the king's request made them all that were there at that high feast, as of the knights of the Table Round, for to search Sir Urre: to that intent the king did it, to wit which was the noblest knight among them.

Then came Sir Aglovale, Sir Durnore, Sir Tor, that was begotten upon Aries, the cowherd's wife, but he was begotten afore Aries wedded her, and King Pellinore begat them all, first Sir Tor, Sir Aglovale, Sir Durnore, Sir Lamorak, the most noblest knight one that ever was in Arthur's days as for a worldly knight, and Sir Percivale that was peerless except Sir Galahad in holy deeds, but they died in the quest of the Sangreal. Then came Sir Griflet le Fise de Dieu, Sir

Lucan the Butler, Sir Bedevere his brother, Sir Brandiles, Sir Constantine, Sir Cador's son of Cornwall, that was king after Arthur's days, and Sir Clegis, Sir Sadok, Sir Dinas le Seneschal of Cornwall, Sir Fergus, Sir Driant, Sir Lambegus, Sir Clarrus of Cleremont, Sir Cloddrus, Sir Hectimere, Sir Edward of Carnarvon, Sir Dinas, Sir Priamus, that was christened by Sir Tristram the noble knight, and these three were brethren; Sir Hellaine le Blank that was son to Sir Bors, he begat him upon King Brandegoris' daughter, and Sir Brian de Listinoise; Sir Gautere, Sir Reynold, Sir Gillemere, were three brethren that Sir Launcelot won upon a bridge in Sir Kay's arms. Sir Guyart le Petite, Sir Bellangere le Beuse, that was son to the good knight, Sir Alisander le Orphelin, that was slain by the treason of King Mark. Also that traitor king slew the noble knight Sir Tristram, as he sat harping afore his lady La Beale Isoud, with a trenchant glaive, for whose death was much bewailing of every knight that ever were in Arthur's days; there was never none so bewailed as was Sir Tristram and Sir Lamorak, for they were traitorously slain, Sir Tristram by King Mark, and Sir Lamorak by Sir Gawaine and his brethren. And this Sir Bellangere revenged the death of his father Alisander, and Sir Tristram slew King Mark, and La Beale Isoud died swooning upon the corse of Sir Tristram, whereof was great pity. And all that were with King Mark that were consenting to the death of Sir Tristram were slain, as Sir Andred and many other.

Then came Sir Hebes, Sir Morganore, Sir Sentraile, Sir Suppinabilis, Sir Bellangere le Orgulous, that the good knight Sir Lamorak won in plain battle; Sir Neroveus and Sir Plenorius, two good knights that Sir Launcelot won; Sir Darras, Sir Harry le Fise Lake, Sir Erminide, brother to King Hermaunce, for whom Sir Palomides fought at the Red City with two brethren; and Sir Selises of the Dolorous Tower, Sir Edward of Orkney, Sir Ironside, that was called the noble Knight of the Red Launds that Sir Gareth won for the love of Dame Liones, Sir Arrook de Grevaunt, Sir Degrane Saunce Velany that fought with the giant of the black lowe, Sir Epinogris, that was the king's son of Northumberland. Sir Pelleas that loved the lady Ettard, and he had died for her love had not been one of the ladies of the lake, her name was Dame Nimue, and she wedded Sir Pelleas, and she saved him that he was never slain, and he was a full noble knight; and Sir Lamiel of Cardiff that was a great lover. Sir Plaine de Fors, Sir Melleaus de Lile, Sir Bohart le Cure Hardy that was King Arthur's son, Sir Mador de la Porte, Sir Colgreavance, Sir Hervise de la Forest Savage, Sir Marrok, the good knight that was betrayed with his wife, for she made him seven year a wer-wolf, Sir Persaunt, Sir Pertilope, his brother, that was called the Green Knight, and Sir Perimones, brother to them both, that was called the Red Knight, that Sir Gareth won when he was called Beaumains. All these hundred

knights and ten searched Sir Urre's wounds by the commandment of King Arthur.

**CHAPTER XII. How Sir Launcelot was commanded by Arthur to handle his wounds, and anon he was all whole, and how they thanked God**

MERCY Jesu, said King Arthur, where is Sir Launcelot du Lake that he is not here at this time? Thus, as they stood and spake of many things, there was espied Sir Launcelot that came riding toward them, and told the king. Peace, said the king, let no manner thing be said until he be come to us. So when Sir Launcelot espied King Arthur, he descended from his horse and came to the king, and saluted him and them all. Anon as the maid, Sir Urre's sister, saw Sir Launcelot, she ran to her brother thereas he lay in his litter, and said: Brother, here is come a knight that my heart giveth greatly unto. Fair sister, said Sir Urre, so doth my heart light against him, and certainly I hope now to be healed, for my heart giveth unto him more than to all these that have searched me.

Then said Arthur unto Sir Launcelot: Ye must do as we have done; and told Sir Launcelot what they had done, and showed him them all, that had searched him. Jesu defend me, said Sir Launcelot, when so many kings and knights have assayed and failed, that I should presume upon me to enchieve that all ye, my lords, might not enchieve. Ye shall not choose, said King Arthur, for I will command you for to do as we all have done. My most renowned lord, said Sir Launcelot, ye know well I dare not nor may not disobey your commandment, but an I might or durst, wit you well I would not take upon me to touch that wounded knight in that intent that I should pass all other knights; Jesu defend me from that shame. Ye take it wrong, said King Arthur, ye shall not do it for no presumption, but for to bear us fellowship, insomuch ye be a fellow of the Table Round; and wit you well, said King Arthur, an ye prevail not and heal him, I dare say there is no knight in this land may heal him, and therefore I pray you, do as we have done.

And then all the kings and knights for the most part prayed Sir Launcelot to search him; and then the wounded knight, Sir Urre, set him up weakly, and prayed Sir Launcelot heartily, saying: Courteous knight, I require thee for God's sake heal my wounds, for methinketh ever sithen ye came here my wounds grieve me not. Ah, my fair lord, said Sir Launcelot, Jesu would that I might help you; I shame me sore that I should be thus rebuked, for never was I able in worthiness to do so high a thing. Then Sir Launcelot kneeled down by the wounded knight saying: My lord Arthur, I must do your commandment, the which is sore against my heart. And then he held up his hands, and looked into the east, saying secretly unto himself: Thou blessed Father, Son, and Holy

Ghost, I beseech thee of thy mercy, that my simple worship and honesty be saved, and thou blessed Trinity, thou mayst give power to heal this sick knight by thy great virtue and grace of thee, but, Good Lord, never of myself. And then Sir Launcelot prayed Sir Urre to let him see his head; and then devoutly kneeling he ransacked the three wounds, that they bled a little, and forthwith all the wounds fair healed, and seemed as they had been whole a seven year. And in likewise he searched his body of other three wounds, and they healed in likewise; and then the last of all he searched the which was in his hand, and anon it healed fair.

Then King Arthur and all the kings and knights kneeled down and gave thankings and lovings unto God and to His Blessed Mother. And ever Sir Launcelot wept as he had been a child that had been beaten. Then King Arthur let array priests and clerks in the most devoutest manner, to bring in Sir Urre within Carlisle, with singing and loving to God. And when this was done, the king let clothe him in the richest manner that could be thought; and then were there but few better made knights in all the court, for he was passingly well made and bigly; and Arthur asked Sir Urre how he felt himself. My good lord, he said, I felt myself never so lusty. Will ye joust and do deeds of arms? said King Arthur. Sir, said Urre, an I had all that longed unto jousts I would be soon ready.

### **CHAPTER XIII. How there was a party made of an hundred knights against an hundred knights, and of other matters**

THEN Arthur made a party of hundred knights to be against an hundred knights. And so upon the morn they jousted for a diamond, but there jousted none of the dangerous knights; and so for to shorten this tale, Sir Urre and Sir Lavaine jousted best that day, for there was none of them but he overthrew and pulled down thirty knights; and then by the assent of all the kings and lords, Sir Urre and Sir Lavaine were made knights of the Table Round. And Sir Lavaine cast his love unto Dame Felelolie, Sir Urre's sister, and then they were wedded together with great joy, and King Arthur gave to everych of them a barony of lands. And this Sir Urre would never go from Sir Launcelot, but he and Sir Lavaine awaited evermore upon him; and they were in all the court accounted for good knights, and full desirous in arms; and many noble deeds they did, for they would have no rest, but ever sought adventures.

Thus they lived in all that court with great noblesse and joy long time. But every night and day Sir Agravaire, Sir Gawaine's brother, awaited Queen Guenever and Sir Launcelot du Lake to put them to a rebuke and shame. And so I leave here of this tale, and overskip great books of Sir Launcelot du Lake, what

great adventures he did when he was called Le Chevaler du Chariot. For as the French book saith, because of despite that knights and ladies called him the knight that rode in the chariot like as he were judged to the gallows, therefore in despite of all them that named him so, he was carried in a chariot a twelvemonth, for, but little after that he had slain Sir Meliagrance in the queen's quarrel, he never in a twelvemonth came on horseback. And as the French book saith, he did that twelvemonth more than forty battles. And because I have lost the very matter of Le Chevaier du Chariot, I depart from the tale of Sir Launcelot, and here I go unto the morte of King Arthur; and that caused Sir Agravaine.

*Explicit liber xix. And hereafter followeth the most piteous history of the morte of King Arthur, the which is the twentieth book.*



## BOOK XX

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### CHAPTER I. How Sir Agravaine and Sir Mordred were busy upon Sir Gawaine for to disclose the love between Sir Launcelot and Queen Guenever

IN May when every lusty heart flourisheth and burgeoneth, for as the season is lusty to behold and comfortable, so man and woman rejoice and gladden of summer coming with his fresh flowers: for winter with his rough winds and blasts causeth a lusty man and woman to cower and sit fast by the fire. So in this season, as in the month of May, it befell a great anger and unhap that stinted not till the flower of chivalry of all the world was destroyed and slain; and all was long upon two unhappy knights the which were named Agravaine and Sir Mordred, that were brethren unto Sir Gawaine. For this Sir Agravaine and Sir Mordred had ever a privy hate unto the queen Dame Guenever and to Sir Launcelot, and daily and nightly they ever watched upon Sir Launcelot.

So it mishapped, Sir Gawaine and all his brethren were in King Arthur's chamber; and then Sir Agravaine said thus openly, and not in no counsel, that many knights might hear it: I marvel that we all be not ashamed both to see and to know how Sir Launcelot lieth daily and nightly by the queen, and all we know it so; and it is shamefully suffered of us all, that we all should suffer so noble a king as King Arthur is so to be shamed.

Then spake Sir Gawaine, and said: Brother Sir Agravaine, I pray you and charge you move no such matters no more afore me, for wit you well, said Sir Gawaine, I will not be of your counsel. So God me help, said Sir Gaheris and Sir Gareth, we will not be knowing, brother Agravaine, of your deeds. Then will I, said Sir Mordred. I lieve well that, said Sir Gawaine, for ever unto all unhappiness, brother Sir Mordred, thereto will ye grant; and I would that ye left all this, and made you not so busy, for I know, said Sir Gawaine, what will fall of it. Fall of it what fall may, said Sir Agravaine, I will disclose it to the king. Not by my counsel, said Sir Gawaine, for an there rise war and wrack betwixt Sir Launcelot and us, wit you well brother, there will many kings and great lords hold with Sir Launcelot. Also, brother Sir Agravaine, said Sir Gawaine, ye must

remember how oftentimes Sir Launcelot hath rescued the king and the queen; and the best of us all had been full cold at the heart-root had not Sir Launcelot been better than we, and that hath he proved himself full oft. And as for my part, said Sir Gawaine, I will never be against Sir Launcelot for one day's deed, when he rescued me from King Carados of the Dolorous Tower, and slew him, and saved my life. Also, brother Sir Agravaine and Sir Mordred, in like wise Sir Launcelot rescued you both, and threescore and two, from Sir Turquin. Methinketh brother, such kind deeds and kindness should be remembered. Do as ye list, said Sir Agravaine, for I will lain it no longer. With these words came to them King Arthur. Now brother, stint your noise, said Sir Gawaine. We will not, said Sir Agravaine and Sir Mordred. Will ye so? said Sir Gawaine; then God speed you, for I will not hear your tales ne be of your counsel. No more will I, said Sir Gareth and Sir Gaheris, for we will never say evil by that man; for because, said Sir Gareth, Sir Launcelot made me knight, by no manner owe I to say ill of him: and therewithal they three departed, making great dole. Alas, said Sir Gawaine and Sir Gareth, now is this realm wholly mischieved, and the noble fellowship of the Round Table shall be disparpled: so they departed.

## **CHAPTER II. How Sir Agravaine disclosed their love to King Arthur, and how King Arthur gave them licence to take him**

AND then Sir Arthur asked them what noise they made. My lord, said Agravaine, I shall tell you that I may keep no longer. Here is I, and my brother Sir Mordred, brake unto my brothers Sir Gawaine, Sir Gaheris, and to Sir Gareth, how this we know all, that Sir Launcelot holdeth your queen, and hath done long; and we be your sister's sons, and we may suffer it no longer, and all we wot that ye should be above Sir Launcelot; and ye are the king that made him knight, and therefore we will prove it, that he is a traitor to your person.

If it be so, said Sir Arthur, wit you well he is none other, but I would be loath to begin such a thing but I might have proofs upon it; for Sir Launcelot is an hardy knight, and all ye know he is the best knight among us all; and but if he be taken with the deed, he will fight with him that bringeth up the noise, and I know no knight that is able to match him. Therefore an it be sooth as ye say, I would he were taken with the deed. For as the French book saith, the king was full loath thereto, that any noise should be upon Sir Launcelot and his queen; for the king had a deeming, but he would not hear of it, for Sir Launcelot had done so much for him and the queen so many times, that wit ye well the king loved him passingly well. My lord, said Sir Agravaine, ye shall ride to-morn a-hunting, and doubt ye not Sir Launcelot will not go with you. Then when it draweth toward night, ye may send the queen word that ye will lie out all that night, and so may

ye send for your cooks, and then upon pain of death we shall take him that night with the queen, and outhere we shall bring him to you dead or quick. I will well, said the king; then I counsel you, said the king, take with you sure fellowship. Sir, said Agravaire, my brother, Sir Mordred, and I, will take with us twelve knights of the Round Table. Beware, said King Arthur, for I warn you ye shall find him wight. Let us deal, said Sir Agravaire and Sir Mordred.

So on the morn King Arthur rode a-hunting, and sent word to the queen that he would be out all that night. Then Sir Agravaire and Sir Mordred gat to them twelve knights, and hid themselves in a chamber in the Castle of Carlisle, and these were their names: Sir Colgrevice, Sir Mador de la Porte, Sir Gingaline, Sir Meliot de Logris, Sir Petipase of Winchelsea, Sir Galleron of Galway, Sir Melion of the Mountain, Sir Astamore, Sir Gromore Somir Joure, Sir Curselaine, Sir Florence, Sir Lovel. So these twelve knights were with Sir Mordred and Sir Agravaire, and all they were of Scotland, outhere of Sir Gawaine's kin, either well-willers to his brethren.

So when the night came, Sir Launcelot told Sir Bors how he would go that night and speak with the queen. Sir, said Sir Bors, ye shall not go this night by my counsel. Why? said Sir Launcelot. Sir, said Sir Bors, I dread me ever of Sir Agravaire, that waiteth you daily to do you shame and us all; and never gave my heart against no going, that ever ye went to the queen, so much as now; for I mistrust that the king is out this night from the queen because peradventure he hath lain some watch for you and the queen, and therefore I dread me sore of treason. Have ye no dread, said Sir Launcelot, for I shall go and come again, and make no tarrying. Sir, said Sir Bors, that me repenteth, for I dread me sore that your going out this night shall wrath us all. Fair nephew, said Sir Launcelot, I marvel much why ye say thus, sithen the queen hath sent for me; and wit ye well I will not be so much a coward, but she shall understand I will see her good grace. God speed you well, said Sir Bors, and send you sound and safe again.

### **CHAPTER III. How Sir Launcelot was espied in the queen's chamber, and how Sir Agravaire and Sir Mordred came with twelve knights to slay him**

SO Sir Launcelot departed, and took his sword under his arm, and so in his mantle that noble knight put himself in great Jeopardy; and so he passed till he came to the queen's chamber, and then Sir Launcelot was lightly put into the chamber. And then, as the French book saith, the queen and Launcelot were together. And whether they were abed or at other manner of disports, me list not hereof make no mention, for love that time was not as is now-a-days. But thus as they were together, there came Sir Agravaire and Sir Mordred, with twelve

knights with them of the Round Table, and they said with crying voice: Traitor-knight, Sir Launcelot du Lake, now art thou taken. And thus they cried with a loud voice, that all the court might hear it; and they all fourteen were armed at all points as they should fight in a battle. Alas said Queen Guenever, now are we mischieved both Madam, said Sir Launcelot, is there here any armour within your chamber, that I might cover my poor body withal? An if there be any give it me, and I shall soon stint their malice, by the grace of God. Truly, said the queen, I have none armour, shield, sword, nor spear; wherefore I dread me sore our long love is come to a mischievous end, for I hear by their noise there be many noble knights, and well I wot they be surely armed, and against them ye may make no resistance. Wherefore ye are likely to be slain, and then shall I be brent. For an ye might escape them, said the queen, I would not doubt but that ye would rescue me in what danger that ever I stood in. Alas, said Sir Launcelot, in all my life thus was I never bestead, that I should be thus shamefully slain for lack of mine armour.

But ever in one Sir Agravaine and Sir Mordred cried: Traitor-knight, come out of the queen's chamber, for wit thou well thou art so beset that thou shalt not escape. O Jesu mercy, said Sir Launcelot, this shameful cry and noise I may not suffer, for better were death at once than thus to endure this pain. Then he took the queen in his arms, and kissed her, and said: Most noble Christian queen, I beseech you as ye have been ever my special good lady, and I at all times your true poor knight unto my power, and as I never failed you in right nor in wrong sithen the first day King Arthur made me knight, that ye will pray for my soul if that I here be slain; for well I am assured that Sir Bors, my nephew, and all the remnant of my kin, with Sir Lavaine and Sir Urre, that they will not fail you to rescue you from the fire; and therefore, mine own lady, recomfort yourself, whatsomever come of me, that ye go with Sir Bors, my nephew, and Sir Urre, and they all will do you all the pleasure that they can or may, that ye shall live like a queen upon my lands. Nay, Launcelot, said the queen, wit thou well I will never live after thy days, but an thou be slain I will take my death as meekly for Jesu Christ's sake as ever did any Christian queen. Well, madam, said I-auncelot, sith it is so that the day is come that our love must depart, wit you well I shall sell my life as dear as I may; and a thousandfold, said Sir Launcelot, I am more heavier for you than for myself. And now I had liefer than to be lord of all Christendom, that I had sure armour upon me, that men might speak of my deeds or ever I were slain. Truly, said the queen, I would an it might please God that they would take me and slay me, and suffer you to escape. That shall never be, said Sir Launcelot, God defend me from such a shame, but Jesu be Thou my shield and mine armour!

#### **CHAPTER IV. How Sir Launcelot slew Sir Colgrevice, and armed him in his harness, and after slew Sir Agravaine, and twelve of his fellows**

AND therewith Sir Launcelot wrapped his mantle about his arm well and surely; and by then they had gotten a great form out of the hall, and therewithal they rashed at the door. Fair lords, said Sir Launcelot, leave your noise and your rashing, and I shall set open this door, and then may ye do with me what it liketh you. Come off then, said they all, and do it, for it availeth thee not to strive against us all; and therefore let us into this chamber, and we shall save thy life until thou come to King Arthur. Then Launcelot unbarred the door, and with his left hand he held it open a little, so that but one man might come in at once; and so there came striding a good knight, a much man and large, and his name was Colgrevice of Gore, and he with a sword struck at Sir Launcelot mightily; and he put aside the stroke, and gave him such a buffet upon the helmet, that he fell grovelling dead within the chamber door. And then Sir Launcelot with great might drew that dead knight within the chamber door; and Sir Launcelot with help of the queen and her ladies was lightly armed in Sir Colgrevice's armour.

And ever stood Sir Agravaine and Sir Mordred crying: Traitor-knight, come out of the queen's chamber. Leave your noise, said Sir Launcelot unto Sir Agravaine, for wit you well, Sir Agravaine, ye shall not prison me this night; and therefore an ye do by my counsel, go ye all from this chamber door, and make not such crying and such manner of slander as ye do; for I promise you by my knighthood, an ye will depart and make no more noise, I shall as to-morn appear afore you all before the king, and then let it be seen which of you all, outhere else ye all, that will accuse me of treason; and there I shall answer you as a knight should, that hither I came to the queen for no manner of mal engin, and that will I prove and make it good upon you with my hands. Fie on thee, traitor, said Sir Agravaine and Sir Mordred, we will have thee maugre thy head, and slay thee if we list; for we let thee wit we have the choice of King Arthur to save thee or to slay thee. Ah sirs, said Sir Launcelot, is there none other grace with you? then keep yourself.

So then Sir Launcelot set all open the chamber door, and mightily and knightly he strode in amongst them; and anon at the first buffet he slew Sir Agravaine. And twelve of his fellows after, within a little while after, he laid them cold to the earth, for there was none of the twelve that might stand Sir Launcelot one buffet. Also Sir Launcelot wounded Sir Mordred, and he fled with all his might. And then Sir Launcelot returned again unto the queen, and said: Madam, now wit you well all our true love is brought to an end, for now will King Arthur ever be my foe; and therefore, madam, an it like you that I may

have you with me, I shall save you from all manner adventures dangerous. That is not best, said the queen; meseemeth now ye have done so much harm, it will be best ye hold you still with this. And if ye see that as to-morn they will put me unto the death, then may ye rescue me as ye think best. I will well, said Sir Launcelot, for have ye no doubt, while I am living I shall rescue you. And then he kissed her, and either gave other a ring; and so there he left the queen, and went until his lodging.

#### **CHAPTER V. How Sir Launcelot came to Sir Bors, and told him how he had sped, and in what adventure he had been, and how he had escaped**

WHEN Sir Bors saw Sir Launcelot he was never so glad of his home-coming as he was then. Jesu mercy, said Sir Launcelot, why be ye all armed: what meaneth this? Sir, said Sir Bors, after ye were departed from us, we all that be of your blood and your well-willers were so dretched that some of us leapt out of our beds naked, and some in their dreams caught naked swords in their hands; therefore, said Sir Bors, we deem there is some great strife at hand; and then we all deemed that ye were betrapped with some treason, and therefore we made us thus ready, what need that ever ye were in.

My fair nephew, said Sir Launcelot unto Sir Bors, now shall ye wit all, that this night I was more harder bestead than ever I was in my life, and yet I escaped. And so he told them all how and in what manner, as ye have heard tofore. And therefore, my fellows, said Sir Launcelot, I pray you all that ye will be of good heart in what need somever I stand, for now is war come to us all. Sir, said Bors, all is welcome that God sendeth us, and we have had much weal with you and much worship, and therefore we will take the woe with you as we have taken the weal. And therefore, they said all (there were many good knights), look ye take no discomfort, for there nis no bands of knights under heaven but we shall be able to grieve them as much as they may us. And therefore discomfort not yourself by no manner, and we shall gather together that we love, and that loveth us, and what that ye will have done shall be done. And therefore, Sir Launcelot, said they, we will take the woe with the weal. Grant mercy, said Sir Launcelot, of your good comfort, for in my great distress, my fair nephew, ye comfort me greatly, and much I am beholding unto you. But this, my fair nephew, I would that ye did in all haste that ye may, or it be forth days, that ye will look in their lodging that be lodged here nigh about the king, which will hold with me, and which will not, for now I would know which were my friends from my foes. Sir, said Sir Bors, I shall do my pain, and or it be seven of the clock I shall wit of such as ye have said before, who will hold with you.

Then Sir Bors called unto him Sir Lionel, Sir Ector de Maris, Sir Blamore de

Ganis, Sir Bleoberis de Ganis, Sir Gahalantine, Sir Galihodin, Sir Galihud, Sir Menadeuke Sir Villiers the Valiant, Sir Hebes le Renoumes, Sir Lavaine Sir Urre of Hungary, Sir Nerounes, Sir Plenorius. These two knights Sir Launcelot made, and the one he won upon a bridge, and therefore they would never be against him. And Harry le Fise du Lake, and Sir Selises of the Dolorous Tower, and Sir Melias de Lile, and Sir Bellangere le Beuse, that was Sir Alisander's son Le Orphelin, because his mother Alice le Beale Pellerin and she was kin unto Sir Launcelot, and he held with him. So there came Sir Palomides and Sir Safere, his brother, to hold with Sir Launcelot, and Sir Clegis of Sadok, and Sir Dinas, Sir Clarius of Cleremont. So these two-and-twenty knights drew them together, and by then they were armed on horseback, and promised Sir Launcelot to do what he would. Then there fell to them, what of North Wales and of Cornwall, for Sir Lamorak's sake and for Sir Tristram's sake, to the number of a fourscore knights.

My lords, said Sir Launcelot, wit you well, I have been ever since I came into this country well willed unto my lord, King Arthur, and unto my lady, Queen Guenever, unto my power; and this night because my lady the queen sent for me to speak with her, I suppose it was made by treason, howbeit I dare largely excuse her person, notwithstanding I was there by a forecast near slain, but as Jesu provided me I escaped all their malice and treason. And then that noble knight Sir Launcelot told them all how he was hard bestead in the queen's chamber, and how and in what manner he escaped from them. And therefore, said Sir Launcelot, wit you well, my fair lords, I am sure there nis but war unto me and mine. And for because I have slain this night these knights, I wot well, as is Sir Agravaine Sir Gawaine's brother, and at the least twelve of his fellows, for this cause now I am sure of mortal war, for these knights were sent and ordained by King Arthur to betray me. And therefore the king will in his heat and malice judge the queen to the fire, and that may I not suffer, that she should be brent for my sake; for an I may be heard and suffered and so taken, I will fight for the queen, that she is a true lady unto her lord; but the king in his heat I dread me will not take me as I ought to be taken.

## **CHAPTER VI. Of the counsel and advice that was taken by Sir Launcelot and his friends for to save the queen**

MY lord, Sir Launcelot, said Sir Bors, by mine advice ye shall take the woe with the weal, and take it in patience, and thank God of it. And sithen it is fallen as it is, I counsel you keep yourself, for an ye will yourself, there is no fellowship of knights christened that shall do you wrong. Also I will counsel you my lord, Sir Launcelot, than an my lady, Queen Guenever, be in distress,

insomuch as she is in pain for your sake, that ye knightly rescue her; an ye did otherwise, all the world will speak of you shame to the world's end. Insomuch as ye were taken with her, whether ye did right or wrong, it is now your part to hold with the queen, that she be not slain and put to a mischievous death, for an she so die the shame shall be yours. Jesu defend me from shame, said Sir Launcelot, and keep and save my lady the queen from villainy and shameful death, and that she never be destroyed in my default; wherefore my fair lords, my kin, and my friends, said Sir Launcelot, what will ye do? Then they said all: We will do as ye will do. I put this to you, said Sir Launcelot, that if my lord Arthur by evil counsel will to-morn in his heat put my lady the queen to the fire there to be brent, now I pray you counsel me what is best to do. Then they said all at once with one voice: Sir, us thinketh best that ye knightly rescue the queen, insomuch as she shall be brent it is for your sake; and it is to suppose, an ye might be handled, ye should have the same death, or a more shamefuler death. And sir, we say all, that ye have many times rescued her from death for other men's quarrels, us seemeth it is more your worship that ye rescue the queen from this peril, insomuch she hath it for your sake.

Then Sir Launcelot stood still, and said: My fair lords, wit you well I would be loath to do that thing that should dishonour you or my blood, and wit you well I would be loath that my lady, the queen, should die a shameful death; but an it be so that ye will counsel me to rescue her, I must do much harm or I rescue her; and peradventure I shall there destroy some of my best friends, that should much repent me; and peradventure there be some, an they could well bring it about, or disobey my lord King Arthur, they would soon come to me, the which I were loath to hurt. And if so be that I rescue her, where shall I keep her? That shall be the least care of us all, said Sir Bors. How did the noble knight Sir Tristram, by your good will? kept not he with him La Beale Isoud near three year in Joyous Gard? the which was done by your alther device, and that same place is your own; and in likewise may ye do an ye list, and take the queen lightly away, if it so be the king will judge her to be brent; and in Joyous Gard ye may keep her long enough until the heat of the king be past. And then shall ye bring again the queen to the king with great worship; and then peradventure ye shall have thank for her bringing home, and love and thank where other shall have maugre.

That is hard to do, said Sir Launcelot, for by Sir Tristram I may have a warning, for when by means of treaties, Sir Tristram brought again La Beale Isoud unto King Mark from Joyous Gard, look what befell on the end, how shamefully that false traitor King Mark slew him as he sat harping afore his lady La Beale Isoud, with a grounden glaive he thrust him in behind to the heart. It



grieveth me, said Sir Launcelot, to speak of his death, for all the world may not find such a knight. All this is truth, said Sir Bors, but there is one thing shall courage you and us all, ye know well King Arthur and King Mark were never like of conditions, for there was never yet man could prove King Arthur untrue of his promise.

So to make short tale, they were all consented that for better outhere for worse, if so were that the queen were on that morn brought to the fire, shortly they all would rescue her. And so by the advice of Sir Launcelot, they put them all in an embushment in a wood, as nigh Carlisle as they might, and there they abode still, to wit what the king would do.

### **CHAPTER VII. How Sir Mordred rode hastily to the king, to tell him of the affray and death of Sir Agravaine and the other knights**

NOW turn we again unto Sir Mordred, that when he was escaped from the noble knight, Sir Launcelot, he anon gat his horse and mounted upon him, and rode unto King Arthur, sore wounded and smitten, and all forbled; and there he told the king all how it was, and how they were all slain save himself all only. Jesu mercy, how may this be? said the king; took ye him in the queen's chamber? Yea, so God me help, said Sir Mordred, there we found him unarmed, and there he slew Colgrevance, and armed him in his armour; and all this he told the king from the beginning to the ending. Jesu mercy, said the king, he is a marvellous knight of prowess. Alas, me sore repenteth, said the king, that ever Sir Launcelot should be against me. Now I am sure the noble fellowship of the Round Table is broken for ever, for with him will many a noble knight hold; and now it is fallen so, said the king, that I may not with my worship, but the queen must suffer the death. So then there was made great ordinance in this heat, that the queen must be judged to the death. And the law was such in those days that whatsoever they were, of what estate or degree, if they were found guilty of treason, there should be none other remedy but death; and outhere the men or the taking with the deed should be causer of their hasty judgment. And right so was it ordained for Queen Guenever, because Sir Mordred was escaped sore wounded, and the death of thirteen knights of the Round Table. These proofs and experiences caused King Arthur to command the queen to the fire there to be brent.

Then spake Sir Gawaine, and said: My lord Arthur, I would counsel you not to be over-hasty, but that ye would put it in respite, this judgment of my lady the queen, for many causes. One it is, though it were so that Sir Launcelot were found in the queen's chamber, yet it might be so that he came thither for none evil; for ye know my lord, said Sir Gawaine, that the queen is much beholden unto Sir Launcelot, more than unto any other knight, for oftentimes he hath saved

her life, and done battle for her when all the court refused the queen; and peradventure she sent for him for goodness and for none evil, to reward him for his good deeds that he had done to her in times past. And peradventure my lady, the queen, sent for him to that intent that Sir Launcelot should come to her good grace privily and secretly, weening to her that it was best so to do, in eschewing and dreading of slander; for oftentimes we do many things that we ween it be for the best, and yet peradventure it turneth to the worst. For I dare say, said Sir Gawaine, my lady, your queen, is to you both good and true; and as for Sir Launcelot, said Sir Gawaine, I dare say he will make it good upon any knight living that will put upon himself villainy or shame, and in like wise he will make good for my lady, Dame Guenever.

That I believe well, said King Arthur, but I will not that way with Sir Launcelot, for he trusteth so much upon his hands and his might that he doubteth no man; and therefore for my queen he shall never fight more, for she shall have the law. And if I may get Sir Launcelot, wit you well he shall have a shameful death. Jesu defend, said Sir Gawaine, that I may never see it. Why say ye so? said King Arthur; forsooth ye have no cause to love Sir Launcelot, for this night last past he slew your brother, Sir Agravaine, a full good knight, and almost he had slain your other brother, Sir Mordred, and also there he slew thirteen noble knights; and also, Sir Gawaine, remember you he slew two sons of yours, Sir Florence and Sir Lovel. My lord, said Sir Gawaine, of all this I have knowledge, of whose deaths I repent me sore; but insomuch I gave them warning, and told my brethren and my sons aforehand what would fall in the end, insomuch they would not do by my counsel, I will not meddle me thereof, nor revenge me nothing of their deaths; for I told them it was no boot to strive with Sir Launcelot. Howbeit I am sorry of the death of my brethren and of my sons, for they are the causers of their own death; for oftentimes I warned my brother Sir Agravaine, and I told him the perils the which be now fallen.

### **CHAPTER VIII. How Sir Launcelot and his kinsmen rescued the queen from the fire, and how he slew many knights**

THEN said the noble King Arthur to Sir Gawaine: Dear nephew, I pray you make you ready in your best armour, with your brethren, Sir Gaheris and Sir Gareth, to bring my queen to the fire, there to have her judgment and receive the death. Nay, my most noble lord, said Sir Gawaine, that will I never do; for wit you well I will never be in that place where so noble a queen as is my lady, Dame Guenever, shall take a shameful end. For wit you well, said Sir Gawaine, my heart will never serve me to see her die; and it shall never be said that ever I was of your counsel of her death.

Then said the king to Sir Gawaine: Suffer your brothers Sir Gaheris and Sir Gareth to be there. My lord, said Sir Gawaine, wit you well they will be loath to be there present, because of many adventures the which be like there to fall, but they are young and full unable to say you nay. Then spake Sir Gaheris, and the good knight Sir Gareth, unto Sir Arthur: Sir, ye may well command us to be there, but wit you well it shall be sore against our will; but an we be there by your strait commandment ye shall plainly hold us there excused: we will be there in peaceable wise, and bear none harness of war upon us. In the name of God, said the king, then make you ready, for she shall soon have her judgment anon. Alas, said Sir Gawaine, that ever I should endure to see this woful day. So Sir Gawaine turned him and wept heartily, and so he went into his chamber; and then the queen was led forth without Carlisle, and there she was despoiled into her smock. And so then her ghostly father was brought to her, to be shriven of her misdeeds. Then was there weeping, and wailing, and wringing of hands, of many lords and ladies, but there were but few in comparison that would bear any armour for to strength the death of the queen.

Then was there one that Sir Launcelot had sent unto that place for to espy what time the queen should go unto her death; and anon as he saw the queen despoiled into her smock, and so shriven, then he gave Sir Launcelot warning. Then was there but spurring and plucking up of horses, and right so they came to the fire. And who that stood against them, there were they slain; there might none withstand Sir Launcelot, so all that bare arms and withstood them, there were they slain, full many a noble knight. For there was slain Sir Belliance le Orgulous, Sir Segwarides, Sir Griflet, Sir Brandiles, Sir Aglovale, Sir Tor; Sir Gauter, Sir Gillimer, Sir Reynolds' three brethren; Sir Damas, Sir Priamus, Sir Kay the Stranger, Sir Driant, Sir Lambegus, Sir Herminde; Sir Pertilope, Sir Perimones, two brethren that were called the Green Knight and the Red Knight. And so in this rushing and hurling, as Sir Launcelot thrang here and there, it mishapped him to slay Gaheris and Sir Gareth, the noble knight, for they were unarmed and unaware. For as the French book saith, Sir Launcelot smote Sir Gareth and Sir Gaheris upon the brain-pans, wherethrough they were slain in the field; howbeit in very truth Sir Launcelot saw them not, and so were they found dead among the thickest of the press.

Then when Sir Launcelot had thus done, and slain and put to flight all that would withstand him, then he rode straight unto Dame Guenever, and made a kirtle and a gown to be cast upon her; and then he made her to be set behind him, and prayed her to be of good cheer. Wit you well the queen was glad that she was escaped from the death. And then she thanked God and Sir Launcelot; and so he rode his way with the queen, as the French book saith, unto Joyous Gard,

and there he kept her as a noble knight should do; and many great lords and some kings sent Sir Launcelot many good knights, and many noble knights drew unto Sir Launcelot. When this was known openly, that King Arthur and Sir Launcelot were at debate, many knights were glad of their debate, and many were full heavy of their debate.

### **CHAPTER IX. Of the sorrow and lamentation of King Arthur for the death of his nephews and other good knights, and also for the queen, his wife**

SO turn we again unto King Arthur, that when it was told him how and in what manner of wise the queen was taken away from the fire, and when he heard of the death of his noble knights, and in especial of Sir Gaheris and Sir Gareth's death, then the king swooned for pure sorrow. And when he awoke of his swoon, then he said: Alas, that ever I bare crown upon my head! for now have I lost the fairest fellowship of noble knights that ever held Christian king together. Alas, my good knights be slain away from me: now within these two days I have lost forty knights, and also the noble fellowship of Sir Launcelot and his blood, for now I may never hold them together no more with my worship. Alas that ever this war began. Now fair fellows, said the king, I charge you that no man tell Sir Gawaine of the death of his two brethren; for I am sure, said the king, when Sir Gawaine heareth tell that Sir Gareth is dead he will go nigh out of his mind. Mercy Jesu, said the king, why slew he Sir Gareth and Sir Gaheris, for I dare say as for Sir Gareth he loved Sir Launcelot above all men earthly. That is truth, said some knights, but they were slain in the hurtling as Sir Launcelot thrang in the thick of the press; and as they were unarmed he smote them and wist not whom that he smote, and so unhappily they were slain. The death of them, said Arthur, will cause the greatest mortal war that ever was; I am sure, wist Sir Gawaine that Sir Gareth were slain, I should never have rest of him till I had destroyed Sir Launcelot's kin and himself both, outhere else he to destroy me. And therefore, said the king, wit you well my heart was never so heavy as it is now, and much more I am sorrier for my good knights' loss than for the loss of my fair queen; for queens I might have enow, but such a fellowship of good knights shall never be together in no company. And now I dare say, said King Arthur, there was never Christian king held such a fellowship together; and alas that ever Sir Launcelot and I should be at debate. Ah Agravaine, Agravaine, said the king, Jesu forgive it thy soul, for thine evil will, that thou and thy brother Sir Mordred hadst unto Sir Launcelot, hath caused all this sorrow: and ever among these complaints the king wept and swooned.

Then there came one unto Sir Gawaine, and told him how the queen was led

away with Sir Launcelot, and nigh a twenty-four knights slain. O Jesu defend my brethren, said Sir Gawaine, for full well wist I that Sir Launcelot would rescue her, outhere else he would die in that field; and to say the truth he had not been a man of worship had he not rescued the queen that day, insomuch she should have been brent for his sake. And as in that, said Sir Gawaine, he hath done but knightly, and as I would have done myself an I had stood in like case. But where are my brethren? said Sir Gawaine, I marvel I hear not of them. Truly, said that man, Sir Gareth and Sir Gaheris be slain. Jesu defend, said Sir Gawaine, for all the world I would not that they were slain, and in especial my good brother, Sir Gareth. Sir, said the man, he is slain, and that is great pity. Who slew him? said Sir Gawaine. Sir, said the man, Launcelot slew them both. That may I not believe, said Sir Gawaine, that ever he slew my brother, Sir Gareth; for I dare say my brother Gareth loved him better than me, and all his brethren, and the king both. Also I dare say, an Sir Launcelot had desired my brother Sir Gareth, with him he would have been with him against the king and us all, and therefore I may never believe that Sir Launcelot slew my brother. Sir, said this man, it is noised that he slew him.

**CHAPTER X. How King Arthur at the request of Sir Gawaine  
concluded to make war against Sir Launcelot, and laid siege to his castle  
called Joyous Gard**

ALAS, said Sir Gawaine, now is my joy gone. And then he fell down and swooned, and long he lay there as he had been dead. And then, when he arose of his swoon, he cried out sorrowfully, and said: Alas! And right so Sir Gawaine ran to the king, crying and weeping: O King Arthur, mine uncle, my good brother Sir Gareth is slain, and so is my brother Sir Gaheris, the which were two noble knights. Then the king wept, and he both; and so they fell a-swooning. And when they were revived then spake Sir Gawaine: Sir, I will go see my brother, Sir Gareth. Ye may not see him, said the king, for I caused him to be interred, and Sir Gaheris both; for I well understood that ye would make overmuch sorrow, and the sight of Sir Gareth should have caused your double sorrow. Alas, my lord, said Sir Gawaine, how slew he my brother, Sir Gareth? Mine own good lord I pray you tell me. Truly, said the king, I shall tell you how it is told me, Sir Launcelot slew him and Sir Gaheris both. Alas, said Sir Gawaine, they bare none arms against him, neither of them both. I wot not how it was, said the king, but as it is said, Sir Launcelot slew them both in the thickest of the press and knew them not; and therefore let us shape a remedy for to revenge their deaths.

My king, my lord, and mine uncle, said Sir Gawaine, wit you well now I

shall make you a promise that I shall hold by my knighthood, that from this day I shall never fail Sir Launcelot until the one of us have slain the other. And therefore I require you, my lord and king, dress you to the war, for wit you well I will be revenged upon Sir Launcelot; and therefore, as ye will have my service and my love, now haste you thereto, and assay your friends. For I promise unto God, said Sir Gawaine, for the death of my brother, Sir Gareth, I shall seek Sir Launcelot throughout seven kings' realms, but I shall slay him or else he shall slay me. Ye shall not need to seek him so far, said the king, for as I hear say, Sir Launcelot will abide me and you in the Joyous Gard; and much people draweth unto him, as I hear say. That may I believe, said Sir Gawaine; but my lord, he said, assay your friends, and I will assay mine. It shall be done, said the king, and as I suppose I shall be big enough to draw him out of the biggest tower of his castle.

So then the king sent letters and writs throughout all England, both in the length and the breadth, for to assummon all his knights. And so unto Arthur drew many knights, dukes, and earls, so that he had a great host. And when they were assembled, the king informed them how Sir Launcelot had bereft him his queen. Then the king and all his host made them ready to lay siege about Sir Launcelot, where he lay within Joyous Gard. Thereof heard Sir Launcelot, and purveyed him of many good knights, for with him held many knights; and some for his own sake, and some for the queen's sake. Thus they were on both parties well furnished and garnished of all manner of thing that longed to the war. But King Arthur's host was so big that Sir Launcelot would not abide him in the field, for he was full loath to do battle against the king; but Sir Launcelot drew him to his strong castle with all manner of victual, and as many noble men as he might suffice within the town and the castle. Then came King Arthur with Sir Gawaine with an huge host, and laid a siege all about Joyous Gard, both at the town and at the castle, and there they made strong war on both parties. But in no wise Sir Launcelot would ride out, nor go out of his castle, of long time; neither he would none of his good knights to issue out, neither none of the town nor of the castle, until fifteen weeks were past.

#### **CHAPTER XI. Of the communication between King Arthur and Sir Launcelot, and how King Arthur reprovod him.**

THEN it befell upon a day in harvest time, Sir Launcelot looked over the walls, and spake on high unto King Arthur and Sir Gawaine: My lords both, wit ye well all is in vain that ye make at this siege, for here win ye no worship but maugre and dishonour; for an it list me to come myself out and my good knights, I should full soon make an end of this war. Come forth, said Arthur unto

Launcelot, an thou durst, and I promise thee I shall meet thee in midst of the field. God defend me, said Sir Launcelot, that ever I should encounter with the most noble king that made me knight. Fie upon thy fair language, said the king, for wit you well and trust it, I am thy mortal foe, and ever will to my death day; for thou hast slain my good knights, and full noble men of my blood, that I shall never recover again. Also thou hast lain by my queen, and holden her many winters, and sithen like a traitor taken her from me by force.

My most noble lord and king, said Sir Launcelot, ye may say what ye will, for ye wot well with yourself will I not strive; but thereas ye say I have slain your good knights, I wot well that I have done so, and that me sore repenteth; but I was enforced to do battle with them in saving of my life, or else I must have suffered them to have slain me. And as for my lady, Queen Guenever, except your person of your highness, and my lord Sir Gawaine, there is no knight under heaven that dare make it good upon me, that ever I was a traitor unto your person. And where it please you to say that I have holden my lady your queen years and winters, unto that I shall ever make a large answer, and prove it upon any knight that beareth the life, except your person and Sir Gawaine, that my lady, Queen Guenever, is a true lady unto your person as any is living unto her lord, and that will I make good with my hands. Howbeit it hath liked her good grace to have me in chierte, and to cherish me more than any other knight; and unto my power I again have deserved her love, for oftentimes, my lord, ye have consented that she should be brent and destroyed, in your heat, and then it fortunéd me to do battle for her, and or I departed from her adversary they confessed their untruth, and she full worshipfully excused. And at such times, my lord Arthur, said Sir Launcelot, ye loved me, and thanked me when I saved your queen from the fire; and then ye promised me for ever to be my good lord; and now methinketh ye reward me full ill for my good service. And my good lord, meseemeth I had lost a great part of my worship in my knighthood an I had suffered my lady, your queen, to have been brent, and insomuch she should have been brent for my sake. For sithen I have done battles for your queen in other quarrels than in mine own, meseemeth now I had more right to do battle for her in right quarrel. And therefore my good and gracious lord, said Sir Launcelot, take your queen unto your good grace, for she is both fair, true, and good.

Fie on thee, false recreant knight, said Sir Gawaine; I let thee wit my lord, mine uncle, King Arthur, shall have his queen and thee, maugre thy visage, and slay you both whether it please him. It may well be, said Sir Launcelot, but wit you well, my lord Sir Gawaine, an me list to come out of this castle ye should win me and the queen more harder than ever ye won a strong battle. Fie on thy proud words, said Sir Gawaine; as for my lady, the queen, I will never say of her

shame. But thou, false and recreant knight, said Sir Gawaine, what cause hadst thou to slay my good brother Sir Gareth, that loved thee more than all my kin? Alas thou madest him knight thine own hands; why slew thou him that loved thee so well? For to excuse me, said Sir Launcelot, it helpeth me not, but by Jesu, and by the faith that I owe to the high order of knighthood, I should with as good will have slain my nephew, Sir Bors de Ganis, at that time. But alas that ever I was so unhappy, said Launcelot, that I had not seen Sir Gareth and Sir Gaheris.

Thou liest, recreant knight, said Sir Gawaine, thou slewest him in despite of me; and therefore, wit thou well I shall make war to thee, and all the while that I may live. That me repenteth, said Sir Launcelot; for well I understand it helpeth not to seek none accordment while ye, Sir Gawaine, are so mischievously set. And if ye were not, I would not doubt to have the good grace of my lord Arthur. I believe it well, false recreant knight, said Sir Gawaine; for thou hast many long days overled me and us all, and destroyed many of our good knights. Ye say as it pleaseth you, said Sir Launcelot; and yet may it never be said on me, and openly proved, that ever I by forecast of treason slew no good knight, as my lord, Sir Gawaine, ye have done; and so did I never, but in my defence that I was driven thereto, in saving of my life. Ah, false knight, said Sir Gawaine, that thou meanest by Sir Lamorak: wit thou well I slew him. Ye slew him not yourself, said Sir Launcelot; it had been overmuch on hand for you to have slain him, for he was one of the best knights christened of his age, and it was great pity of his death.

## **CHAPTER XII. How the cousins and kinsmen of Sir Launcelot excited him to go out to battle, and how they made them ready**

WELL, well, said Sir Gawaine to Launcelot, sithen thou enbraidest me of Sir Lamorak, wit thou well I shall never leave thee till I have thee at such avail that thou shalt not escape my hands. I trust you well enough, said Sir Launcelot, an ye may get me I get but little mercy. But as the French book saith, the noble King Arthur would have taken his queen again, and have been accorded with Sir Launcelot, but Sir Gawaine would not suffer him by no manner of mean. And then Sir Gawaine made many men to blow upon Sir Launcelot; and all at once they called him false recreant knight.

Then when Sir Bors de Ganis, Sir Ector de Maris, and Sir Lionel, heard this outcry, they called to them Sir Palomides, Sir Safere's brother, and Sir Lavaine, with many more of their blood, and all they went unto Sir Launcelot, and said thus: My lord Sir Launcelot, wit ye well we have great scorn of the great rebukes that we heard Gawaine say to you; wherefore we pray you, and charge you as ye



will have our service, keep us no longer within these walls; for wit you well plainly, we will ride into the field and do battle with them; for ye fare as a man that were afeard, and for all your fair speech it will not avail you. For wit you well Sir Gawaine will not suffer you to be accorded with King Arthur, and therefore fight for your life and your right, an ye dare. Alas, said Sir Launcelot, for to ride out of this castle, and to do battle, I am full loath.

Then Sir Launcelot spake on high unto Sir Arthur and Sir Gawaine: My lords, I require you and beseech you, sithen that I am thus required and conjured to ride into the field, that neither you, my lord King Arthur, nor you Sir Gawaine, come not into the field. What shall we do then? said Sir Gawaine, [N]is this the king's quarrel with thee to fight? and it is my quarrel to fight with thee, Sir Launcelot, because of the death of my brother Sir Gareth. Then must I needs unto battle, said Sir Launcelot. Now wit you well, my lord Arthur and Sir Gawaine, ye will repent it whensomever I do battle with you.

And so then they departed either from other; and then either party made them ready on the morn for to do battle, and great purveyance was made on both sides; and Sir Gawaine let purvey many knights for to wait upon Sir Launcelot, for to overset him and to slay him. And on the morn at underne Sir Arthur was ready in the field with three great hosts. And then Sir Launcelot's fellowship came out at three gates, in a full good array; and Sir Lionel came in the foremost battle, and Sir Launcelot came in the middle, and Sir Bors came out at the third gate. Thus they came in order and rule, as full noble knights; and always Sir Launcelot charged all his knights in any wise to save King Arthur and Sir Gawaine.

### **CHAPTER XIII. How Sir Gawaine jousted and smote down Sir Lionel, and how Sir Launcelot horsed King Arthur**

THEN came forth Sir Gawaine from the king's host, and he came before and proffered to joust. And Sir Lionel was a fierce knight, and lightly he encountered with Sir Gawaine; and there Sir Gawaine smote Sir Lionel through out the body, that he dashed to the earth like as he had been dead; and then Sir Ector de Maris and other more bare him into the castle. Then there began a great stour, and much people was slain; and ever Sir Launcelot did what he might to save the people on King Arthur's party, for Sir Palomides, and Sir Bors, and Sir Safere, overthrew many knights, for they were deadly knights. And Sir Blamore de Ganis, and Sir Bleoberis de Ganis, with Sir Bellangere le Beuse, these six knights did much harm; and ever King Arthur was nigh about Sir Launcelot to have slain him, and Sir Launcelot suffered him, and would not strike again. So Sir Bors encountered with King Arthur, and there with a spear Sir Bors smote

him down; and so he alighted and drew his sword, and said to Sir Launcelot: Shall I make an end of this war? and that he meant to have slain King Arthur. Not so hardy, said Sir Launcelot, upon pain of thy head, that thou touch him no more, for I will never see that most noble king that made me knight neither slain ne shamed. And therewithal Sir Launcelot alighted off his horse and took up the king and horsed him again, and said thus: My lord Arthur, for God's love stint this strife, for ye get here no worship, and I would do mine utterance, but always I forbear you, and ye nor none of yours forbearth me; my lord, remember what I have done in many places, and now I am evil rewarded.

Then when King Arthur was on horseback, he looked upon Sir Launcelot, and then the tears brast out of his eyen, thinking on the great courtesy that was in Sir Launcelot more than in any other man; and therewith the king rode his way, and might no longer behold him, and said: Alas, that ever this war began. And then either parties of the battles withdrew them to repose them, and buried the dead, and to the wounded men they laid soft salves; and thus they endured that night till on the morn. And on the morn by underne they made them ready to do battle. And then Sir Bors led the forward.

So upon the morn there came Sir Gawaine as brim as any boar, with a great spear in his hand. And when Sir Bors saw him he thought to revenge his brother Sir Lionel of the despite that Sir Gawaine did him the other day. And so they that knew either other feutred their spears, and with all their mights of their horses and themselves, they met together so felonously that either bare other through, and so they fell both to the earth; and then the battles joined, and there was much slaughter on both parties. Then Sir Launcelot rescued Sir Bors, and sent him into the castle; but neither Sir Gawaine nor Sir Bors died not of their wounds, for they were all holpen. Then Sir Lavaine and Sir Urre prayed Sir Launcelot to do his pain, and fight as they had done; For we see ye forbear and spare, and that doth much harm; therefore we pray you spare not your enemies no more than they do you. Alas, said Sir Launcelot, I have no heart to fight against my lord Arthur, for ever meseemeth I do not as I ought to do. My lord, said Sir Palomides, though ye spare them all this day they will never con you thank; and if they may get you at avail ye are but dead. So then Sir Launcelot understood that they said him truth; and then he strained himself more than he did aforehand, and because his nephew Sir Bors was sore wounded. And then within a little while, by evensong time, Sir Launcelot and his party better stood, for their horses went in blood past the fetlocks, there was so much people slain. And then for pity Sir Launcelot withheld his knights, and suffered King Arthur's party for to withdraw them aside. And then Sir Launcelot's party withdrew them into his castle, and either parties buried the dead, and put salve unto the wounded

men.

So when Sir Gawaine was hurt, they on King Arthur's party were not so orgulous as they were toforehand to do battle. Of this war was noised through all Christendom, and at the last it was noised afore the Pope; and he considering the great goodness of King Arthur, and of Sir Launcelot, that was called the most noblest knights of the world, wherefore the Pope called unto him a noble clerk that at that time was there present; the French book saith, it was the Bishop of Rochester; and the Pope gave him bulls under lead unto King Arthur of England, charging him upon pain of interdicting of all England, that he take his queen Dame Guenever unto him again, and accord with Sir Launcelot.

#### **CHAPTER XIV. How the Pope sent down his bulls to make peace, and how Sir Launcelot brought the queen to King Arthur**

SO when this Bishop was come to Carlisle he shewed the king these bulls. And when the king understood these bulls he nist what to do: full fain he would have been accorded with Sir Launcelot, but Sir Gawaine would not suffer him; but as for to have the queen, thereto he agreed. But in nowise Sir Gawaine would not suffer the king to accord with Sir Launcelot; but as for the queen he consented. And then the Bishop had of the king his great seal, and his assurance as he was a true anointed king that Sir Launcelot should come safe, and go safe, and that the queen should not be spoken unto of the king, nor of none other, for no thing done afore time past; and of all these appointments the Bishop brought with him sure assurance and writing, to shew Sir Launcelot.

So when the Bishop was come to Joyous Gard, there he shewed Sir Launcelot how the Pope had written to Arthur and unto him, and there he told him the perils if he withheld the queen from the king. It was never in my thought, said Launcelot, to withhold the queen from my lord Arthur; but, insomuch she should have been dead for my sake, meseemeth it was my part to save her life, and put her from that danger, till better recover might come. And now I thank God, said Sir Launcelot, that the Pope hath made her peace; for God knoweth, said Sir Launcelot, I will be a thousandfold more gladder to bring her again, than ever I was of her taking away; with this, I may be sure to come safe and go safe, and that the queen shall have her liberty as she had before; and never for no thing that hath been surmised afore this time, she never from this day stand in no peril. For else, said Sir Launcelot, I dare adventure me to keep her from an harder shour than ever I kept her. It shall not need you, said the Bishop, to dread so much; for wit you well, the Pope must be obeyed, and it were not the Pope's worship nor my poor honesty to wit you distressed, neither the queen, neither in peril, nor shamed. And then he shewed Sir Launcelot all his

writing, both from the Pope and from King Arthur. This is sure enough, said Sir Launcelot, for full well I dare trust my lord's own writing and his seal, for he was never shamed of his promise. Therefore, said Sir Launcelot unto the Bishop, ye shall ride unto the king afore, and recommend me unto his good grace, and let him have knowledging that this same day eight days, by the grace of God, I myself shall bring my lady, Queen Guenever, unto him. And then say ye unto my most redoubted king, that I will say largely for the queen, that I shall none except for dread nor fear, but the king himself, and my lord Sir Gawaine; and that is more for the king's love than for himself.

So the Bishop departed and came to the king at Carlisle, and told him all how Sir Launcelot answered him; and then the tears brast out of the king's eyen. Then Sir Launcelot purveyed him an hundred knights, and all were clothed in green velvet, and their horses trapped to their heels; and every knight held a branch of olive in his hand, in tokening of peace. And the queen had four-and-twenty gentlewomen following her in the same wise; and Sir Launcelot had twelve coursers following him, and on every courser sat a young gentleman, and all they were arrayed in green velvet, with sarps of gold about their quarters, and the horse trapped in the same wise down to the heels, with many ouches, y-set with stones and pearls in gold, to the number of a thousand. And she and Sir Launcelot were clothed in white cloth of gold tissue; and right so as ye have heard, as the French book maketh mention, he rode with the queen from Joyous Gard to Carlisle. And so Sir Launcelot rode throughout Carlisle, and so in the castle, that all men might behold; and wit you well there was many a weeping eye. And then Sir Launcelot himself alighted and avoided his horse, and took the queen, and so led her where King Arthur was in his seat: and Sir Gawaine sat afore him, and many other great lords. So when Sir Launcelot saw the king and Sir Gawaine, then he led the queen by the arm, and then he kneeled down, and the queen both. Wit you well then was there many bold knight there with King Arthur that wept as tenderly as though they had seen all their kin afore them. So the king sat still, and said no word. And when Sir Launcelot saw his countenance, he arose and pulled up the queen with him, and thus he spake full knightly.

#### **CHAPTER XV. Of the deliverance of the queen to the king by Sir Launcelot, and what language Sir Gawaine had to Sir Launcelot**

MY most redoubted king, ye shall understand, by the Pope's commandment and yours, I have brought to you my lady the queen, as right requireth; and if there be any knight, of whatsoever degree that he be, except your person, that will say or dare say but that she is true and clean to you, I here myself, Sir

Launcelot du Lake, will make it good upon his body, that she is a true lady unto you; but liars ye have listened, and that hath caused debate betwixt you and me. For time hath been, my lord Arthur, that ye have been greatly pleased with me when I did battle for my lady, your queen; and full well ye know, my most noble king, that she hath been put to great wrong or this time; and sithen it pleased you at many times that I should fight for her, meseemeth, my good lord, I had more cause to rescue her from the fire, insomuch she should have been brent for my sake. For they that told you those tales were liars, and so it fell upon them; for by likelihood had not the might of God been with me, I might never have endured fourteen knights, and they armed and afore purposed, and I unarmed and not purposed. For I was sent for unto my lady your queen, I wot not for what cause; but I was not so soon within the chamber door, but anon Sir Agravaire and Sir Mordred called me traitor and recreant knight. They called thee right, said Sir Gawaine. My lord Sir Gawaine, said Sir Launcelot, in their quarrel they proved themselves not in the right. Well well, Sir Launcelot, said the king, I have given thee no cause to do to me as thou hast done, for I have worshipped thee and thine more than any of all my knights.

My good lord, said Sir Launcelot, so ye be not displeased, ye shall understand I and mine have done you oft better service than any other knights have done, in many divers places; and where ye have been full hard bestead divers times, I have myself rescued you from many dangers; and ever unto my power I was glad to please you, and my lord Sir Gawaine; both in jousts, and tournaments, and in battles set, both on horseback and on foot, I have often rescued you, and my lord Sir Gawaine, and many mo of your knights in many divers places. For now I will make avaunt, said Sir Launcelot, I will that ye all wit that yet I found never no manner of knight but that I was overhard for him, an I had done my utterance, thanked be God; howbeit I have been matched with good knights, as Sir Tristram and Sir Lamorak, but ever I had a favour unto them and a deeming what they were. And I take God to record, said Sir Launcelot, I never was wroth nor greatly heavy with no good knight an I saw him busy about to win worship; and glad I was ever when I found any knight that might endure me on horseback and on foot: howbeit Sir Carados of the Dolorous Tower was a full noble knight and a passing strong man, and that wot ye, my lord Sir Gawaine; for he might well be called a noble knight when he by fine force pulled you out of your saddle, and bound you overthwart afore him to his saddle bow; and there, my lord Sir Gawaine, I rescued you, and slew him afore your sight. Also I found his brother, Sir Turquin, in likewise leading Sir Gaheris, your brother, bounden afore him; and there I rescued your brother and slew that Turquin, and delivered threescore-and-four of my lord Arthur's knights out of his

prison. And now I dare say, said Sir Launcelot, I met never with so strong knights, nor so well fighting, as was Sir Carados and Sir Turquin, for I fought with them to the uttermost. And therefore, said Sir Launcelot unto Sir Gawaine, meseemeth ye ought of right to remember this; for, an I might have your good will, I would trust to God to have my lord Arthur's good grace.

#### **CHAPTER XVI. Of the communication between Sir Gawaine and Sir Launcelot, with much other language**

THE king may do as he will, said Sir Gawaine, but wit thou well, Sir Launcelot, thou and I shall never be accorded while we live, for thou hast slain three of my brethren; and two of them ye slew traitorly and piteously, for they bare none harness against thee, nor none would bear. God would they had been armed, said Sir Launcelot, for then had they been alive. And wit ye well Sir Gawaine, as for Sir Gareth, I love none of my kinsmen so much as I did him; and ever while I live, said Sir Launcelot, I will bewail Sir Gareth's death, not all only for the great fear I have of you, but many causes cause me to be sorrowful. One is, for I made him knight; another is, I wot well he loved me above all other knights; and the third is, he was passing noble, true, courteous, and gentle, and well conditioned; the fourth is, I wist well, anon as I heard that Sir Gareth was dead, I should never after have your love, but everlasting war betwixt us; and also I wist well that ye would cause my noble lord Arthur for ever to be my mortal foe. And as Jesu be my help, said Sir Launcelot, I slew never Sir Gareth nor Sir Gaheris by my will; but alas that ever they were unarmed that unhappy day. But thus much I shall offer me, said Sir Launcelot, if it may please the king's good grace, and you, my lord Sir Gawaine, I shall first begin at Sandwich, and there I shall go in my shirt, barefoot; and at every ten miles' end I will found and gar make an house of religion, of what order that ye will assign me, with an whole convent, to sing and read, day and night, in especial for Sir Gareth's sake and Sir Gaheris. And this shall I perform from Sandwich unto Carlisle; and every house shall have sufficient livelihood. And this shall I perform while I have any livelihood in Christendom; and there nis none of all these religious places, but they shall be performed, furnished and garnished in all things as an holy place ought to be, I promise you faithfully. And this, Sir Gawaine, methinketh were more fairer, holier, and more better to their souls, than ye, my most noble king, and you, Sir Gawaine, to war upon me, for thereby shall ye get none avail.

Then all knights and ladies that were there wept as they were mad, and the tears fell on King Arthur's cheeks. Sir Launcelot, said Sir Gawaine, I have right well heard thy speech, and thy great proffers, but wit thou well, let the king do as

it pleased him, I will never forgive my brothers' death, and in especial the death of my brother, Sir Gareth. And if mine uncle, King Arthur, will accord with thee, he shall lose my service, for wit thou well thou art both false to the king and to me. Sir, said Launcelot he beareth not the life that may make that good and if ye, Sir Gawaine, will charge me with so high a thing, ye must pardon me, for then needs must I answer you. Nay, said Sir Gawaine, we are past that at this time, and that caused the Pope, for he hath charged mine uncle, the king, that he shall take his queen again, and to accord with thee, Sir Launcelot, as for this season, and therefore thou shalt go safe as thou camest. But in this land thou shalt not abide past fifteen days, such summons I give thee: so the king and we were consented and accorded or thou camest. And else, said Sir Gawaine, wit thou well thou shouldst not have come here, but if it were maugre thy head. And if it were not for the Pope's commandment, said Sir Gawaine, I should do battle with mine own body against thy body, and prove it upon thee, that thou hast been both false unto mine uncle King Arthur, and to me both; and that shall I prove upon thy body, when thou art departed from hence, wheresomever I find thee.

#### **CHAPTER XVII. How Sir Launcelot departed from the king and from Joyous Gard over seaward, and what knights went with him**

THEN Sir Launcelot sighed, and therewith the tears fell on his cheeks, and then he said thus: Alas, most noble Christian realm, whom I have loved above all other realms, and in thee I have gotten a great part of my worship, and now I shall depart in this wise. Truly me repenteth that ever I came in this realm, that should be thus shamefully banished, undeserved and causeless; but fortune is so variant, and the wheel so moveable, there nis none constant abiding, and that may be proved by many old chronicles, of noble Ector, and Troilus, and Alisander, the mighty conqueror, and many mo other; when they were most in their royalty, they alighted lowest. And so fareth it by me, said Sir Launcelot, for in this realm I had worship, and by me and mine all the whole Round Table hath been increased more in worship, by me and mine blood, than by any other. And therefore wit thou well, Sir Gawaine, I may live upon my lands as well as any knight that here is. And if ye, most redoubted king, will come upon my lands with Sir Gawaine to war upon me, I must endure you as well as I may. But as to you, Sir Gawaine, if that ye come there, I pray you charge me not with treason nor felony, for an ye do, I must answer you. Do thou thy best, said Sir Gawaine; therefore hie thee fast that thou were gone, and wit thou well we shall soon come after, and break the strongest castle that thou hast, upon thy head. That shall not need, said Sir Launcelot, for an I were as orgulous set as ye are, wit you well I should meet you in midst of the field. Make thou no more language, said Sir

Gawaine, but deliver the queen from thee, and pike thee lightly out of this court. Well, said Sir Launcelot, an I had wist of this short coming, I would have advised me twice or that I had come hither; for an the queen had been so dear to me as ye noise her, I durst have kept her from the fellowship of the best knights under heaven.

And then Sir Launcelot said unto Guenever, in hearing of the king and them all: Madam, now I must depart from you and this noble fellowship for ever; and sithen it is so, I beseech you to pray for me, and say me well; and if ye be hard bestead by any false tongues, lightly my lady send me word, and if any knight's hands may deliver you by battle, I shall deliver you. And therewithal Sir Launcelot kissed the queen; and then he said all openly. Now let see what he be in this place that dare say the queen is not true unto my lord Arthur, let see who will speak an he dare speak. And therewith he brought the queen to the king, and then Sir Launcelot took his leave and departed; and there was neither king, duke, nor earl, baron nor knight, lady nor gentlewoman, but all they wept as people out of their mind, except Sir Gawaine. And when the noble Sir Launcelot took his horse to ride out of Carlisle, there was sobbing and weeping for pure dole of his departing; and so he took his way unto Joyous Gard. And then ever after he called it the Dolorous Gard. And thus departed Sir Launcelot from the court for ever.

And so when he came to Joyous Gard he called his fellowship unto him, and asked them what they would do. Then they answered all wholly together with one voice they would as he would do. My fair fellows, said Sir Launcelot, I must depart out of this most noble realm, and now I shall depart it grieveth me sore, for I shall depart with no worship, for a flemed man departed never out of a realm with no worship; and that is my heaviness, for ever I fear after my days that men shall chronicle upon me that I was flemed out of this land; and else, my fair lords, be ye sure, an I had not dread shame, my lady, Queen Guenever, and I should never have departed.

Then spake many noble knights, as Sir Palomides, Sir Safere his brother, and Sir Bellingere le Beuse, and Sir Urre, with Sir Lavaine, with many others: Sir, an ye be so disposed to abide in this land we will never fail you; and if ye list not to abide in this land there nis none of the good knights that here be will fail you, for many causes. One is, all we that be not of your blood shall never be welcome to the court. And sithen it liked us to take a part with you in your distress and heaviness in this realm, wit you well it shall like us as well to go in other countries with you, and there to take such part as ye do. My fair lords, said Sir Launcelot, I well understand you, and as I can, thank you: and ye shall understand, such livelihood as I am born unto I shall depart with you in this



manner of wise; that is for to say, I shall depart all my livelihood and all my lands freely among you, and I myself will have as little as any of you, for have I sufficient that may long to my person, I will ask none other rich array; and I trust to God to maintain you on my lands as well as ever were maintained any knights. Then spake all the knights at once: He have shame that will leave you; for we all understand in this realm will be now no quiet, but ever strife and debate, now the fellowship of the Round Table is broken; for by the noble fellowship of the Round Table was King Arthur upborne, and by their noblesse the king and all his realm was in quiet and rest, and a great part they said all was because of your noblesse.

### **CHAPTER XVIII. How Sir Launcelot passed over the sea, and how he made great lords of the knights that went with him**

TRULY, said Sir Launcelot, I thank you all of your good saying, howbeit, I wot well, in me was not all the stability of this realm, but in that I might I did my devoir; and well I am sure I knew many rebellions in my days that by me were peaced, and I trow we all shall hear of them in short space, and that me sore repenteth. For ever I dread me, said Sir Launcelot, that Sir Mordred will make trouble, for he is passing envious and applieth him to trouble. So they were accorded to go with Sir Launcelot to his lands; and to make short tale, they trussed, and paid all that would ask them; and wholly an hundred knights departed with Sir Launcelot at once, and made their avows they would never leave him for weal nor for woe.

And so they shipped at Cardiff, and sailed unto Benwick: some men call it Bayonne, and some men call it Beaune, where the wine of Beaune is. But to say the sooth, Sir Launcelot and his nephews were lords of all France, and of all the lands that longed unto France; he and his kindred rejoiced it all through Sir Launcelot's noble prowess. And then Sir Launcelot stuffed and furnished and garnished all his noble towns and castles. Then all the people of those lands came to Sir Launcelot on foot and hands. And so when he had stablished all these countries, he shortly called a parliament; and there he crowned Sir Lionel, King of France; and Sir Bors [he] crowned him king of all King Claudas' lands; and Sir Ector de Maris, that was Sir Launcelot's youngest brother, he crowned him King of Benwick, and king of all Guienne, that was Sir Launcelot's own land. And he made Sir Ector prince of them all, and thus he departed.

Then Sir Launcelot advanced all his noble knights, and first he advanced them of his blood; that was Sir Blamore, he made him Duke of Limosin in Guienne and Sir Bleoberis he made him Duke of Poitiers, and Sir Gahalantine he made him Duke of Querne, and Sir Galihodin he made him Duke of

Sentonge, and Sir Galihud he made him Earl of Perigot, and Sir Menadeuke he made him Earl of Roerge, and Sir Villiards the Valiant he made him Earl of Bearn, and Sir Hebes le Renoumes he made him Earl of Comange, and Sir Lavaine he made him Earl of Arminak, and Sir Urre he made him Earl of Estrake, and Sir Neroneus he made him Earl of Pardiak, and Sir Plenorius he made Earl of Foise, and Sir Selises of the Dolorous Tower he made him Earl of Masauke, and Sir Melias de Lile he made him Earl of Tursauk, and Sir Bellangere le Beuse he made Earl of the Launds, and Sir Palomides he made him Duke of the Provence, and Sir Safere he made him Duke of Landok, and Sir Clegis he gave him the Earldom of Agente, and Sir Sadok he gave the Earldom of Surlat, and Sir Dinas le Seneschal he made him Duke of Anjou, and Sir Clarrus he made him Duke of Normandy. Thus Sir Launcelot rewarded his noble knights and many more, that meseemeth it were too long to rehearse

### **CHAPTER XIX. How King Arthur and Sir Gawaine made a great host ready to go over sea to make war on Sir Launcelot**

SO leave we Sir Launcelot in his lands, and his noble knights with him, and return we again unto King Arthur and to Sir Gawaine, that made a great host ready, to the number of threescore thousand; and all thing was made ready for their shipping to pass over the sea, and so they shipped at Cardiff. And there King Arthur made Sir Mordred chief ruler of all England, and also he put Queen Guenever under his governance; because Sir Mordred was King Arthur's son, he gave him the rule of his land and of his wife; and so the king passed the sea and landed upon Sir Launcelot's lands, and there he brent and wasted, through the vengeance of Sir Gawaine, all that they might overrun.

When this word came to Sir Launcelot, that King Arthur and Sir Gawaine were landed upon his lands, and made a full great destruction and waste, then spake Sir Bors, and said: My lord Sir Launcelot, it is shame that we suffer them thus to ride over our lands, for wit you well, suffer ye them as long as ye will, they will do you no favour an they may handle you. Then said Sir Lionel that was wary and wise: My lord Sir Launcelot, I will give this counsel, let us keep our strong walled towns until they have hunger and cold, and blow on their nails; and then let us freshly set upon them, and shred them down as sheep in a field, that aliens may take example for ever how they land upon our lands.

Then spake King Bagdemagus to Sir Launcelot: Sir, your courtesy will shende us all, and thy courtesy hath waked all this sorrow; for an they thus over our lands ride, they shall by process bring us all to nought whilst we thus in holes us hide. Then said Sir Galihud unto Sir Launcelot: Sir, here be knights come of kings' blood, that will not long droop, and they are within these walls;

therefore give us leave, like as we be knights, to meet them in the field, and we shall slay them, that they shall curse the time that ever they came into this country. Then spake seven brethren of North Wales, and they were seven noble knights; a man might seek in seven kings' lands or he might find such seven knights. Then they all said at once: Sir Launcelot, for Christ's sake let us out ride with Sir Galihud, for we be never wont to cower in castles nor in noble towns.

Then spake Sir Launcelot, that was master and governor of them all: My fair lords, wit you well I am full loath to ride out with my knights for shedding of Christian blood; and yet my lands I understand be full bare for to sustain any host awhile, for the mighty wars that whilom made King Claudas upon this country, upon my father King Ban, and on mine uncle King Bors; howbeit we will as at this time keep our strong walls, and I shall send a messenger unto my lord Arthur, a treaty for to take; for better is peace than always war.

So Sir Launcelot sent forth a damosel and a dwarf with her, requiring King Arthur to leave his warring upon his lands; and so she start upon a palfrey, and the dwarf ran by her side. And when she came to the pavilion of King Arthur, there she alighted; and there met her a gentle knight, Sir Lucan the Butler, and said: Fair damosel, come ye from Sir Launcelot du Lake? Yea sir, she said, therefore I come hither to speak with my lord the king. Alas, said Sir Lucan, my lord Arthur would love Launcelot, but Sir Gawaine will not suffer him. And then he said: I pray to God, damosel, ye may speed well, for all we that be about the king would Sir Launcelot did best of any knight living. And so with this Lucan led the damosel unto the king where he sat with Sir Gawaine, for to hear what she would say. So when she had told her tale, the water ran out of the king's eyes, and all the lords were full glad for to advise the king as to be accorded with Sir Launcelot, save all only Sir Gawaine, and he said: My lord mine uncle, what will ye do? Will ye now turn again, now ye are passed thus far upon this journey? all the world will speak of your villainy. Nay, said Arthur, wit thou well, Sir Gawaine, I will do as ye will advise me; and yet meseemeth, said Arthur, his fair proffers were not good to be refused; but sithen I am come so far upon this journey, I will that ye give the damosel her answer, for I may not speak to her for pity, for her proffers be so large.

## **CHAPTER XX. What message Sir Gawaine sent to Sir Launcelot; and how King Arthur laid siege to Benwick, and other matters**

THEN Sir Gawaine said to the damosel thus: Damosel, say ye to Sir Launcelot that it is waste labour now to sue to mine uncle; for tell him, an he would have made any labour for peace, he should have made it or this time, for tell him now it is too late; and say that I, Sir Gawaine, so send him word, that I

promise him by the faith I owe unto God and to knighthood, I shall never leave him till he have slain me or I him. So the damosel wept and departed, and there were many weeping eyen; and so Sir Lucan brought the damosel to her palfrey, and so she came to Sir Launcelot where he was among all his knights. And when Sir Launcelot had heard this answer, then the tears ran down by his cheeks. And then his noble knights strode about him, and said: Sir Launcelot, wherefore make ye such cheer, think what ye are, and what men we are, and let us noble knights match them in midst of the field. That may be lightly done, said Sir Launcelot, but I was never so loath to do battle, and therefore I pray you, fair sirs, as ye love me, be ruled as I will have you, for I will always flee that noble king that made me knight. And when I may no further, I must needs defend me, and that will be more worship for me and us all than to compare with that noble king whom we have all served. Then they held their language, and as that night they took their rest.

And upon the morn early, in the dawning of the day, as knights looked out, they saw the city of Benwick besieged round about; and fast they began to set up ladders, and then they defied them out of the town, and beat them from the walls wightly. Then came forth Sir Gawaine well armed upon a stiff steed, and he came before the chief gate, with his spear in his hand, crying: Sir Launcelot, where art thou? is there none of you proud knights dare break a spear with me? Then Sir Bors made him ready, and came forth out of the town, and there Sir Gawaine encountered with Sir Bors. And at that time he smote Sir Bors down from his horse, and almost he had slain him; and so Sir Bors was rescued and borne into the town. Then came forth Sir Lionel, brother to Sir Bors, and thought to revenge him; and either feutred their spears, and ran together; and there they met spitefully, but Sir Gawaine had such grace that he smote Sir Lionel down, and wounded him there passing sore; and then Sir Lionel was rescued and borne into the town. And this Sir Gawaine came every day, and he failed not but that he smote down one knight or other.

So thus they endured half a year, and much slaughter was of people on both parties. Then it befell upon a day, Sir Gawaine came afore the gates armed at all pieces on a noble horse, with a great spear in his hand; and then he cried with a loud voice: Where art thou now, thou false traitor, Sir Launcelot? Why hidest thou thyself within holes and walls like a coward? Look out now, thou false traitor knight, and here I shall revenge upon thy body the death of my three brethren. All this language heard Sir Launcelot every deal; and his kin and his knights drew about him, and all they said at once to Sir Launcelot: Sir Launcelot, now must ye defend you like a knight, or else ye be shamed for ever; for, now ye be called upon treason, it is time for you to stir, for ye have slept over-long and

suffered overmuch. So God me help, said Sir Launcelot, I am right heavy of Sir Gawaine's words, for now he charged me with a great charge; and therefore I wot it as well as ye, that I must defend me, or else to be recreant.

Then Sir Launcelot bade saddle his strongest horse, and bade let fetch his arms, and bring all unto the gate of the tower; and then Sir Launcelot spake on high unto King Arthur, and said: My lord Arthur, and noble king that made me knight, wit you well I am right heavy for your sake, that ye thus sue upon me; and always I forbare you, for an I would have been vengeable, I might have met you in midst of the field, and there to have made your boldest knights full tame. And now I have forborne half a year, and suffered you and Sir Gawaine to do what ye would do; and now may I endure it no longer, for now must I needs defend myself, insomuch Sir Gawaine hath appealed me of treason; the which is greatly against my will that ever I should fight against any of your blood, but now I may not forsake it, I am driven thereto as a beast till a bay.

Then Sir Gawaine said: Sir Launcelot, an thou durst do battle, leave thy babbling and come off, and let us ease our hearts. Then Sir Launcelot armed him lightly, and mounted upon his horse, and either of the knights gat great spears in their hands, and the host without stood still all apart, and the noble knights came out of the city by a great number, insomuch that when Arthur saw the number of men and knights, he marvelled, and said to himself: Alas, that ever Sir Launcelot was against me, for now I see he hath forborne me. And so the covenant was made, there should no man nigh them, nor deal with them, till the one were dead or yelden.

### **CHAPTER XXI. How Sir Launcelot and Sir Gawaine did battle together, and how Sir Gawaine was overthrown and hurt**

THEN Sir Gawaine and Sir Launcelot departed a great way asunder, and then they came together with all their horses' might as they might run, and either smote other in midst of their shields; but the knights were so strong, and their spears so big, that their horses might not endure their buffets, and so their horses fell to the earth; and then they avoided their horses, and dressed their shields afore them. Then they stood together and gave many sad strokes on divers places of their bodies, that the blood brast out on many sides and places. Then had Sir Gawaine such a grace and gift that an holy man had given to him, that every day in the year, from underne till high noon, his might increased those three hours as much as thrice his strength, and that caused Sir Gawaine to win great honour. And for his sake King Arthur made an ordinance, that all manner of battles for any quarrels that should be done afore King Arthur should begin at underne; and all was done for Sir Gawaine's love, that by likelihood, if Sir Gawaine were on

the one part, he should have the better in battle while his strength endureth three hours; but there were but few knights that time living that knew this advantage that Sir Gawaine had, but King Arthur all only.

Thus Sir Launcelot fought with Sir Gawaine, and when Sir Launcelot felt his might evermore increase, Sir Launcelot wondered and dread him sore to be shamed. For as the French book saith, Sir Launcelot weened, when he felt Sir Gawaine double his strength, that he had been a fiend and none earthly man; wherefore Sir Launcelot traced and traversed, and covered himself with his shield, and kept his might and his braide during three hours; and that while Sir Gawaine gave him many sad brunts, and many sad strokes, that all the knights that beheld Sir Launcelot marvelled how that he might endure him; but full little understood they that travail that Sir Launcelot had for to endure him. And then when it was past noon Sir Gawaine had no more but his own might. When Sir Launcelot felt him so come down, then he stretched him up and stood near Sir Gawaine, and said thus: My lord Sir Gawaine, now I feel ye have done; now my lord Sir Gawaine, I must do my part, for many great and grievous strokes I have endured you this day with great pain.

Then Sir Launcelot doubled his strokes and gave Sir Gawaine such a buffet on the helmet that he fell down on his side, and Sir Launcelot withdrew him from him. Why withdrawest thou thee? said Sir Gawaine; now turn again, false traitor knight, and slay me, for an thou leave me thus, when I am whole I shall do battle with thee again. I shall endure you, Sir, by God's grace, but wit thou well, Sir Gawaine, I will never smite a felled knight. And so Sir Launcelot went into the city; and Sir Gawaine was borne into King Arthur's pavilion, and leeches were brought to him, and searched and salved with soft ointments. And then Sir Launcelot said: Now have good day, my lord the king, for wit you well ye win no worship at these walls; and if I would my knights outbring, there should many a man die. Therefore, my lord Arthur, remember you of old kindness; and however I fare, Jesu be your guide in all places.

## **CHAPTER XXII. Of the sorrow that King Arthur made for the war, and of another battle where also Sir Gawaine had the worse**

ALAS, said the king, that ever this unhappy war was begun; for ever Sir Launcelot forbearth me in all places, and in likewise my kin, and that is seen well this day by my nephew Sir Gawaine. Then King Arthur fell sick for sorrow of Sir Gawaine, that he was so sore hurt, and because of the war betwixt him and Sir Launcelot. So then they on King Arthur's part kept the siege with little war withoutforth; and they withinforth kept their walls, and defended them when need was. Thus Sir Gawaine lay sick three weeks in his tents, with all manner of

leech-craft that might be had. And as soon as Sir Gawaine might go and ride, he armed him at all points, and start upon a courser, and gat a spear in his hand, and so he came riding afore the chief gate of Benwick; and there he cried on height: Where art thou, Sir Launcelot? Come forth, thou false traitor knight and recreant, for I am here, Sir Gawaine, will prove this that I say on thee.

All this language Sir Launcelot heard, and then he said thus: Sir Gawaine, me repents of your foul saying, that ye will not cease of your language; for you wot well, Sir Gawaine, I know your might and all that ye may do; and well ye wot, Sir Gawaine, ye may not greatly hurt me. Come down, traitor knight, said he, and make it good the contrary with thy hands, for it mishapped me the last battle to be hurt of thy hands; therefore wit thou well I am come this day to make amends, for I ween this day to lay thee as low as thou laidest me. Jesu defend me, said Sir Launcelot, that ever I be so far in your danger as ye have been in mine, for then my days were done. But Sir Gawaine, said Sir Launcelot, ye shall not think that I tarry long, but sithen that ye so unknighly call me of treason, ye shall have both your hands full of me. And then Sir Launcelot armed him at all points, and mounted upon his horse, and gat a great spear in his hand, and rode out at the gate. And both the hosts were assembled, of them without and of them within, and stood in array full manly. And both parties were charged to hold them still, to see and behold the battle of these two noble knights. And then they laid their spears in their rests, and they came together as thunder, and Sir Gawaine brake his spear upon Sir Launcelot in a hundred pieces unto his hand; and Sir Launcelot smote him with a greater might, that Sir Gawaine's horse's feet raised, and so the horse and he fell to the earth. Then Sir Gawaine deliverly avoided his horse, and put his shield afore him, and eagerly drew his sword, and bade Sir Launcelot: Alight, traitor knight, for if this mare's son hath failed me, wit thou well a king's son and a queen's son shall not fail thee.

Then Sir Launcelot avoided his horse, and dressed his shield afore him, and drew his sword; and so stood they together and gave many sad strokes, that all men on both parties had thereof passing great wonder. But when Sir Launcelot felt Sir Gawaine's might so marvellously increase, he then withheld his courage and his wind, and kept himself wonder covert of his might; and under his shield he traced and traversed here and there, to break Sir Gawaine's strokes and his courage; and Sir Gawaine enforced himself with all his might and power to destroy Sir Launcelot; for as the French book saith, ever as Sir Gawaine's might increased, right so increased his wind and his evil will. Thus Sir Gawaine did great pain unto Sir Launcelot three hours, that he had right great pain for to defend him.

And when the three hours were passed, that Sir Launcelot felt that Sir

Gawaine was come to his own proper strength, then Sir Launcelot said unto Sir Gawaine: Now have I proved you twice, that ye are a full dangerous knight, and a wonderful man of your might; and many wonderful deeds have ye done in your days, for by your might increasing you have deceived many a full noble and valiant knight; and, now I feel that ye have done your mighty deeds, now wit you well I must do my deeds. And then Sir Launcelot stood near Sir Gawaine, and then Sir Launcelot doubled his strokes; and Sir Gawaine defended him mightily, but nevertheless Sir Launcelot smote such a stroke upon Sir Gawaine's helm, and upon the old wound, that Sir Gawaine sinked down upon his one side in a swoon. And anon as he did awake he waved and foined at Sir Launcelot as he lay, and said: Traitor knight, wit thou well I am not yet slain, come thou near me and perform this battle unto the uttermost. I will no more do than I have done, said Sir Launcelot, for when I see you on foot I will do battle upon you all the while I see you stand on your feet; but for to smite a wounded man that may not stand, God defend me from such a shame. And then he turned him and went his way toward the city. And Sir Gawaine evermore calling him traitor knight, and said: Wit thou well Sir Launcelot, when I am whole I shall do battle with thee again, for I shall never leave thee till that one of us be slain. Thus as this siege endured, and as Sir Gawaine lay sick near a month; and when he was well recovered and ready within three days to do battle again with Sir Launcelot, right so came tidings unto Arthur from England that made King Arthur and all his host to remove.

*Here followeth the xxi. book.*



## BOOK XXI

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### **CHAPTER I. How Sir Mordred presumed and took on him to be King of England, and would have married the queen, his father's wife**

AS Sir Mordred was ruler of all England, he did do make letters as though that they came from beyond the sea, and the letters specified that King Arthur was slain in battle with Sir Launcelot. Wherefore Sir Mordred made a parliament, and called the lords together, and there he made them to choose him king; and so was he crowned at Canterbury, and held a feast there fifteen days; and afterward he drew him unto Winchester, and there he took the Queen Guenever, and said plainly that he would wed her which was his uncle's wife and his father's wife. And so he made ready for the feast, and a day prefixed that they should be wedded; wherefore Queen Guenever was passing heavy. But she durst not discover her heart, but spake fair, and agreed to Sir Mordred's will. Then she desired of Sir Mordred for to go to London, to buy all manner of things that longed unto the wedding. And because of her fair speech Sir Mordred trusted her well enough, and gave her leave to go. And so when she came to London she took the Tower of London, and suddenly in all haste possible she stuffed it with all manner of victual, and well garnished it with men, and so kept it.

Then when Sir Mordred wist and understood how he was beguiled, he was passing wroth out of measure. And a short tale for to make, he went and laid a mighty siege about the Tower of London, and made many great assaults thereat, and threw many great engines unto them, and shot great guns. But all might not prevail Sir Mordred, for Queen Guenever would never for fair speech nor for foul, would never trust to come in his hands again.

Then came the Bishop of Canterbury, the which was a noble clerk and an holy man, and thus he said to Sir Mordred: Sir, what will ye do? will ye first displease God and sithen shame yourself, and all knighthood? Is not King Arthur your uncle, no farther but your mother's brother, and on her himself King Arthur begat you upon his own sister, therefore how may you wed your father's wife? Sir, said the noble clerk, leave this opinion or I shall curse you with book and bell and candle. Do thou thy worst, said Sir Mordred, wit thou well I shall defy thee. Sir, said the Bishop, and wit you well I shall not fear me to do that me

ought to do. Also where ye noise where my lord Arthur is slain, and that is not so, and therefore ye will make a foul work in this land. Peace, thou false priest, said Sir Mordred, for an thou chafe me any more I shall make strike off thy head. So the Bishop departed and did the cursing in the most orgulist wise that might be done. And then Sir Mordred sought the Bishop of Canterbury, for to have slain him. Then the Bishop fled, and took part of his goods with him, and went nigh unto Glastonbury; and there he was as priest hermit in a chapel, and lived in poverty and in holy prayers, for well he understood that mischievous war was at hand.

Then Sir Mordred sought on Queen Guenever by letters and sonds, and by fair means and foul means, for to have her to come out of the Tower of London; but all this availed not, for she answered him shortly, openly and privily, that she had liefer slay herself than to be married with him. Then came word to Sir Mordred that King Arthur had araised the siege for Sir Launcelot, and he was coming homeward with a great host, to be avenged upon Sir Mordred; wherefore Sir Mordred made write writs to all the barony of this land, and much people drew to him. For then was the common voice among them that with Arthur was none other life but war and strife, and with Sir Mordred was great joy and bliss. Thus was Sir Arthur depraved, and evil said of. And many there were that King Arthur had made up of nought, and given them lands, might not then say him a good word. Lo ye all Englishmen, see ye not what a mischief here was! for he that was the most king and knight of the world, and most loved the fellowship of noble knights, and by him they were all upholden, now might not these Englishmen hold them content with him. Lo thus was the old custom and usage of this land; and also men say that we of this land have not yet lost nor forgotten that custom and usage. Alas, this is a great default of us Englishmen, for there may no thing please us no term. And so fared the people at that time, they were better pleased with Sir Mordred than they were with King Arthur; and much people drew unto Sir Mordred, and said they would abide with him for better and for worse. And so Sir Mordred drew with a great host to Dover, for there he heard say that Sir Arthur would arrive, and so he thought to beat his own father from his lands; and the most part of all England held with Sir Mordred, the people were so new-fangle.

**CHAPTER II. How after that King Arthur had tidings, he returned and came to Dover, where Sir Mordred met him to let his landing; and of the death of**

## Sir Gawaine

AND so as Sir Mordred was at Dover with his host, there came King Arthur with a great navy of ships, and galleys, and carracks. And there was Sir Mordred ready awaiting upon his landing, to let his own father to land upon the land that he was king over. Then there was launching of great boats and small, and full of noble men of arms; and there was much slaughter of gentle knights, and many a full bold baron was laid full low, on both parties. But King Arthur was so courageous that there might no manner of knights let him to land, and his knights fiercely followed him; and so they landed maugre Sir Mordred and all his power, and put Sir Mordred aback, that he fled and all his people.

So when this battle was done, King Arthur let bury his people that were dead. And then was noble Sir Gawaine found in a great boat, lying more than half dead. When Sir Arthur wist that Sir Gawaine was laid so low; he went unto him; and there the king made sorrow out of measure, and took Sir Gawaine in his arms, and thrice he there swooned. And then when he awaked, he said: Alas, Sir Gawaine, my sister's son, here now thou liest; the man in the world that I loved most; and now is my joy gone, for now, my nephew Sir Gawaine, I will discover me unto your person: in Sir Launcelot and you I most had my joy, and mine affianced, and now have I lost my joy of you both; wherefore all mine earthly joy is gone from me. Mine uncle King Arthur, said Sir Gawaine, wit you well my death-day is come, and all is through mine own hastiness and wilfulness; for I am smitten upon the old wound the which Sir Launcelot gave me, on the which I feel well I must die; and had Sir Launcelot been with you as he was, this unhappy war had never begun; and of all this am I causer, for Sir Launcelot and his blood, through their prowess, held all your cankered enemies in subjection and daunger. And now, said Sir Gawaine, ye shall miss Sir Launcelot. But alas, I would not accord with him, and therefore, said Sir Gawaine, I pray you, fair uncle, that I may have paper, pen, and ink, that I may write to Sir Launcelot a cedle with mine own hands.

And then when paper and ink was brought, then Gawaine was set up weakly by King Arthur, for he was shriven a little to-fore; and then he wrote thus, as the French book maketh mention: Unto Sir Launcelot, flower of all noble knights that ever I heard of or saw by my days, I, Sir Gawaine, King Lot's son of Orkney, sister's son unto the noble King Arthur, send thee greeting, and let thee have knowledge that the tenth day of May I was smitten upon the old wound that thou gavest me afore the city of Benwick, and through the same wound that thou gavest me I am come to my death-day. And I will that all the world wit, that I, Sir Gawaine, knight of the Table Round, sought my death, and not through thy deserving, but it was mine own seeking; wherefore I beseech thee, Sir Launcelot,

to return again unto this realm, and see my tomb, and pray some prayer more or less for my soul. And this same day that I wrote this cedle, I was hurt to the death in the same wound, the which I had of thy hand, Sir Launcelot; for of a more nobler man might I not be slain. Also Sir Launcelot, for all the love that ever was betwixt us, make no tarrying, but come over the sea in all haste, that thou mayst with thy noble knights rescue that noble king that made thee knight, that is my lord Arthur; for he is full straitly bestead with a false traitor, that is my half-brother, Sir Mordred; and he hath let crown him king, and would have wedded my lady Queen Guenever, and so had he done had she not put herself in the Tower of London. And so the tenth day of May last past, my lord Arthur and we all landed upon them at Dover; and there we put that false traitor, Sir Mordred, to flight, and there it misfortuned me to be stricken upon thy stroke. And at the date of this letter was written, but two hours and a half afore my death, written with mine own hand, and so subscribed with part of my heart's blood. And I require thee, most famous knight of the world, that thou wilt see my tomb. And then Sir Gawaine wept, and King Arthur wept; and then they swooned both. And when they awaked both, the king made Sir Gawaine to receive his Saviour. And then Sir Gawaine prayed the king for to send for Sir Launcelot, and to cherish him above all other knights.

And so at the hour of noon Sir Gawaine yielded up the spirit; and then the king let inter him in a chapel within Dover Castle; and there yet all men may see the skull of him, and the same wound is seen that Sir Launcelot gave him in battle. Then was it told the king that Sir Mordred had pight a new field upon Barham Down. And upon the morn the king rode thither to him, and there was a great battle betwixt them, and much people was slain on both parties; but at the last Sir Arthur's party stood best, and Sir Mordred and his party fled unto Canterbury.

### **CHAPTER III. How after, Sir Gawaine's ghost appeared to King Arthur, and warned him that he should not fight that day**

AND then the king let search all the towns for his knights that were slain, and interred them; and salved them with soft salves that so sore were wounded. Then much people drew unto King Arthur. And then they said that Sir Mordred warred upon King Arthur with wrong. And then King Arthur drew him with his host down by the seaside, westward toward Salisbury; and there was a day assigned betwixt King Arthur and Sir Mordred, that they should meet upon a down beside Salisbury, and not far from the seaside; and this day was assigned on a Monday after Trinity Sunday, whereof King Arthur was passing glad, that he might be avenged upon Sir Mordred. Then Sir Mordred araised much people

about London, for they of Kent, Southsex, and Surrey, Estsex, and of Southfolk, and of Northfolk, held the most part with Sir Mordred; and many a full noble knight drew unto Sir Mordred and to the king: but they that loved Sir Launcelot drew unto Sir Mordred.

So upon Trinity Sunday at night, King Arthur dreamed a wonderful dream, and that was this: that him seemed he sat upon a chaflet in a chair, and the chair was fast to a wheel, and thereupon sat King Arthur in the richest cloth of gold that might be made; and the king thought there was under him, far from him, an hideous deep black water, and therein were all manner of serpents, and worms, and wild beasts, foul and horrible; and suddenly the king thought the wheel turned up-so-down, and he fell among the serpents, and every beast took him by a limb; and then the king cried as he lay in his bed and slept: Help. And then knights, squires, and yeomen, awaked the king; and then he was so amazed that he wist not where he was; and then he fell a-slumbering again, not sleeping nor thoroughly waking. So the king seemed verily that there came Sir Gawaine unto him with a number of fair ladies with him. And when King Arthur saw him, then he said: Welcome, my sister's son; I weened thou hadst been dead, and now I see thee alive, much am I beholding unto Almighty Jesu. O fair nephew and my sister's son, what be these ladies that hither be come with you? Sir, said Sir Gawaine, all these be ladies for whom I have foughten when I was man living, and all these are those that I did battle for in righteous quarrel; and God hath given them that grace at their great prayer, because I did battle for them, that they should bring me hither unto you: thus much hath God given me leave, for to warn you of your death; for an ye fight as to-morn with Sir Mordred, as ye both have assigned, doubt ye not ye must be slain, and the most part of your people on both parties. And for the great grace and goodness that almighty Jesu hath unto you, and for pity of you, and many more other good men there shall be slain, God hath sent me to you of his special grace, to give you warning that in no wise ye do battle as to-morn, but that ye take a treaty for a month day; and proffer you largely, so as to-morn to be put in a delay. For within a month shall come Sir Launcelot with all his noble knights, and rescue you worshipfully, and slay Sir Mordred, and all that ever will hold with him. Then Sir Gawaine and all the ladies vanished.

And anon the king called upon his knights, squires, and yeomen, and charged them wightly to fetch his noble lords and wise bishops unto him. And when they were come, the king told them his avision, what Sir Gawaine had told him, and warned him that if he fought on the morn he should be slain. Then the king commanded Sir Lucan the Butler, and his brother Sir Bedivere, with two bishops with them, and charged them in any wise, an they might, Take a treaty for a

month day with Sir Mordred, and spare not, proffer him lands and goods as much as ye think best. So then they departed, and came to Sir Mordred, where he had a grim host of an hundred thousand men. And there they entreated Sir Mordred long time; and at the last Sir Mordred was agreed for to have Cornwall and Kent, by Arthur's days: after, all England, after the days of King Arthur.

#### **CHAPTER IV. How by misadventure of an adder the battle began, where Mordred was slain, and Arthur hurt to the death**

THEN were they condescended that King Arthur and Sir Mordred should meet betwixt both their hosts, and everych of them should bring fourteen persons; and they came with this word unto Arthur. Then said he: I am glad that this is done: and so he went into the field. And when Arthur should depart, he warned all his host that an they see any sword drawn: Look ye come on fiercely, and slay that traitor, Sir Mordred, for I in no wise trust him. In like wise Sir Mordred warned his host that: An ye see any sword drawn, look that ye come on fiercely, and so slay all that ever before you standeth; for in no wise I will not trust for this treaty, for I know well my father will be avenged on me. And so they met as their appointment was, and so they were agreed and accorded thoroughly; and wine was fetched, and they drank. Right soon came an adder out of a little heath bush, and it stung a knight on the foot. And when the knight felt him stung, he looked down and saw the adder, and then he drew his sword to slay the adder, and thought of none other harm. And when the host on both parties saw that sword drawn, then they blew beams, trumpets, and horns, and shouted grimly. And so both hosts dressed them together. And King Arthur took his horse, and said: Alas this unhappy day! and so rode to his party. And Sir Mordred in like wise. And never was there seen a more dolefuller battle in no Christian land; for there was but rushing and riding, foining and striking, and many a grim word was there spoken either to other, and many a deadly stroke. But ever King Arthur rode throughout the battle of Sir Mordred many times, and did full nobly as a noble king should, and at all times he fainted never; and Sir Mordred that day put him in devoir, and in great peril. And thus they fought all the long day, and never stinted till the noble knights were laid to the cold earth; and ever they fought still till it was near night, and by that time was there an hundred thousand laid dead upon the down. Then was Arthur wood wroth out of measure, when he saw his people so slain from him.

Then the king looked about him, and then was he ware, of all his host and of all his good knights, were left no more alive but two knights; that one was Sir Lucan the Butler, and his brother Sir Bedivere, and they were full sore wounded. Jesu mercy, said the king, where are all my noble knights become? Alas that

ever I should see this doleful day, for now, said Arthur, I am come to mine end. But would to God that I wist where were that traitor Sir Mordred, that hath caused all this mischief. Then was King Arthur ware where Sir Mordred leaned upon his sword among a great heap of dead men. Now give me my spear, said Arthur unto Sir Lucan, for yonder I have espied the traitor that all this woe hath wrought. Sir, let him be, said Sir Lucan, for he is unhappy; and if ye pass this unhappy day ye shall be right well revenged upon him. Good lord, remember ye of your night's dream, and what the spirit of Sir Gawaine told you this night, yet God of his great goodness hath preserved you hitherto. Therefore, for God's sake, my lord, leave off by this, for blessed be God ye have won the field, for here we be three alive, and with Sir Mordred is none alive; and if ye leave off now this wicked day of destiny is past. Tide me death, betide me life, saith the king, now I see him yonder alone he shall never escape mine hands, for at a better avail shall I never have him. God speed you well, said Sir Bedivere.

Then the king gat his spear in both his hands, and ran toward Sir Mordred, crying: Traitor, now is thy death-day come. And when Sir Mordred heard Sir Arthur, he ran until him with his sword drawn in his hand. And there King Arthur smote Sir Mordred under the shield, with a foin of his spear, throughout the body, more than a fathom. And when Sir Mordred felt that he had his death wound he thrust himself with the might that he had up to the bur of King Arthur's spear. And right so he smote his father Arthur, with his sword holden in both his hands, on the side of the head, that the sword pierced the helmet and the brain-pan, and therewithal Sir Mordred fell stark dead to the earth; and the noble Arthur fell in a swoon to the earth, and there he swooned oftentimes. And Sir Lucan the Butler and Sir Bedivere oftentimes heaved him up. And so weakly they led him betwixt them both, to a little chapel not far from the seaside. And when the king was there he thought him well eased.

Then heard they people cry in the field. Now go thou, Sir Lucan, said the king, and do me to wit what betokens that noise in the field. So Sir Lucan departed, for he was grievously wounded in many places. And so as he yede, he saw and hearkened by the moonlight, how that pillers and robbers were come into the field, to pill and to rob many a full noble knight of brooches, and beads, of many a good ring, and of many a rich jewel; and who that were not dead all out, there they slew them for their harness and their riches. When Sir Lucan understood this work, he came to the king as soon as he might, and told him all what he had heard and seen. Therefore by my rede, said Sir Lucan, it is best that we bring you to some town. I would it were so, said the king.

## **CHAPTER V. How King Arthur commanded to cast his sword**

### **Excalibur into the water, and how he was delivered to ladies in a barge**

BUT I may not stand, mine head works so. Ah Sir Launcelot, said King Arthur, this day have I sore missed thee: alas, that ever I was against thee, for now have I my death, whereof Sir Gawaine me warned in my dream. Then Sir Lucan took up the king the one part, and Sir Bedivere the other part, and in the lifting the king swooned; and Sir Lucan fell in a swoon with the lift, that the part of his guts fell out of his body, and therewith the noble knight's heart brast. And when the king awoke, he beheld Sir Lucan, how he lay foaming at the mouth, and part of his guts lay at his feet. Alas, said the king, this is to me a full heavy sight, to see this noble duke so die for my sake, for he would have holpen me, that had more need of help than I. Alas, he would not complain him, his heart was so set to help me: now Jesu have mercy upon his soul! Then Sir Bedivere wept for the death of his brother. Leave this mourning and weeping, said the king, for all this will not avail me, for wit thou well an I might live myself, the death of Sir Lucan would grieve me evermore; but my time hieth fast, said the king. Therefore, said Arthur unto Sir Bedivere, take thou Excalibur, my good sword, and go with it to yonder water side, and when thou comest there I charge thee throw my sword in that water, and come again and tell me what thou there seest. My lord, said Bedivere, your commandment shall be done, and lightly bring you word again.

So Sir Bedivere departed, and by the way he beheld that noble sword, that the pommel and the haft was all of precious stones; and then he said to himself: If I throw this rich sword in the water, thereof shall never come good, but harm and loss. And then Sir Bedivere hid Excalibur under a tree. And so, as soon as he might, he came again unto the king, and said he had been at the water, and had thrown the sword in the water. What saw thou there? said the king. Sir, he said, I saw nothing but waves and winds. That is untruly said of thee, said the king, therefore go thou lightly again, and do my commandment; as thou art to me lief and dear, spare not, but throw it in. Then Sir Bedivere returned again, and took the sword in his hand; and then him thought sin and shame to throw away that noble sword, and so eft he hid the sword, and returned again, and told to the king that he had been at the water, and done his commandment. What saw thou there? said the king. Sir, he said, I saw nothing but the waters wap and waves wan. Ah, traitor untrue, said King Arthur, now hast thou betrayed me twice. Who would have weened that, thou that hast been to me so lief and dear? and thou art named a noble knight, and would betray me for the richness of the sword. But now go again lightly, for thy long tarrying putteth me in great jeopardy of my life, for I have taken cold. And but if thou do now as I bid thee, if ever I may see thee, I shall slay thee with mine own hands; for thou wouldst for my rich sword see me



dead.

Then Sir Bedivere departed, and went to the sword, and lightly took it up, and went to the water side; and there he bound the girdle about the hilts, and then he threw the sword as far into the water as he might; and there came an arm and an hand above the water and met it, and caught it, and so shook it thrice and brandished, and then vanished away the hand with the sword in the water. So Sir Bedivere came again to the king, and told him what he saw. Alas, said the king, help me hence, for I dread me I have tarried over long. Then Sir Bedivere took the king upon his back, and so went with him to that water side. And when they were at the water side, even fast by the bank hove a little barge with many fair ladies in it, and among them all was a queen, and all they had black hoods, and all they wept and shrieked when they saw King Arthur. Now put me into the barge, said the king. And so he did softly; and there received him three queens with great mourning; and so they set them down, and in one of their laps King Arthur laid his head. And then that queen said: Ah, dear brother, why have ye tarried so long from me? alas, this wound on your head hath caught over-much cold. And so then they rowed from the land, and Sir Bedivere beheld all those ladies go from him. Then Sir Bedivere cried: Ah my lord Arthur, what shall become of me, now ye go from me and leave me here alone among mine enemies? Comfort thyself, said the king, and do as well as thou mayst, for in me is no trust for to trust in; for I will into the vale of Avilion to heal me of my grievous wound: and if thou hear never more of me, pray for my soul. But ever the queens and ladies wept and shrieked, that it was pity to hear. And as soon as Sir Bedivere had lost the sight of the barge, he wept and wailed, and so took the forest; and so he went all that night, and in the morning he was ware betwixt two holts hoar, of a chapel and an hermitage.

#### **CHAPTER VI. How Sir Bedivere found him on the morrow dead in an hermitage, and how he abode there with the hermit**

THEN was Sir Bedivere glad, and thither he went; and when he came into the chapel, he saw where lay an hermit grovelling on all four, there fast by a tomb was new graven. When the hermit saw Sir Bedivere he knew him well, for he was but little to-fore Bishop of Canterbury, that Sir Mordred flemed. Sir, said Bedivere, what man is there interred that ye pray so fast for? Fair son, said the hermit, I wot not verily, but by deeming. But this night, at midnight, here came a number of ladies, and brought hither a dead corpse, and prayed me to bury him; and here they offered an hundred tapers, and they gave me an hundred besants. Alas, said Sir Bedivere, that was my lord King Arthur, that here lieth buried in this chapel. Then Sir Bedivere swooned; and when he awoke he prayed the

hermit he might abide with him still there, to live with fasting and prayers. For from hence will I never go, said Sir Bedivere, by my will, but all the days of my life here to pray for my lord Arthur. Ye are welcome to me, said the hermit, for I know ye better than ye ween that I do. Ye are the bold Bedivere, and the full noble duke, Sir Lucan the Butler, was your brother. Then Sir Bedivere told the hermit all as ye have heard to-fore. So there bode Sir Bedivere with the hermit that was to-fore Bishop of Canterbury, and there Sir Bedivere put upon him poor clothes, and served the hermit full lowly in fasting and in prayers.

Thus of Arthur I find never more written in books that be authorised, nor more of the very certainty of his death heard I never read, but thus was he led away in a ship wherein were three queens; that one was King Arthur's sister, Queen Morgan le Fay; the other was the Queen of Northgalis; the third was the Queen of the Waste Lands. Also there was Nimue, the chief lady of the lake, that had wedded Pelleas the good knight; and this lady had done much for King Arthur, for she would never suffer Sir Pelleas to be in no place where he should be in danger of his life; and so he lived to the uttermost of his days with her in great rest. More of the death of King Arthur could I never find, but that ladies brought him to his burials; and such one was buried there, that the hermit bare witness that sometime was Bishop of Canterbury, but yet the hermit knew not in certain that he was verily the body of King Arthur: for this tale Sir Bedivere, knight of the Table Round, made it to be written.

## **CHAPTER VII. Of the opinion of some men of the death of King Arthur; and how Queen Guenever made her a nun in Almesbury**

YET some men say in many parts of England that King Arthur is not dead, but had by the will of our Lord Jesu into another place; and men say that he shall come again, and he shall win the holy cross. I will not say it shall be so, but rather I will say: here in this world he changed his life. But many men say that there is written upon his tomb this verse: *Hic jacet Arthurus, Rex quondam, Rexque futurus*. Thus leave I here Sir Bedivere with the hermit, that dwelled that time in a chapel beside Glastonbury, and there was his hermitage. And so they lived in their prayers, and fastings, and great abstinence. And when Queen Guenever understood that King Arthur was slain, and all the noble knights, Sir Mordred and all the remnant, then the queen stole away, and five ladies with her, and so she went to Almesbury; and there she let make herself a nun, and ware white clothes and black, and great penance she took, as ever did sinful lady in this land, and never creature could make her merry; but lived in fasting, prayers, and alms-deeds, that all manner of people marvelled how virtuously she was changed. Now leave we Queen Guenever in Almesbury, a nun in white clothes

and black, and there she was Abbess and ruler as reason would; and turn we from her, and speak we of Sir Launcelot du Lake.

### **CHAPTER VIII. How when Sir Lancelot heard of the death of King Arthur, and of Sir Gawaine, and other matters, he came into England**

AND when he heard in his country that Sir Mordred was crowned king in England, and made war against King Arthur, his own father, and would let him to land in his own land; also it was told Sir Launcelot how that Sir Mordred had laid siege about the Tower of London, because the queen would not wed him; then was Sir Launcelot wroth out of measure, and said to his kinsmen: Alas, that double traitor Sir Mordred, now me repenteth that ever he escaped my hands, for much shame hath he done unto my lord Arthur; for all I feel by the doleful letter that my lord Sir Gawaine sent me, on whose soul Jesu have mercy that my lord Arthur is full hard bestead. Alas, said Sir Launcelot, that ever I should live to hear that most noble king that made me knight thus to be overset with his subject in his own realm. And this doleful letter that my lord, Sir Gawaine, hath sent me afore his death, praying me to see his tomb, wit you well his doleful words shall never go from mine heart, for he was a full noble knight as ever was born; and in an unhappy hour was I born that ever I should have that unhap to slay first Sir Gawaine, Sir Gaheris the good knight, and mine own friend Sir Gareth, that full noble knight. Alas, I may say I am unhappy, said Sir Launcelot, that ever I should do thus unhappily, and, alas, yet might I never have hap to slay that traitor, Sir Mordred.

Leave your complaints, said Sir Bors, and first revenge you of the death of Sir Gawaine; and it will be well done that ye see Sir Gawaine's tomb, and secondly that ye revenge my lord Arthur, and my lady, Queen Guenever I thank you, said Sir Launcelot, for ever ye will my worship.

Then they made them ready in all the haste that might be, with ships and galleys, with Sir Launcelot and his host to pass into England. And so he passed over the sea till he came to Dover, and there he landed with seven kings, and the number was hideous to behold. Then Sir Launcelot spered of men of Dover where was King Arthur become. Then the people told him how that he was slain, and Sir Mordred and an hundred thousand died on a day; and how Sir Mordred gave King Arthur there the first battle at his landing, and there was good Sir Gawaine slain; and on the morn Sir Mordred fought with the king upon Barham Down, and there the king put Sir Mordred to the worse. Alas, said Sir Launcelot, this is the heaviest tidings that ever came to me. Now, fair sirs, said Sir Launcelot, shew me the tomb of Sir Gawaine. And then certain people of the town brought him into the castle of Dover, and shewed him the tomb. Then Sir

Launcelot kneeled down and wept, and prayed heartily for his soul. And that night he made a dole, and all they that would come had as much flesh, fish, wine and ale, and every man and woman had twelve pence, come who would. Thus with his own hand dealt he this money, in a mourning gown; and ever he wept, and prayed them to pray for the soul of Sir Gawaine. And on the morn all the priests and clerks that might be gotten in the country were there, and sang mass of Requiem; and there offered first Sir Launcelot, and he offered an hundred pound; and then the seven kings offered forty pound apiece; and also there was a thousand knights, and each of them offered a pound; and the offering dured from morn till night, and Sir Launcelot lay two nights on his tomb in prayers and weeping.

Then on the third day Sir Launcelot called the kings, dukes, earls, barons, and knights, and said thus: My fair lords, I thank you all of your coming into this country with me, but we came too late, and that shall repent me while I live, but against death may no man rebel. But sithen it is so, said Sir Launcelot, I will myself ride and seek my lady, Queen Guenever, for as I hear say she hath had great pain and much disease; and I heard say that she is fled into the west. Therefore ye all shall abide me here, and but if I come again within fifteen days, then take your ships and your fellowship, and depart into your country, for I will do as I say to you.

### **CHAPTER IX. How Sir Launcelot departed to seek the Queen Guenever, and how he found her at Almesbury**

THEN came Sir Bors de Ganis, and said: My lord Sir Launcelot, what think ye for to do, now to ride in this realm? wit ye well ye shall find few friends. Be as be may, said Sir Launcelot, keep you still here, for I will forth on my journey, and no man nor child shall go with me. So it was no boot to strive, but he departed and rode westerly, and there he sought a seven or eight days; and at the last he came to a nunnery, and then was Queen Guenever ware of Sir Launcelot as he walked in the cloister. And when she saw him there she swooned thrice, that all the ladies and gentlewomen had work enough to hold the queen up. So when she might speak, she called ladies and gentlewomen to her, and said: Ye marvel, fair ladies, why I make this fare. Truly, she said, it is for the sight of yonder knight that yonder standeth; wherefore I pray you all call him to me.

When Sir Launcelot was brought to her, then she said to all the ladies: Through this man and me hath all this war been wrought, and the death of the most noblest knights of the world; for through our love that we have loved together is my most noble lord slain. Therefore, Sir Launcelot, wit thou well I am set in such a plight to get my soul-heal; and yet I trust through God's grace

that after my death to have a sight of the blessed face of Christ, and at domesday to sit on his right side, for as sinful as ever I was are saints in heaven. Therefore, Sir Launcelot, I require thee and beseech thee heartily, for all the love that ever was betwixt us, that thou never see me more in the visage; and I command thee, on God's behalf, that thou forsake my company, and to thy kingdom thou turn again, and keep well thy realm from war and wrack; for as well as I have loved thee, mine heart will not serve me to see thee, for through thee and me is the flower of kings and knights destroyed; therefore, Sir Launcelot, go to thy realm, and there take thee a wife, and live with her with joy and bliss; and I pray thee heartily, pray for me to our Lord that I may amend my misliving. Now, sweet madam, said Sir Launcelot, would ye that I should now return again unto my country, and there to wed a lady? Nay, madam, wit you well that shall I never do, for I shall never be so false to you of that I have promised; but the same destiny that ye have taken you to, I will take me unto, for to please Jesu, and ever for you I cast me specially to pray. If thou wilt do so, said the queen, hold thy promise, but I may never believe but that thou wilt turn to the world again. Well, madam, said he, ye say as pleaseth you, yet wist you me never false of my promise, and God defend but I should forsake the world as ye have done. For in the quest of the Sangreal I had forsaken the vanities of the world had not your lord been. And if I had done so at that time, with my heart, will, and thought, I had passed all the knights that were in the Sangreal except Sir Galahad, my son. And therefore, lady, sithen ye have taken you to perfection, I must needs take me to perfection, of right. For I take record of God, in you I have had mine earthly joy; and if I had found you now so disposed, I had cast me to have had you into mine own realm.

#### **CHAPTER X. How Sir Launcelot came to the hermitage where the Archbishop of Canterbury was, and how he took the habit on him**

BUT sithen I find you thus disposed, I ensure you faithfully, I will ever take me to penance, and pray while my life lasteth, if I may find any hermit, either gray or white, that will receive me. Wherefore, madam, I pray you kiss me and never no more. Nay, said the queen, that shall I never do, but abstain you from such works: and they departed. But there was never so hard an hearted man but he would have wept to see the dolour that they made; for there was lamentation as they had been stung with spears; and many times they swooned, and the ladies bare the queen to her chamber.

And Sir Launcelot awoke, and went and took his horse, and rode all that day and all night in a forest, weeping. And at the last he was ware of an hermitage and a chapel stood betwixt two cliffs; and then he heard a little bell ring to mass,

and thither he rode and alighted, and tied his horse to the gate, and heard mass. And he that sang mass was the Bishop of Canterbury. Both the Bishop and Sir Bedivere knew Sir Launcelot, and they spake together after mass. But when Sir Bedivere had told his tale all whole, Sir Launcelot's heart almost brast for sorrow, and Sir Launcelot threw his arms abroad, and said: Alas, who may trust this world. And then he kneeled down on his knee, and prayed the Bishop to shrive him and assoil him. And then he besought the Bishop that he might be his brother. Then the Bishop said: I will gladly; and there he put an habit upon Sir Launcelot, and there he served God day and night with prayers and fastings.

Thus the great host abode at Dover. And then Sir Lionel took fifteen lords with him, and rode to London to seek Sir Launcelot; and there Sir Lionel was slain and many of his lords. Then Sir Bors de Ganis made the great host for to go home again; and Sir Bors, Sir Ector de Maris, Sir Blamore, Sir Bleoberis, with more other of Sir Launcelot's kin, took on them to ride all England overthwart and endlong, to seek Sir Launcelot. So Sir Bors by fortune rode so long till he came to the same chapel where Sir Launcelot was; and so Sir Bors heard a little bell knell, that rang to mass; and there he alighted and heard mass. And when mass was done, the Bishop Sir Launcelot, and Sir Bedivere, came to Sir Bors. And when Sir Bors saw Sir Launcelot in that manner clothing, then he prayed the Bishop that he might be in the same suit. And so there was an habit put upon him, and there he lived in prayers and fasting. And within half a year, there was come Sir Galihud, Sir Galihodin, Sir Blamore, Sir Bleoberis, Sir Villiards, Sir Clarras, and Sir Gahalantine. So all these seven noble knights there abode still. And when they saw Sir Launcelot had taken him to such perfection, they had no lust to depart, but took such an habit as he had.

Thus they endured in great penance six year; and then Sir Launcelot took the habit of priesthood of the Bishop, and a twelvemonth he sang mass. And there was none of these other knights but they read in books, and help for to sing mass, and rang bells, and did bodily all manner of service. And so their horses went where they would, for they took no regard of no worldly riches. For when they saw Sir Launcelot endure such penance, in prayers, and fastings, they took no force what pain they endured, for to see the noblest knight of the world take such abstinence that he waxed full lean. And thus upon a night, there came a vision to Sir Launcelot, and charged him, in remission of his sins, to haste him unto Almesbury: And by then thou come there, thou shalt find Queen Guenever dead. And therefore take thy fellows with thee, and purvey them of an horse bier, and fetch thou the corpse of her, and bury her by her husband, the noble King Arthur. So this avision came to Sir Launcelot thrice in one night.

**CHAPTER XI. How Sir Launcelot went with his seven fellows to  
Almesbury, and found there Queen Guenever dead, whom they brought to  
Glastonbury**

THEN Sir Launcelot rose up or day, and told the hermit. It were well done, said the hermit, that ye made you ready, and that you disobey not the avision. Then Sir Launcelot took his eight fellows with him, and on foot they yede from Glastonbury to Almesbury, the which is little more than thirty mile. And thither they came within two days, for they were weak and feeble to go. And when Sir Launcelot was come to Almesbury within the nunnery, Queen Guenever died but half an hour afore. And the ladies told Sir Launcelot that Queen Guenever told them all or she passed, that Sir Launcelot had been priest near a twelvemonth, And hither he cometh as fast as he may to fetch my corpse; and beside my lord, King Arthur, he shall bury me. Wherefore the queen said in hearing of them all: I beseech Almighty God that I may never have power to see Sir Launcelot with my worldly eyes; and thus, said all the ladies, was ever her prayer these two days, till she was dead. Then Sir Launcelot saw her visage, but he wept not greatly, but sighed. And so he did all the observance of the service himself, both the dirige, and on the morn he sang mass. And there was ordained an horse bier; and so with an hundred torches ever brenning about the corpse of the queen, and ever Sir Launcelot with his eight fellows went about the horse bier, singing and reading many an holy orison, and frankincense upon the corpse incensed. Thus Sir Launcelot and his eight fellows went on foot from Almesbury unto Glastonbury.

And when they were come to the chapel and the hermitage, there she had a dirige, with great devotion. And on the morn the hermit that sometime was Bishop of Canterbury sang the mass of Requiem with great devotion. And Sir Launcelot was the first that offered, and then also his eight fellows. And then she was wrapped in cered cloth of Raines, from the top to the toe, in thirtyfold, and after she was put in a web of lead, and then in a coffin of marble. And when she was put in the earth Sir Launcelot swooned, and lay long still, while the hermit came and awaked him, and said: Ye be to blame, for ye displease God with such manner of sorrow-making. Truly, said Sir Launcelot, I trust I do not displease God, for He knoweth mine intent. For my sorrow was not, nor is not for any rejoicing of sin, but my sorrow may never have end. For when I remember of her beauty, and of her noblesse, that was both with her king and with her, so when I saw his corpse and her corpse so lie together, truly mine heart would not serve to sustain my careful body. Also when I remember me how by my default, mine orgule and my pride, that they were both laid full low, that were peerless that ever was living of Christian people, wit you well, said Sir Launcelot, this

remembered, of their kindness and mine unkindness, sank so to mine heart, that I might not sustain myself. So the French book maketh mention.

**CHAPTER XII. How Sir Launcelot began to sicken, and after died,  
whose body was borne to Joyous Gard for to be buried**

THEN Sir Launcelot never after ate but little meat, ne drank, till he was dead. For then he sickened more and more, and dried, and dwined away. For the Bishop nor none of his fellows might not make him to eat, and little he drank, that he was waxen by a cubit shorter than he was, that the people could not know him. For evermore, day and night, he prayed, but sometime he slumbered a broken sleep; ever he was lying grovelling on the tomb of King Arthur and Queen Guenever. And there was no comfort that the Bishop, nor Sir Bors, nor none of his fellows, could make him, it availed not. So within six weeks after, Sir Launcelot fell sick, and lay in his bed; and then he sent for the Bishop that there was hermit, and all his true fellows. Then Sir Launcelot said with dreary steven: Sir Bishop, I pray you give to me all my rites that longeth to a Christian man. It shall not need you, said the hermit and all his fellows, it is but heaviness of your blood, ye shall be well mended by the grace of God to-morn. My fair lords, said Sir Launcelot, wit you well my careful body will into the earth, I have warning more than now I will say; therefore give me my rites. So when he was houseled and anealed, and had all that a Christian man ought to have, he prayed the Bishop that his fellows might bear his body to Joyous Gard. Some men say it was Alnwick, and some men say it was Bamborough. Howbeit, said Sir Launcelot, me repenteth sore, but I made mine avow sometime, that in Joyous Gard I would be buried. And because of breaking of mine avow, I pray you all, lead me thither. Then there was weeping and wringing of hands among his fellows.

So at a season of the night they all went to their beds, for they all lay in one chamber. And so after midnight, against day, the Bishop [that] then was hermit, as he lay in his bed asleep, he fell upon a great laughter. And therewith all the fellowship awoke, and came to the Bishop, and asked him what he ailed. Ah Jesu mercy, said the Bishop, why did ye awake me? I was never in all my life so merry and so well at ease. Wherefore? said Sir Bors. Truly said the Bishop, here was Sir Launcelot with me with mo angels than ever I saw men in one day. And I saw the angels heave up Sir Launcelot unto heaven, and the gates of heaven opened against him. It is but dretching of swevens, said Sir Bors, for I doubt not Sir Launcelot aileth nothing but good. It may well be, said the Bishop; go ye to his bed, and then shall ye prove the sooth. So when Sir Bors and his fellows came to his bed they found him stark dead, and he lay as he had smiled, and the



sweetest savour about him that ever they felt.

Then was there weeping and wringing of hands, and the greatest dole they made that ever made men. And on the morn the Bishop did his mass of Requiem, and after, the Bishop and all the nine knights put Sir Launcelot in the same horse bier that Queen Guenever was laid in to-fore that she was buried. And so the Bishop and they all together went with the body of Sir Launcelot daily, till they came to Joyous Gard; and ever they had an hundred torches brenning about him. And so within fifteen days they came to Joyous Gard. And there they laid his corpse in the body of the quire, and sang and read many psalters and prayers over him and about him.

And ever his visage was laid open and naked, that all folks might behold him. For such was the custom in those days, that all men of worship should so lie with open visage till that they were buried. And right thus as they were at their service, there came Sir Ector de Maris, that had seven years sought all England, Scotland, and Wales, seeking his brother, Sir Launcelot.

### **CHAPTER XIII. How Sir Ector found Sir Launcelot his brother dead, and how Constantine reigned next after Arthur; and of the end of this book**

AND when Sir Ector heard such noise and light in the quire of Joyous Gard, he alighted and put his horse from him, and came into the quire, and there he saw men sing and weep. And all they knew Sir Ector, but he knew not them. Then went Sir Bors unto Sir Ector, and told him how there lay his brother, Sir Launcelot, dead; and then Sir Ector threw his shield, sword, and helm from him. And when he beheld Sir Launcelot's visage, he fell down in a swoon. And when he waked it were hard any tongue to tell the doleful complaints that he made for his brother. Ah Launcelot, he said, thou were head of all Christian knights, and now I dare say, said Sir Ector, thou Sir Launcelot, there thou liest, that thou were never matched of earthly knight's hand. And thou were the courteoust knight that ever bare shield. And thou were the truest friend to thy lover that ever bestrad horse. And thou were the truest lover of a sinful man that ever loved woman. And thou were the kindest man that ever struck with sword. And thou were the goodliest person that ever came among press of knights. And thou was the meekest man and the gentlest that ever ate in hall among ladies. And thou were the sternest knight to thy mortal foe that ever put spear in the rest. Then there was weeping and dolour out of measure.

Thus they kept Sir Launcelot's corpse aloft fifteen days, and then they buried it with great devotion. And then at leisure they went all with the Bishop of Canterbury to his hermitage, and there they were together more than a month. Then Sir Constantine, that was Sir Cador's son of Cornwall, was chosen king of

England. And he was a full noble knight, and worshipfully he ruled this realm. And then this King Constantine sent for the Bishop of Canterbury, for he heard say where he was. And so he was restored unto his Bishopric, and left that hermitage. And Sir Bedivere was there ever still hermit to his life's end. Then Sir Bors de Ganis, Sir Ector de Maris, Sir Gahalantine, Sir Galihud, Sir Galihodin, Sir Blamore, Sir Bleoberis, Sir Villiards le Valiant, Sir Clarrus of Clermont, all these knights drew them to their countries. Howbeit King Constantine would have had them with him, but they would not abide in this realm. And there they all lived in their countries as holy men. And some English books make mention that they went never out of England after the death of Sir Launcelot, but that was but favour of makers. For the French book maketh mention, and is authorised, that Sir Bors, Sir Ector, Sir Blamore, and Sir Bleoberis, went into the Holy Land thereas Jesu Christ was quick and dead, and anon as they had stablished their lands. For the book saith, so Sir Launcelot commanded them for to do, or ever he passed out of this world. And these four knights did many battles upon the miscreants or Turks. And there they died upon a Good Friday for God's sake.

*Here is the end of the book of King Arthur, and of his noble knights of the Round Table, that when they were whole together there was ever an hundred and forty. And here is the end of the death of Arthur. I pray you all, gentlemen and gentlewomen that readeth this book of Arthur and his knights, from the beginning to the ending, pray for me while I am alive, that God send me good deliverance, and when I am dead, I pray you all pray for my soul. For this book was ended the ninth year of the reign of King Edward the Fourth, by Sir Thomas Maleore, knight, as Jesu help him for his great might, as he is the servant of Jesu both day and night.*

*Thus endeth this noble and joyous book entitled Le Morte Darthur. Notwithstanding it treateth of the birth, life, and acts of the said King Arthur, of his noble knights of the Round Table, their marvellous enquests and adventures, the achieving of the Sangreal, and in the end the dolorous death and departing out of this world of them all. Which book was reduced into English by Sir Thomas Malory, knight, as afore is said, and by me divided into twenty-one books, chaptered and emprinted, and finished in the abbey, Westminster, the last day of July the year of our Lord MCCCCLXXX{?}.*

*Caxton me fieri fecit.*

# **IDYLLS OF THE KING**

**by Alfred, Lord Tennyson**

# Table of Contents

[Dedication](#)

[The Coming of Arthur](#)

## **THE ROUND TABLE**

[Gareth and Lynette](#)

[The Marriage of Geraint](#)

[Geraint and Enid](#)

[Balin and Balan](#)

[Merlin and Vivien](#)

[Lancelot and Elaine](#)

[The Holy Grail](#)

[Pelleas and Ettarre](#)

[The Last Tournament](#)

[Guinevere](#)

[The Passing of Arthur](#)

[To the Queen](#)

## Dedication

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Perchance as finding there unconsciously  
Some image of himself—I dedicate,  
I dedicate, I consecrate with tears—  
These Idylls.

And indeed He seems to me  
Scarce other than my king's ideal knight,  
'Who revered his conscience as his king;  
Whose glory was, redressing human wrong;  
Who spake no slander, no, nor listened to it;  
Who loved one only and who clave to her—'  
Her—over all whose realms to their last isle,  
Commingled with the gloom of imminent war,  
The shadow of His loss drew like eclipse,  
Darkening the world. We have lost him: he is gone:  
We know him now: all narrow jealousies  
Are silent; and we see him as he moved,  
How modest, kindly, all-accomplished, wise,  
With what sublime repression of himself,  
And in what limits, and how tenderly;  
Not swaying to this faction or to that;  
Not making his high place the lawless perch  
Of winged ambitions, nor a vantage-ground  
For pleasure; but through all this tract of years  
Wearing the white flower of a blameless life,  
Before a thousand peering littlenesses,  
In that fierce light which beats upon a throne,  
And blackens every blot: for where is he,  
Who dares foreshadow for an only son  
A lovelier life, a more unstained, than his?  
Or how should England dreaming of his sons  
Hope more for these than some inheritance

Of such a life, a heart, a mind as thine,  
Thou noble Father of her Kings to be,  
Laborious for her people and her poor—  
Voice in the rich dawn of an ampler day—  
Far-sighted summoner of War and Waste  
To fruitful strifes and rivalries of peace—  
Sweet nature gilded by the gracious gleam  
Of letters, dear to Science, dear to Art,  
Dear to thy land and ours, a Prince indeed,  
Beyond all titles, and a household name,  
Hereafter, through all times, Albert the Good.

Break not, O woman's-heart, but still endure;  
Break not, for thou art Royal, but endure,  
Remembering all the beauty of that star  
Which shone so close beside Thee that ye made  
One light together, but has past and leaves  
The Crown a lonely splendour.

May all love,  
His love, unseen but felt, o'ershadow Thee,  
The love of all Thy sons encompass Thee,  
The love of all Thy daughters cherish Thee,  
The love of all Thy people comfort Thee,  
Till God's love set Thee at his side again!

## The Coming of Arthur

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Leodogran, the King of Cameliard,  
Had one fair daughter, and none other child;  
And she was the fairest of all flesh on earth,  
Guinevere, and in her his one delight.

For many a petty king ere Arthur came  
Ruled in this isle, and ever waging war  
Each upon other, wasted all the land;  
And still from time to time the heathen host  
Swarmed overseas, and harried what was left.  
And so there grew great tracts of wilderness,  
Wherein the beast was ever more and more,  
But man was less and less, till Arthur came.  
For first Aurelius lived and fought and died,  
And after him King Uther fought and died,  
But either failed to make the kingdom one.  
And after these King Arthur for a space,  
And through the puissance of his Table Round,  
Drew all their petty principdoms under him.  
Their king and head, and made a realm, and reigned.

And thus the land of Cameliard was waste,  
Thick with wet woods, and many a beast therein,  
And none or few to scare or chase the beast;  
So that wild dog, and wolf and boar and bear  
Came night and day, and rooted in the fields,  
And wallowed in the gardens of the King.  
And ever and anon the wolf would steal  
The children and devour, but now and then,  
Her own brood lost or dead, lent her fierce teat  
To human sucklings; and the children, housed  
In her foul den, there at their meat would growl,  
And mock their foster mother on four feet,

Till, straightened, they grew up to wolf-like men,  
Worse than the wolves. And King Leodogran  
Groaned for the Roman legions here again,  
And Caesar's eagle: then his brother king,  
Urien, assailed him: last a heathen horde,  
Reddening the sun with smoke and earth with blood,  
And on the spike that split the mother's heart  
Spitting the child, brake on him, till, amazed,  
He knew not whither he should turn for aid.

But—for he heard of Arthur newly crowned,  
Though not without an uproar made by those  
Who cried, 'He is not Uther's son'—the King  
Sent to him, saying, 'Arise, and help us thou!  
For here between the man and beast we die.'

And Arthur yet had done no deed of arms,  
But heard the call, and came: and Guinevere  
Stood by the castle walls to watch him pass;  
But since he neither wore on helm or shield  
The golden symbol of his kinglihood,  
But rode a simple knight among his knights,  
And many of these in richer arms than he,  
She saw him not, or marked not, if she saw,  
One among many, though his face was bare.  
But Arthur, looking downward as he past,  
Felt the light of her eyes into his life  
Smite on the sudden, yet rode on, and pitched  
His tents beside the forest. Then he drave  
The heathen; after, slew the beast, and felled  
The forest, letting in the sun, and made  
Broad pathways for the hunter and the knight  
And so returned.

For while he lingered there,  
A doubt that ever smouldered in the hearts  
Of those great Lords and Barons of his realm  
Flashed forth and into war: for most of these,  
Colleaguings with a score of petty kings,  
Made head against him, crying, 'Who is he  
That he should rule us? who hath proven him  
King Uther's son? for lo! we look at him,



And find nor face nor bearing, limbs nor voice,  
Are like to those of Uther whom we knew.  
This is the son of Gorlois, not the King;  
This is the son of Anton, not the King.'

And Arthur, passing thence to battle, felt  
Travail, and throes and agonies of the life,  
Desiring to be joined with Guinevere;  
And thinking as he rode, 'Her father said  
That there between the man and beast they die.  
Shall I not lift her from this land of beasts  
Up to my throne, and side by side with me?  
What happiness to reign a lonely king,  
Vext—O ye stars that shudder over me,  
O earth that soundest hollow under me,  
Vext with waste dreams? for saving I be joined  
To her that is the fairest under heaven,  
I seem as nothing in the mighty world,  
And cannot will my will, nor work my work  
Wholly, nor make myself in mine own realm  
Victor and lord. But were I joined with her,  
Then might we live together as one life,  
And reigning with one will in everything  
Have power on this dark land to lighten it,  
And power on this dead world to make it live.'

Thereafter—as he speaks who tells the tale—  
When Arthur reached a field-of-battle bright  
With pitched pavilions of his foe, the world  
Was all so clear about him, that he saw  
The smallest rock far on the faintest hill,  
And even in high day the morning star.  
So when the King had set his banner broad,  
At once from either side, with trumpet-blast,  
And shouts, and clarions shrilling unto blood,  
The long-lanced battle let their horses run.  
And now the Barons and the kings prevailed,  
And now the King, as here and there that war  
Went swaying; but the Powers who walk the world  
Made lightnings and great thunders over him,  
And dazed all eyes, till Arthur by main might,

And mightier of his hands with every blow,  
And leading all his knighthood threw the kings  
Carados, Urien, Cradlemon of Wales,  
Claudias, and Clariance of Northumberland,  
The King Brandagoras of Latangor,  
With Anguisant of Erin, Morganore,  
And Lot of Orkney. Then, before a voice  
As dreadful as the shout of one who sees  
To one who sins, and deems himself alone  
And all the world asleep, they swerved and brake  
Flying, and Arthur called to stay the brands  
That hacked among the flyers, 'Ho! they yield!'  
So like a painted battle the war stood  
Silenced, the living quiet as the dead,  
And in the heart of Arthur joy was lord.  
He laughed upon his warrior whom he loved  
And honoured most. 'Thou dost not doubt me King,  
So well thine arm hath wrought for me today.'  
'Sir and my liege,' he cried, 'the fire of God  
Descends upon thee in the battle-field:  
I know thee for my King!' Whereat the two,  
For each had warded either in the fight,  
Swore on the field of death a deathless love.  
And Arthur said, 'Man's word is God in man:  
Let chance what will, I trust thee to the death.'

Then quickly from the foughten field he sent  
Ulfius, and Brastias, and Bedivere,  
His new-made knights, to King Leodogran,  
Saying, 'If I in aught have served thee well,  
Give me thy daughter Guinevere to wife.'

Whom when he heard, Leodogran in heart  
Debating—'How should I that am a king,  
However much he help me at my need,  
Give my one daughter saving to a king,  
And a king's son?'—lifted his voice, and called  
A hoary man, his chamberlain, to whom  
He trusted all things, and of him required  
His counsel: 'Knowest thou aught of Arthur's birth?'

Then spake the hoary chamberlain and said,

'Sir King, there be but two old men that know:  
And each is twice as old as I; and one  
Is Merlin, the wise man that ever served  
King Uther through his magic art; and one  
Is Merlin's master (so they call him) Bleys,  
Who taught him magic, but the scholar ran  
Before the master, and so far, that Bleys,  
Laid magic by, and sat him down, and wrote  
All things and whatsoever Merlin did  
In one great annal-book, where after-years  
Will learn the secret of our Arthur's birth.'

To whom the King Leodogran replied,  
'O friend, had I been holpen half as well  
By this King Arthur as by thee today,  
Then beast and man had had their share of me:  
But summon here before us yet once more  
Ulfius, and Brastias, and Bedivere.'

Then, when they came before him, the King said,  
'I have seen the cuckoo chased by lesser fowl,  
And reason in the chase:but wherefore now  
Do these your lords stir up the heat of war,  
Some calling Arthur born of Gorlois,  
Others of Anton?Tell me, ye yourselves,  
Hold ye this Arthur for King Uther's son?'

And Ulfius and Brastias answered, 'Ay.'  
Then Bedivere, the first of all his knights  
Knighted by Arthur at his crowning, spake—  
For bold in heart and act and word was he,  
Whenever slander breathed against the King—

'Sir, there be many rumours on this head:  
For there be those who hate him in their hearts,  
Call him baseborn, and since his ways are sweet,  
And theirs are bestial, hold him less than man:  
And there be those who deem him more than man,  
And dream he dropt from heaven:but my belief  
In all this matter—so ye care to learn—  
Sir, for ye know that in King Uther's time  
The prince and warrior Gorlois, he that held  
Tintagil castle by the Cornish sea,

Was wedded with a winsome wife, Ygerne:  
And daughters had she borne him,—one whereof,  
Lot's wife, the Queen of Orkney, Bellicent,  
Hath ever like a loyal sister cleaved  
To Arthur,—but a son she had not borne.  
And Uther cast upon her eyes of love:  
But she, a stainless wife to Gorlois,  
So loathed the bright dishonour of his love,  
That Gorlois and King Uther went to war:  
And overthrown was Gorlois and slain.  
Then Uther in his wrath and heat besieged  
Ygerne within Tintagil, where her men,  
Seeing the mighty swarm about their walls,  
Left her and fled, and Uther entered in,  
And there was none to call to but himself.  
So, compassed by the power of the King,  
Enforced was she to wed him in her tears,  
And with a shameful swiftness: afterward,  
Not many moons, King Uther died himself,  
Moaning and wailing for an heir to rule  
After him, lest the realm should go to wrack.  
And that same night, the night of the new year,  
By reason of the bitterness and grief  
That vext his mother, all before his time  
Was Arthur born, and all as soon as born  
Delivered at a secret postern-gate  
To Merlin, to be holden far apart  
Until his hour should come; because the lords  
Of that fierce day were as the lords of this,  
Wild beasts, and surely would have torn the child  
Piecemeal among them, had they known; for each  
But sought to rule for his own self and hand,  
And many hated Uther for the sake  
Of Gorlois. Wherefore Merlin took the child,  
And gave him to Sir Anton, an old knight  
And ancient friend of Uther; and his wife  
Nursed the young prince, and reared him with her own;  
And no man knew. And ever since the lords  
Have foughten like wild beasts among themselves,

So that the realm has gone to wrack:but now,  
This year, when Merlin (for his hour had come)  
Brought Arthur forth, and set him in the hall,  
Proclaiming, "Here is Uther's heir, your king,"  
A hundred voices cried, "Away with him!  
No king of ours! a son of Gorlois he,  
Or else the child of Anton, and no king,  
Or else baseborn."Yet Merlin through his craft,  
And while the people clamoured for a king,  
Had Arthur crowned; but after, the great lords  
Banded, and so brake out in open war.'

Then while the King debated with himself  
If Arthur were the child of shamefulness,  
Or born the son of Gorlois, after death,  
Or Uther's son, and born before his time,  
Or whether there were truth in anything  
Said by these three, there came to Cameliard,  
With Gawain and young Modred, her two sons,  
Lot's wife, the Queen of Orkney, Bellicent;  
Whom as he could, not as he would, the King  
Made feast for, saying, as they sat at meat,

'A doubtful throne is ice on summer seas.  
Ye come from Arthur's court. Victor his men  
Report him! Yea, but ye—think ye this king—  
So many those that hate him, and so strong,  
So few his knights, however brave they be—  
Hath body enow to hold his foemen down?'

'O King,' she cried, 'and I will tell thee:few,  
Few, but all brave, all of one mind with him;  
For I was near him when the savage yells  
Of Uther's peerage died, and Arthur sat  
Crowned on the dais, and his warriors cried,  
"Be thou the king, and we will work thy will  
Who love thee."Then the King in low deep tones,  
And simple words of great authority,  
Bound them by so strait vows to his own self,  
That when they rose, knighted from kneeling, some  
Were pale as at the passing of a ghost,  
Some flushed, and others dazed, as one who wakes

Half-blinded at the coming of a light.

'But when he spake and cheered his Table Round  
With large, divine, and comfortable words,  
Beyond my tongue to tell thee—I beheld  
From eye to eye through all their Order flash  
A momentary likeness of the King:  
And ere it left their faces, through the cross  
And those around it and the Crucified,  
Down from the casement over Arthur, smote  
Flame-colour, vert and azure, in three rays,  
One falling upon each of three fair queens,  
Who stood in silence near his throne, the friends  
Of Arthur, gazing on him, tall, with bright  
Sweet faces, who will help him at his need.

'And there I saw mage Merlin, whose vast wit  
And hundred winters are but as the hands  
Of loyal vassals toiling for their liege.

'And near him stood the Lady of the Lake,  
Who knows a subtler magic than his own—  
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful.  
She gave the King his huge cross-hilted sword,  
Whereby to drive the heathen out: a mist  
Of incense curled about her, and her face  
Wellnigh was hidden in the minster gloom;  
But there was heard among the holy hymns  
A voice as of the waters, for she dwells  
Down in a deep; calm, whatsoever storms  
May shake the world, and when the surface rolls,  
Hath power to walk the waters like our Lord.

'There likewise I beheld Excalibur  
Before him at his crowning borne, the sword  
That rose from out the bosom of the lake,  
And Arthur rowed across and took it—rich  
With jewels, elfin Urim, on the hilt,  
Bewildering heart and eye—the blade so bright  
That men are blinded by it—on one side,  
Graven in the oldest tongue of all this world,  
"Take me," but turn the blade and ye shall see,  
And written in the speech ye speak yourself,

"Cast me away!" And sad was Arthur's face  
Taking it, but old Merlin counselled him,  
"Take thou and strike! the time to cast away  
Is yet far-off." So this great brand the king  
Took, and by this will beat his foemen down.'

Thereat Leodogran rejoiced, but thought  
To sift his doubts to the last, and asked,  
Fixing full eyes of question on her face,  
'The swallow and the swift are near akin,  
But thou art closer to this noble prince,  
Being his own dear sister;' and she said,  
'Daughter of Gorlois and Ygerne am I;  
'And therefore Arthur's sister?' asked the King.  
She answered, 'These be secret things,' and signed  
To those two sons to pass, and let them be.  
And Gawain went, and breaking into song  
Sprang out, and followed by his flying hair  
Ran like a colt, and leapt at all he saw:  
But Modred laid his ear beside the doors,  
And there half-heard; the same that afterward  
Struck for the throne, and striking found his doom.

And then the Queen made answer, 'What know I?  
For dark my mother was in eyes and hair,  
And dark in hair and eyes am I; and dark  
Was Gorlois, yea and dark was Uther too,  
Wellnigh to blackness; but this King is fair  
Beyond the race of Britons and of men.  
Moreover, always in my mind I hear  
A cry from out the dawning of my life,  
A mother weeping, and I hear her say,  
"O that ye had some brother, pretty one,  
To guard thee on the rough ways of the world."'

'Ay,' said the King, 'and hear ye such a cry?  
But when did Arthur chance upon thee first?'

'O King!' she cried, 'and I will tell thee true:  
He found me first when yet a little maid:  
Beaten I had been for a little fault  
Whereof I was not guilty; and out I ran  
And flung myself down on a bank of heath,

And hated this fair world and all therein,  
And wept, and wished that I were dead; and he—  
I know not whether of himself he came,  
Or brought by Merlin, who, they say, can walk  
Unseen at pleasure—he was at my side,  
And spake sweet words, and comforted my heart,  
And dried my tears, being a child with me.  
And many a time he came, and evermore  
As I grew greater grew with me; and sad  
At times he seemed, and sad with him was I,  
Stern too at times, and then I loved him not,  
But sweet again, and then I loved him well.  
And now of late I see him less and less,  
But those first days had golden hours for me,  
For then I surely thought he would be king.

'But let me tell thee now another tale:  
For Bleys, our Merlin's master, as they say,  
Died but of late, and sent his cry to me,  
To hear him speak before he left his life.  
Shrunk like a fairy changeling lay the mage;  
And when I entered told me that himself  
And Merlin ever served about the King,  
Uther, before he died; and on the night  
When Uther in Tintagil past away  
Moaning and wailing for an heir, the two  
Left the still King, and passing forth to breathe,  
Then from the castle gateway by the chasm  
Descending through the dismal night—a night  
In which the bounds of heaven and earth were lost—  
Beheld, so high upon the dreary deeps  
It seemed in heaven, a ship, the shape thereof  
A dragon winged, and all from stern to stern  
Bright with a shining people on the decks,  
And gone as soon as seen. And then the two  
Dropt to the cove, and watched the great sea fall,  
Wave after wave, each mightier than the last,  
Till last, a ninth one, gathering half the deep  
And full of voices, slowly rose and plunged  
Roaring, and all the wave was in a flame:



And down the wave and in the flame was borne  
A naked babe, and rode to Merlin's feet,  
Who stooped and caught the babe, and cried "The King!  
Here is an heir for Uther!" And the fringe  
Of that great breaker, sweeping up the strand,  
Lashed at the wizard as he spake the word,  
And all at once all round him rose in fire,  
So that the child and he were clothed in fire.  
And presently thereafter followed calm,  
Free sky and stars: "And this the same child," he said,  
"Is he who reigns; nor could I part in peace  
Till this were told." And saying this the seer  
Went through the strait and dreadful pass of death,  
Not ever to be questioned any more  
Save on the further side; but when I met  
Merlin, and asked him if these things were truth—  
The shining dragon and the naked child  
Descending in the glory of the seas—  
He laughed as is his wont, and answered me  
In riddling triplets of old time, and said:

"Rain, rain, and sun! a rainbow in the sky!  
A young man will be wiser by and by;  
An old man's wit may wander ere he die.  
Rain, rain, and sun! a rainbow on the lea!  
And truth is this to me, and that to thee;  
And truth or clothed or naked let it be.  
Rain, sun, and rain! and the free blossom blows:  
Sun, rain, and sun! and where is he who knows?  
From the great deep to the great deep he goes."

'So Merlin riddling angered me; but thou  
Fear not to give this King thy only child,  
Guinevere: so great bards of him will sing  
Hereafter; and dark sayings from of old  
Ranging and ringing through the minds of men,  
And echoed by old folk beside their fires  
For comfort after their wage-work is done,  
Speak of the King; and Merlin in our time  
Hath spoken also, not in jest, and sworn  
Though men may wound him that he will not die,

But pass, again to come; and then or now  
Utterly smite the heathen underfoot,  
Till these and all men hail him for their king.'

She spake and King Leodogran rejoiced,  
But musing, 'Shall I answer yea or nay?'  
Doubted, and drowsed, nodded and slept, and saw,  
Dreaming, a slope of land that ever grew,  
Field after field, up to a height, the peak  
Haze-hidden, and thereon a phantom king,  
Now looming, and now lost; and on the slope  
The sword rose, the hind fell, the herd was driven,  
Fire glimpsed; and all the land from roof and rick,  
In drifts of smoke before a rolling wind,  
Streamed to the peak, and mingled with the haze  
And made it thicker; while the phantom king  
Sent out at times a voice; and here or there  
Stood one who pointed toward the voice, the rest  
Slew on and burnt, crying, 'No king of ours,  
No son of Uther, and no king of ours;'  
Till with a wink his dream was changed, the haze  
Descended, and the solid earth became  
As nothing, but the King stood out in heaven,  
Crowned. And Leodogran awoke, and sent  
Ulfius, and Brastias and Bedivere,  
Back to the court of Arthur answering yea.

Then Arthur charged his warrior whom he loved  
And honoured most, Sir Lancelot, to ride forth  
And bring the Queen;—and watched him from the gates:  
And Lancelot past away among the flowers,  
(For then was latter April) and returned  
Among the flowers, in May, with Guinevere.  
To whom arrived, by Dubric the high saint,  
Chief of the church in Britain, and before  
The stateliest of her altar-shrines, the King  
That morn was married, while in stainless white,  
The fair beginners of a nobler time,  
And glorying in their vows and him, his knights  
Stood around him, and rejoicing in his joy.  
Far shone the fields of May through open door,

The sacred altar blossomed white with May,  
The Sun of May descended on their King,  
They gazed on all earth's beauty in their Queen,  
Rolled incense, and there past along the hymns  
A voice as of the waters, while the two  
Swore at the shrine of Christ a deathless love:  
And Arthur said, 'Behold, thy doom is mine.  
Let chance what will, I love thee to the death!'  
To whom the Queen replied with drooping eyes,  
'King and my lord, I love thee to the death!'  
And holy Dubric spread his hands and spake,  
'Reign ye, and live and love, and make the world  
Other, and may thy Queen be one with thee,  
And all this Order of thy Table Round  
Fulfil the boundless purpose of their King!'

So Dubric said; but when they left the shrine  
Great Lords from Rome before the portal stood,  
In scornful stillness gazing as they past;  
Then while they paced a city all on fire  
With sun and cloth of gold, the trumpets blew,  
And Arthur's knighthood sang before the King:—

'Blow, trumpet, for the world is white with May;  
Blow trumpet, the long night hath rolled away!  
Blow through the living world—"Let the King reign."

'Shall Rome or Heathen rule in Arthur's realm?  
Flash brand and lance, fall battleaxe upon helm,  
Fall battleaxe, and flash brand! Let the King reign.

'Strike for the King and live! his knights have heard  
That God hath told the King a secret word.  
Fall battleaxe, and flash brand! Let the King reign.

'Blow trumpet! he will lift us from the dust.  
Blow trumpet! live the strength and die the lust!  
Clang battleaxe, and clash brand! Let the King reign.

'Strike for the King and die! and if thou diest,  
The King is King, and ever wills the highest.  
Clang battleaxe, and clash brand! Let the King reign.

'Blow, for our Sun is mighty in his May!  
Blow, for our Sun is mightier day by day!  
Clang battleaxe, and clash brand! Let the King reign.

'The King will follow Christ, and we the King  
In whom high God hath breathed a secret thing.  
Fall battleaxe, and flash brand! Let the King reign.'

So sang the knighthood, moving to their hall.  
There at the banquet those great Lords from Rome,  
The slowly-fading mistress of the world,  
Strode in, and claimed their tribute as of yore.  
But Arthur spake, 'Behold, for these have sworn  
To wage my wars, and worship me their King;  
The old order changeth, yielding place to new;  
And we that fight for our fair father Christ,  
Seeing that ye be grown too weak and old  
To drive the heathen from your Roman wall,  
No tribute will we pay:' so those great lords  
Drew back in wrath, and Arthur strove with Rome.

And Arthur and his knighthood for a space  
Were all one will, and through that strength the King  
Drew in the petty principedoms under him,  
Fought, and in twelve great battles overcame  
The heathen hordes, and made a realm and reigned.

## Gareth and Lynette

---

The last tall son of Lot and Bellicent,  
And tallest, Gareth, in a showerful spring  
Stared at the spate. A slender-shafted Pine  
Lost footing, fell, and so was whirled away.  
'How he went down,' said Gareth, 'as a false knight  
Or evil king before my lance if lance  
Were mine to use—O senseless cataract,  
Bearing all down in thy precipitancy—  
And yet thou art but swollen with cold snows  
And mine is living blood: thou dost His will,  
The Maker's, and not knowest, and I that know,  
Have strength and wit, in my good mother's hall  
Linger with vacillating obedience,  
Prisoned, and kept and coaxed and whistled to—  
Since the good mother holds me still a child!  
Good mother is bad mother unto me!  
A worse were better; yet no worse would I.  
Heaven yield her for it, but in me put force  
To weary her ears with one continuous prayer,  
Until she let me fly discaged to sweep  
In ever-highering eagle-circles up  
To the great Sun of Glory, and thence swoop  
Down upon all things base, and dash them dead,  
A knight of Arthur, working out his will,  
To cleanse the world. Why, Gawain, when he came  
With Modred hither in the summertime,  
Asked me to tilt with him, the proven knight.  
Modred for want of worthier was the judge.  
Then I so shook him in the saddle, he said,  
"Thou hast half prevailed against me," said so—he—  
Though Modred biting his thin lips was mute,

For he is alway sullen:what care I?'

And Gareth went, and hovering round her chair  
Asked, 'Mother, though ye count me still the child,  
Sweet mother, do ye love the child?'She laughed,  
'Thou art but a wild-goose to question it.'  
'Then, mother, an ye love the child,' he said,  
'Being a goose and rather tame than wild,  
Hear the child's story."Yea, my well-beloved,  
An 'twere but of the goose and golden eggs.'

And Gareth answered her with kindling eyes,  
'Nay, nay, good mother, but this egg of mine  
Was finer gold than any goose can lay;  
For this an Eagle, a royal Eagle, laid  
Almost beyond eye-reach, on such a palm  
As glitters gilded in thy Book of Hours.  
And there was ever haunting round the palm  
A lusty youth, but poor, who often saw  
The splendour sparkling from aloft, and thought  
"An I could climb and lay my hand upon it,  
Then were I wealthier than a leash of kings."  
But ever when he reached a hand to climb,  
One, that had loved him from his childhood, caught  
And stayed him, "Climb not lest thou break thy neck,  
I charge thee by my love," and so the boy,  
Sweet mother, neither clomb, nor brake his neck,  
But brake his very heart in pining for it,  
And past away.'

To whom the mother said,  
'True love, sweet son, had risked himself and climbed,  
And handed down the golden treasure to him.'

And Gareth answered her with kindling eyes,  
'Gold?' said I gold?—ay then, why he, or she,  
Or whosoe'er it was, or half the world  
Had ventured—had the thing I spake of been  
Mere gold—but this was all of that true steel,  
Whereof they forged the brand Excalibur,  
And lightnings played about it in the storm,  
And all the little fowl were flurried at it,  
And there were cries and clashings in the nest,

That sent him from his senses:let me go.'

Then Bellicent bemoaned herself and said,  
'Hast thou no pity upon my loneliness?  
Lo, where thy father Lot beside the hearth  
Lies like a log, and all but smouldered out!  
For ever since when traitor to the King  
He fought against him in the Barons' war,  
And Arthur gave him back his territory,  
His age hath slowly droopt, and now lies there  
A yet-warm corpse, and yet unburiable,  
No more; nor sees, nor hears, nor speaks, nor knows.  
And both thy brethren are in Arthur's hall,  
Albeit neither loved with that full love  
I feel for thee, nor worthy such a love:  
Stay therefore thou; red berries charm the bird,  
And thee, mine innocent, the jousts, the wars,  
Who never knewest finger-ache, nor pang  
Of wrenched or broken limb—an often chance  
In those brain-stunning shocks, and tourney-falls,  
Frights to my heart; but stay:follow the deer  
By these tall firs and our fast-falling burns;  
So make thy manhood mightier day by day;  
Sweet is the chase:and I will seek thee out  
Some comfortable bride and fair, to grace  
Thy climbing life, and cherish my prone year,  
Till falling into Lot's forgetfulness  
I know not thee, myself, nor anything.  
Stay, my best son! ye are yet more boy than man.'

Then Gareth, 'An ye hold me yet for child,  
Hear yet once more the story of the child.  
For, mother, there was once a King, like ours.  
The prince his heir, when tall and marriageable,  
Asked for a bride; and thereupon the King  
Set two before him.One was fair, strong, armed—  
But to be won by force—and many men  
Desired her; one good lack, no man desired.  
And these were the conditions of the King:  
That save he won the first by force, he needs  
Must wed that other, whom no man desired,

A red-faced bride who knew herself so vile,  
That evermore she longed to hide herself,  
Nor fronted man or woman, eye to eye—  
Yea—some she cleaved to, but they died of her.  
And one—they called her Fame; and one,—O Mother,  
How can ye keep me tethered to you—Shame.  
Man am I grown, a man's work must I do.  
Follow the deer? follow the Christ, the King,  
Live pure, speak true, right wrong, follow the King—  
Else, wherefore born?'

To whom the mother said

'Sweet son, for there be many who deem him not,  
Or will not deem him, wholly proven King—  
Albeit in mine own heart I knew him King,  
When I was frequent with him in my youth,  
And heard him Kingly speak, and doubted him  
No more than he, himself; but felt him mine,  
Of closest kin to me:yet—wilt thou leave  
Thine easeful bidding here, and risk thine all,  
Life, limbs, for one that is not proven King?  
Stay, till the cloud that settles round his birth  
Hath lifted but a little.Stay, sweet son.'

And Gareth answered quickly, 'Not an hour,  
So that ye yield me—I will walk through fire,  
Mother, to gain it—your full leave to go.  
Not proven, who swept the dust of ruined Rome  
From off the threshold of the realm, and crushed  
The Idolaters, and made the people free?  
Who should be King save him who makes us free?'

So when the Queen, who long had sought in vain  
To break him from the intent to which he grew,  
Found her son's will unwaveringly one,  
She answered craftily, 'Will ye walk through fire?  
Who walks through fire will hardly heed the smoke.  
Ay, go then, an ye must:only one proof,  
Before thou ask the King to make thee knight,  
Of thine obedience and thy love to me,  
Thy mother,—I demand.

And Gareth cried,



'A hard one, or a hundred, so I go.

Nay—quick! the proof to prove me to the quick!

But slowly spake the mother looking at him,  
'Prince, thou shalt go disguised to Arthur's hall,  
And hire thyself to serve for meats and drinks  
Among the scullions and the kitchen-knaves,  
And those that hand the dish across the bar.  
Nor shalt thou tell thy name to anyone.  
And thou shalt serve a twelvemonth and a day.'

For so the Queen believed that when her son  
Beheld his only way to glory lead  
Low down through villain kitchen-vassalage,  
Her own true Gareth was too princely-proud  
To pass thereby; so should he rest with her,  
Closed in her castle from the sound of arms.

Silent awhile was Gareth, then replied,  
'The thrall in person may be free in soul,  
And I shall see the jousts. Thy son am I,  
And since thou art my mother, must obey.  
I therefore yield me freely to thy will;  
For hence will I, disguised, and hire myself  
To serve with scullions and with kitchen-knaves;  
Nor tell my name to any—no, not the King.'

Gareth awhile lingered. The mother's eye  
Full of the wistful fear that he would go,  
And turning toward him wheresoe'er he turned,  
Perplext his outward purpose, till an hour,  
When wakened by the wind which with full voice  
Swept bellowing through the darkness on to dawn,  
He rose, and out of slumber calling two  
That still had tended on him from his birth,  
Before the wakeful mother heard him, went.

The three were clad like tillers of the soil.  
Southward they set their faces. The birds made  
Melody on branch, and melody in mid air.  
The damp hill-slopes were quickened into green,  
And the live green had kindled into flowers,  
For it was past the time of Easterday.

So, when their feet were planted on the plain

That broadened toward the base of Camelot,  
Far off they saw the silver-misty morn  
Rolling her smoke about the Royal mount,  
That rose between the forest and the field.  
At times the summit of the high city flashed;  
At times the spires and turrets half-way down  
Pricked through the mist; at times the great gate shone  
Only, that opened on the field below:  
Anon, the whole fair city had disappeared.

Then those who went with Gareth were amazed,  
One crying, 'Let us go no further, lord.  
Here is a city of Enchanters, built  
By fairy Kings.' The second echoed him,  
'Lord, we have heard from our wise man at home  
To Northward, that this King is not the King,  
But only changeling out of Fairyland,  
Who drave the heathen hence by sorcery  
And Merlin's glamour.' Then the first again,  
'Lord, there is no such city anywhere,  
But all a vision.'

Gareth answered them  
With laughter, swearing he had glamour enow  
In his own blood, his princedom, youth and hopes,  
To plunge old Merlin in the Arabian sea;  
So pushed them all unwilling toward the gate.  
And there was no gate like it under heaven.  
For barefoot on the keystone, which was lined  
And rippled like an ever-fleeting wave,  
The Lady of the Lake stood: all her dress  
Wept from her sides as water flowing away;  
But like the cross her great and goodly arms  
Stretched under the cornice and upheld:  
And drops of water fell from either hand;  
And down from one a sword was hung, from one  
A censer, either worn with wind and storm;  
And o'er her breast floated the sacred fish;  
And in the space to left of her, and right,  
Were Arthur's wars in weird devices done,  
New things and old co-twisted, as if Time

Were nothing, so inveterately, that men  
Were giddy gazing there; and over all  
High on the top were those three Queens, the friends  
Of Arthur, who should help him at his need.

Then those with Gareth for so long a space  
Stared at the figures, that at last it seemed  
The dragon-boughts and elvish emblemings  
Began to move, seethe, twine and curl:they called  
To Gareth, 'Lord, the gateway is alive.'

And Gareth likewise on them fixt his eyes  
So long, that even to him they seemed to move.  
Out of the city a blast of music pealed.  
Back from the gate started the three, to whom  
From out thereunder came an ancient man,  
Long-bearded, saying, 'Who be ye, my sons?'

Then Gareth, 'We be tillers of the soil,  
Who leaving share in furrow come to see  
The glories of our King;but these, my men,  
(Your city moved so weirdly in the mist)  
Doubt if the King be King at all, or come  
From Fairyland; and whether this be built  
By magic, and by fairy Kings and Queens;  
Or whether there be any city at all,  
Or all a vision:and this music now  
Hath scared them both, but tell thou these the truth.'

Then that old Seer made answer playing on him  
And saying, 'Son, I have seen the good ship sail  
Keel upward, and mast downward, in the heavens,  
And solid turrets topsy-turvy in air:  
And here is truth; but an it please thee not,  
Take thou the truth as thou hast told it me.  
For truly as thou sayest, a Fairy King  
And Fairy Queens have built the city, son;  
They came from out a sacred mountain-cleft  
Toward the sunrise, each with harp in hand,  
And built it to the music of their harps.  
And, as thou sayest, it is enchanted, son,  
For there is nothing in it as it seems  
Saving the King; though some there be that hold

The King a shadow, and the city real:  
Yet take thou heed of him, for, so thou pass  
Beneath this archway, then wilt thou become  
A thrall to his enchantments, for the King  
Will bind thee by such vows, as is a shame  
A man should not be bound by, yet the which  
No man can keep; but, so thou dread to swear,  
Pass not beneath this gateway, but abide  
Without, among the cattle of the field.  
For an ye heard a music, like enow  
They are building still, seeing the city is built  
To music, therefore never built at all,  
And therefore built for ever.'

Gareth spake

Angered, 'Old master, reverence thine own beard  
That looks as white as utter truth, and seems  
Wellnigh as long as thou art statured tall!  
Why mockest thou the stranger that hath been  
To thee fair-spoken?'

But the Seer replied,

'Know ye not then the Riddling of the Bards?  
"Confusion, and illusion, and relation,  
Elusion, and occasion, and evasion"?'  
I mock thee not but as thou mockest me,  
And all that see thee, for thou art not who  
Thou seemest, but I know thee who thou art.  
And now thou goest up to mock the King,  
Who cannot brook the shadow of any lie.'

Unmockingly the mocker ending here  
Turned to the right, and past along the plain;  
Whom Gareth looking after said, 'My men,  
Our one white lie sits like a little ghost  
Here on the threshold of our enterprise.  
Let love be blamed for it, not she, nor I:  
Well, we will make amends.'

With all good cheer

He spake and laughed, then entered with his twain  
Camelot, a city of shadowy palaces  
And stately, rich in emblem and the work

Of ancient kings who did their days in stone;  
Which Merlin's hand, the Mage at Arthur's court,  
Knowing all arts, had touched, and everywhere  
At Arthur's ordinance, tipt with lessening peak  
And pinnacle, and had made it spire to heaven.  
And ever and anon a knight would pass  
Outward, or inward to the hall:his arms  
Clashed; and the sound was good to Gareth's ear.  
And out of bower and casement shyly glanced  
Eyes of pure women, wholesome stars of love;  
And all about a healthful people stept  
As in the presence of a gracious king.

Then into hall Gareth ascending heard  
A voice, the voice of Arthur, and beheld  
Far over heads in that long-vaulted hall  
The splendour of the presence of the King  
Throned, and delivering doom—and looked no more—  
But felt his young heart hammering in his ears,  
And thought, 'For this half-shadow of a lie  
The truthful King will doom me when I speak.'  
Yet pressing on, though all in fear to find  
Sir Gawain or Sir Modred, saw nor one  
Nor other, but in all the listening eyes  
Of those tall knights, that ranged about the throne,  
Clear honour shining like the dewy star  
Of dawn, and faith in their great King, with pure  
Affection, and the light of victory,  
And glory gained, and evermore to gain.  
Then came a widow crying to the King,  
'A boon, Sir King!Thy father, Uther, reft  
From my dead lord a field with violence:  
For howsoe'er at first he proffered gold,  
Yet, for the field was pleasant in our eyes,  
We yielded not; and then he reft us of it  
Perforce, and left us neither gold nor field.'

Said Arthur, 'Whether would ye? gold or field?'  
To whom the woman weeping, 'Nay, my lord,  
The field was pleasant in my husband's eye.'

And Arthur, 'Have thy pleasant field again,

And thrice the gold for Uther's use thereof,  
According to the years.No boon is here,  
But justice, so thy say be proven true.  
Accursed, who from the wrongs his father did  
Would shape himself a right!

And while she past,  
Came yet another widow crying to him,  
'A boon, Sir King!Thine enemy, King, am I.  
With thine own hand thou slewest my dear lord,  
A knight of Uther in the Barons' war,  
When Lot and many another rose and fought  
Against thee, saying thou wert basely born.  
I held with these, and loathe to ask thee aught.  
Yet lo! my husband's brother had my son  
Thralled in his castle, and hath starved him dead;  
And standeth seized of that inheritance  
Which thou that slewest the sire hast left the son.  
So though I scarce can ask it thee for hate,  
Grant me some knight to do the battle for me,  
Kill the foul thief, and wreak me for my son.'

Then strode a good knight forward, crying to him,  
'A boon, Sir King!I am her kinsman, I.  
Give me to right her wrong, and slay the man.'

Then came Sir Kay, the seneschal, and cried,  
'A boon, Sir King! even that thou grant her none,  
This railer, that hath mocked thee in full hall—  
None; or the wholesome boon of gyve and gag.'

But Arthur, 'We sit King, to help the wronged  
Through all our realm.The woman loves her lord.  
Peace to thee, woman, with thy loves and hates!  
The kings of old had doomed thee to the flames,  
Aurelius Emrys would have scourged thee dead,  
And Uther slit thy tongue:but get thee hence—  
Lest that rough humour of the kings of old  
Return upon me!Thou that art her kin,  
Go likewise; lay him low and slay him not,  
But bring him here, that I may judge the right,  
According to the justice of the King:  
Then, be he guilty, by that deathless King

Who lived and died for men, the man shall die.'

Then came in hall the messenger of Mark,  
A name of evil savour in the land,  
The Cornish king. In either hand he bore  
What dazzled all, and shone far-off as shines  
A field of charlock in the sudden sun  
Between two showers, a cloth of palest gold,  
Which down he laid before the throne, and knelt,  
Delivering, that his lord, the vassal king,  
Was even upon his way to Camelot;  
For having heard that Arthur of his grace  
Had made his goodly cousin, Tristram, knight,  
And, for himself was of the greater state,  
Being a king, he trusted his liege-lord  
Would yield him this large honour all the more;  
So prayed him well to accept this cloth of gold,  
In token of true heart and fealty.

Then Arthur cried to rend the cloth, to rend  
In pieces, and so cast it on the hearth.  
An oak-tree smouldered there. 'The goodly knight!  
What! shall the shield of Mark stand among these?'  
For, midway down the side of that long hall  
A stately pile,—whereof along the front,  
Some blazoned, some but carven, and some blank,  
There ran a treble range of stony shields,—  
Rose, and high-arching overbrowed the hearth.  
And under every shield a knight was named:  
For this was Arthur's custom in his hall;  
When some good knight had done one noble deed,  
His arms were carven only; but if twain  
His arms were blazoned also; but if none,  
The shield was blank and bare without a sign  
Saving the name beneath; and Gareth saw  
The shield of Gawain blazoned rich and bright,  
And Modred's blank as death; and Arthur cried  
To rend the cloth and cast it on the hearth.

'More like are we to reave him of his crown  
Than make him knight because men call him king.  
The kings we found, ye know we stayed their hands

From war among themselves, but left them kings;  
Of whom were any bounteous, merciful,  
Truth-speaking, brave, good livers, them we enrolled  
Among us, and they sit within our hall.  
But as Mark hath tarnished the great name of king,  
As Mark would sully the low state of churl:  
And, seeing he hath sent us cloth of gold,  
Return, and meet, and hold him from our eyes,  
Lest we should lap him up in cloth of lead,  
Silenced for ever—craven—a man of plots,  
Craft, poisonous counsels, wayside ambushings—  
No fault of thine:let Kay the seneschal  
Look to thy wants, and send thee satisfied—  
Accursed, who strikes nor lets the hand be seen!'

And many another suppliant crying came  
With noise of ravage wrought by beast and man,  
And evermore a knight would ride away.

Last, Gareth leaning both hands heavily  
Down on the shoulders of the twain, his men,  
Approached between them toward the King, and asked,  
'A boon, Sir King (his voice was all ashamed),  
For see ye not how weak and hungerworn  
I seem—leaning on these? grant me to serve  
For meat and drink among thy kitchen-knaves  
A twelvemonth and a day, nor seek my name.  
Hereafter I will fight.'

To him the King,  
'A goodly youth and worth a goodlier boon!  
But so thou wilt no goodlier, then must Kay,  
The master of the meats and drinks, be thine.'

He rose and past; then Kay, a man of mien  
Wan-sallow as the plant that feels itself  
Root-bitten by white lichen,

'Lo ye now!  
This fellow hath broken from some Abbey, where,  
God wot, he had not beef and brewis enow,  
However that might chance! but an he work,  
Like any pigeon will I cram his crop,  
And sleeker shall he shine than any hog.'



Then Lancelot standing near, 'Sir Seneschal,  
Sleuth-hound thou knowest, and gray, and all the hounds;  
A horse thou knowest, a man thou dost not know:  
Broad brows and fair, a fluent hair and fine,  
High nose, a nostril large and fine, and hands  
Large, fair and fine!—Some young lad's mystery—  
But, or from sheepcot or king's hall, the boy  
Is noble-natured. Treat him with all grace,  
Lest he should come to shame thy judging of him.'

Then Kay, 'What murmurest thou of mystery?  
Think ye this fellow will poison the King's dish?  
Nay, for he spake too fool-like: mystery!  
Tut, an the lad were noble, he had asked  
For horse and armour: fair and fine, forsooth!  
Sir Fine-face, Sir Fair-hands? but see thou to it  
That thine own fineness, Lancelot, some fine day  
Undo thee not—and leave my man to me.'

So Gareth all for glory underwent  
The sooty yoke of kitchen-vassalage;  
Ate with young lads his portion by the door,  
And couched at night with grimy kitchen-knaves.  
And Lancelot ever spake him pleasantly,  
But Kay the seneschal, who loved him not,  
Would hustle and harry him, and labour him  
Beyond his comrade of the hearth, and set  
To turn the broach, draw water, or hew wood,  
Or grosser tasks; and Gareth bowed himself  
With all obedience to the King, and wrought  
All kind of service with a noble ease  
That graced the lowliest act in doing it.  
And when the thralls had talk among themselves,  
And one would praise the love that linkt the King  
And Lancelot—how the King had saved his life  
In battle twice, and Lancelot once the King's—  
For Lancelot was the first in Tournament,  
But Arthur mightiest on the battle-field—  
Gareth was glad. Or if some other told,  
How once the wandering forester at dawn,  
Far over the blue tarns and hazy seas,

On Caer-Eryri's highest found the King,  
A naked babe, of whom the Prophet spake,  
'He passes to the Isle Avilion,  
He passes and is healed and cannot die'—  
Gareth was glad. But if their talk were foul,  
Then would he whistle rapid as any lark,  
Or carol some old roundelay, and so loud  
That first they mocked, but, after, revered him.  
Or Gareth telling some prodigious tale  
Of knights, who sliced a red life-bubbling way  
Through twenty folds of twisted dragon, held  
All in a gap-mouthed circle his good mates  
Lying or sitting round him, idle hands,  
Charmed; till Sir Kay, the seneschal, would come  
Blustering upon them, like a sudden wind  
Among dead leaves, and drive them all apart.  
Or when the thralls had sport among themselves,  
So there were any trial of mastery,  
He, by two yards in casting bar or stone  
Was counted best; and if there chanced a joust,  
So that Sir Kay nodded him leave to go,  
Would hurry thither, and when he saw the knights  
Clash like the coming and retiring wave,  
And the spear spring, and good horse reel, the boy  
Was half beyond himself for ecstasy.

So for a month he wrought among the thralls;  
But in the weeks that followed, the good Queen,  
Repentant of the word she made him swear,  
And saddening in her childless castle, sent,  
Between the in-crescent and de-crescent moon,  
Arms for her son, and loosed him from his vow.

This, Gareth hearing from a squire of Lot  
With whom he used to play at tourney once,  
When both were children, and in lonely haunts  
Would scratch a ragged oval on the sand,  
And each at either dash from either end—  
Shame never made girl redder than Gareth joy.  
He laughed; he sprang. 'Out of the smoke, at once  
I leap from Satan's foot to Peter's knee—

These news be mine, none other's—nay, the King's—  
Descend into the city:' whereon he sought  
The King alone, and found, and told him all.

'I have staggered thy strong Gawain in a tilt  
For pastime; yea, he said it:joust can I.  
Make me thy knight—in secret! let my name  
Be hidden, and give me the first quest, I spring  
Like flame from ashes.'

Here the King's calm eye  
Fell on, and checked, and made him flush, and bow  
Lowly, to kiss his hand, who answered him,  
'Son, the good mother let me know thee here,  
And sent her wish that I would yield thee thine.  
Make thee my knight? my knights are sworn to vows  
Of utter hardihood, utter gentleness,  
And, loving, utter faithfulness in love,  
And uttermost obedience to the King.'

Then Gareth, lightly springing from his knees,  
'My King, for hardihood I can promise thee.  
For uttermost obedience make demand  
Of whom ye gave me to, the Seneschal,  
No mellow master of the meats and drinks!  
And as for love, God wot, I love not yet,  
But love I shall, God willing.'

And the King  
'Make thee my knight in secret? yea, but he,  
Our noblest brother, and our truest man,  
And one with me in all, he needs must know.'

'Let Lancelot know, my King, let Lancelot know,  
Thy noblest and thy truest!'

And the King—  
'But wherefore would ye men should wonder at you?  
Nay, rather for the sake of me, their King,  
And the deed's sake my knighthood do the deed,  
Than to be noised of.'

Merrily Gareth asked,  
'Have I not earned my cake in baking of it?  
Let be my name until I make my name!  
My deeds will speak:it is but for a day.'

So with a kindly hand on Gareth's arm  
Smiled the great King, and half-unwillingly  
Loving his lusty youthhood yielded to him.  
Then, after summoning Lancelot privily,  
'I have given him the first quest: he is not proven.  
Look therefore when he calls for this in hall,  
Thou get to horse and follow him far away.  
Cover the lions on thy shield, and see  
Far as thou mayest, he be nor ta'en nor slain.'

Then that same day there past into the hall  
A damsel of high lineage, and a brow  
May-blossom, and a cheek of apple-blossom,  
Hawk-eyes; and lightly was her slender nose  
Tip-tilted like the petal of a flower;  
She into hall past with her page and cried,

'O King, for thou hast driven the foe without,  
See to the foe within! bridge, ford, beset  
By bandits, everyone that owns a tower  
The Lord for half a league. Why sit ye there?  
Rest would I not, Sir King, an I were king,  
Till even the lonest hold were all as free  
From cursed bloodshed, as thine altar-cloth  
From that best blood it is a sin to spill.'

'Comfort thyself,' said Arthur. 'I nor mine  
Rest: so my knighthood keep the vows they swore,  
The wastest moorland of our realm shall be  
Safe, damsel, as the centre of this hall.  
What is thy name? thy need?'

'My name?' she said—  
'Lynette my name; noble; my need, a knight  
To combat for my sister, Lyonors,  
A lady of high lineage, of great lands,  
And comely, yea, and comelier than myself.  
She lives in Castle Perilous: a river  
Runs in three loops about her living-place;  
And o'er it are three passings, and three knights  
Defend the passings, brethren, and a fourth  
And of that four the mightiest, holds her stayed  
In her own castle, and so besieges her

To break her will, and make her wed with him:  
And but delays his purport till thou send  
To do the battle with him, thy chief man  
Sir Lancelot whom he trusts to overthrow,  
Then wed, with glory:but she will not wed  
Save whom she loveth, or a holy life.  
Now therefore have I come for Lancelot.'

Then Arthur mindful of Sir Gareth asked,  
'Damsel, ye know this Order lives to crush  
All wrongers of the Realm.But say, these four,  
Who be they?What the fashion of the men?'

'They be of foolish fashion, O Sir King,  
The fashion of that old knight-errantry  
Who ride abroad, and do but what they will;  
Courteous or bestial from the moment, such  
As have nor law nor king; and three of these  
Proud in their fantasy call themselves the Day,  
Morning-Star, and Noon-Sun, and Evening-Star,  
Being strong fools; and never a whit more wise  
The fourth, who alway rideth armed in black,  
A huge man-beast of boundless savagery.  
He names himself the Night and oftener Death,  
And wears a helmet mounted with a skull,  
And bears a skeleton figured on his arms,  
To show that who may slay or scape the three,  
Slain by himself, shall enter endless night.  
And all these four be fools, but mighty men,  
And therefore am I come for Lancelot.'

Hereat Sir Gareth called from where he rose,  
A head with kindling eyes above the throng,  
'A boon, Sir King—this quest!' then—for he marked  
Kay near him groaning like a wounded bull—  
'Yea, King, thou knowest thy kitchen-knave am I,  
And mighty through thy meats and drinks am I,  
And I can topple over a hundred such.  
Thy promise, King,' and Arthur glancing at him,  
Brought down a momentary brow.'Rough, sudden,  
And pardonable, worthy to be knight—  
Go therefore,' and all hearers were amazed.

But on the damsel's forehead shame, pride, wrath  
Slew the May-white: she lifted either arm,  
'Fie on thee, King! I asked for thy chief knight,  
And thou hast given me but a kitchen-knave.'  
Then ere a man in hall could stay her, turned,  
Fled down the lane of access to the King,  
Took horse, descended the slope street, and past  
The weird white gate, and paused without, beside  
The field of tourney, murmuring 'kitchen-knave.'

Now two great entries opened from the hall,  
At one end one, that gave upon a range  
Of level pavement where the King would pace  
At sunrise, gazing over plain and wood;  
And down from this a lordly stairway sloped  
Till lost in blowing trees and tops of towers;  
And out by this main doorway past the King.  
But one was counter to the hearth, and rose  
High that the highest-crested helm could ride  
Therethrough nor graze: and by this entry fled  
The damsel in her wrath, and on to this  
Sir Gareth strode, and saw without the door  
King Arthur's gift, the worth of half a town,  
A warhorse of the best, and near it stood  
The two that out of north had followed him:  
This bare a maiden shield, a casque; that held  
The horse, the spear; whereat Sir Gareth loosed  
A cloak that dropt from collar-bone to heel,  
A cloth of roughest web, and cast it down,  
And from it like a fuel-smothered fire,  
That lookt half-dead, brake bright, and flashed as those  
Dull-coated things, that making slide apart  
Their dusk wing-cases, all beneath there burns  
A jewelled harness, ere they pass and fly.  
So Gareth ere he parted flashed in arms.  
Then as he donned the helm, and took the shield  
And mounted horse and graspt a spear, of grain  
Storm-strengthened on a windy site, and tipt  
With trenchant steel, around him slowly prest  
The people, while from out of kitchen came

The thralls in throng, and seeing who had worked  
Lustier than any, and whom they could but love,  
Mounted in arms, threw up their caps and cried,  
'God bless the King, and all his fellowship!'  
And on through lanes of shouting Gareth rode  
Down the slope street, and past without the gate.

So Gareth past with joy; but as the cur  
Pluckt from the cur he fights with, ere his cause  
Be cooled by fighting, follows, being named,  
His owner, but remembers all, and growls  
Remembering, so Sir Kay beside the door  
Muttered in scorn of Gareth whom he used  
To harry and hustle.

'Bound upon a quest  
With horse and arms—the King hath past his time—  
My scullion knave! Thralls to your work again,  
For an your fire be low ye kindle mine!  
Will there be dawn in West and eve in East?  
Begone!—my knave!—belike and like enow  
Some old head-blow not heeded in his youth  
So shook his wits they wander in his prime—  
Crazed! How the villain lifted up his voice,  
Nor shamed to bawl himself a kitchen-knave.  
Tut: he was tame and meek enow with me,  
Till peacocked up with Lancelot's noticing.  
Well—I will after my loud knave, and learn  
Whether he know me for his master yet.  
Out of the smoke he came, and so my lance  
Hold, by God's grace, he shall into the mire—  
Thence, if the King awaken from his craze,  
Into the smoke again.'

But Lancelot said,  
'Kay, wherefore wilt thou go against the King,  
For that did never he whereon ye rail,  
But ever meekly served the King in thee?  
Abide: take counsel; for this lad is great  
And lusty, and knowing both of lance and sword.'  
'Tut, tell not me,' said Kay, 'ye are overfine  
To mar stout knaves with foolish courtesies:'

Then mounted, on through silent faces rode  
Down the slope city, and out beyond the gate.

But by the field of tourney lingering yet  
Muttered the damsel, 'Wherefore did the King  
Scorn me? for, were Sir Lancelot lackt, at least  
He might have yielded to me one of those  
Who tilt for lady's love and glory here,  
Rather than—O sweet heaven! O fie upon him—  
His kitchen-knave.'

To whom Sir Gareth drew  
(And there were none but few goodlier than he)  
Shining in arms, 'Damsel, the quest is mine.  
Lead, and I follow.' She thereat, as one  
That smells a foul-fleshed agaric in the holt,  
And deems it carrion of some woodland thing,  
Or shrew, or weasel, nipt her slender nose  
With petulant thumb and finger, shrilling, 'Hence!  
Avoid, thou smelllest all of kitchen-grease.  
And look who comes behind,' for there was Kay.  
'Knowest thou not me? thy master? I am Kay.  
We lack thee by the hearth.'

And Gareth to him,  
'Master no more! too well I know thee, ay—  
The most ungentle knight in Arthur's hall.'  
'Have at thee then,' said Kay: they shocked, and Kay  
Fell shoulder-slipt, and Gareth cried again,  
'Lead, and I follow,' and fast away she fled.

But after sod and shingle ceased to fly  
Behind her, and the heart of her good horse  
Was nigh to burst with violence of the beat,  
Perforce she stayed, and overtaken spoke.

'What doest thou, scullion, in my fellowship?  
Deem'st thou that I accept thee aught the more  
Or love thee better, that by some device  
Full cowardly, or by mere unhappiness,  
Thou hast overthrown and slain thy master—thou!—  
Dish-washer and broach-turner, loon!—to me  
Thou smelllest all of kitchen as before.'

'Damsel,' Sir Gareth answered gently, 'say



Whate'er ye will, but whatsoe'er ye say,  
I leave not till I finish this fair quest,  
Or die therefore.'

'Ay, wilt thou finish it?

Sweet lord, how like a noble knight he talks!  
The listening rogue hath caught the manner of it.  
But, knave, anon thou shalt be met with, knave,  
And then by such a one that thou for all  
The kitchen brewis that was ever supt  
Shalt not once dare to look him in the face.'

'I shall assay,' said Gareth with a smile  
That maddened her, and away she flashed again  
Down the long avenues of a boundless wood,  
And Gareth following was again beknaved.

'Sir Kitchen-knave, I have missed the only way  
Where Arthur's men are set along the wood;  
The wood is nigh as full of thieves as leaves:  
If both be slain, I am rid of thee; but yet,  
Sir Scullion, canst thou use that spit of thine?  
Fight, an thou canst: I have missed the only way.'

So till the dusk that followed evensong  
Rode on the two, reviler and reviled;  
Then after one long slope was mounted, saw,  
Bowl-shaped, through tops of many thousand pines  
A gloomy-gladed hollow slowly sink  
To westward—in the deeps whereof a mere,  
Round as the red eye of an Eagle-owl,  
Under the half-dead sunset glared; and shouts  
Ascended, and there brake a servingman  
Flying from out of the black wood, and crying,  
'They have bound my lord to cast him in the mere.'  
Then Gareth, 'Bound am I to right the wronged,  
But straitlier bound am I to bide with thee.'  
And when the damsel spake contemptuously,  
'Lead, and I follow,' Gareth cried again,  
'Follow, I lead!' so down among the pines  
He plunged; and there, blackshadowed nigh the mere,  
And mid-thigh-deep in bulrushes and reed,  
Saw six tall men haling a seventh along,

A stone about his neck to drown him in it.  
Three with good blows he quieted, but three  
Fled through the pines; and Gareth loosed the stone  
From off his neck, then in the mere beside  
Tumbled it; oilily bubbled up the mere.  
Last, Gareth loosed his bonds and on free feet  
Set him, a stalwart Baron, Arthur's friend.

'Well that ye came, or else these caitiff rogues  
Had wreaked themselves on me; good cause is theirs  
To hate me, for my wont hath ever been  
To catch my thief, and then like vermin here  
Drown him, and with a stone about his neck;  
And under this wan water many of them  
Lie rotting, but at night let go the stone,  
And rise, and flickering in a grimly light  
Dance on the mere. Good now, ye have saved a life  
Worth somewhat as the cleanser of this wood.  
And fain would I reward thee worshipfully.  
What guerdon will ye?'

Gareth sharply spake,  
'None! for the deed's sake have I done the deed,  
In uttermost obedience to the King.  
But wilt thou yield this damsel harbourage?'

Whereat the Baron saying, 'I well believe  
You be of Arthur's Table,' a light laugh  
Broke from Lynette, 'Ay, truly of a truth,  
And in a sort, being Arthur's kitchen-knave!—  
But deem not I accept thee aught the more,  
Scullion, for running sharply with thy spit  
Down on a rout of craven foresters.  
A thresher with his flail had scattered them.  
Nay—for thou smellest of the kitchen still.  
But an this lord will yield us harbourage,  
Well.'

So she spake. A league beyond the wood,  
All in a full-fair manor and a rich,  
His towers where that day a feast had been  
Held in high hall, and many a viand left,  
And many a costly cate, received the three.

And there they placed a peacock in his pride  
Before the damsel, and the Baron set  
Gareth beside her, but at once she rose.

'Meseems, that here is much discourtesy,  
Setting this knave, Lord Baron, at my side.  
Hear me—this morn I stood in Arthur's hall,  
And prayed the King would grant me Lancelot  
To fight the brotherhood of Day and Night—  
The last a monster unsubduable  
Of any save of him for whom I called—  
Suddenly bawls this frontless kitchen-knave,  
"The quest is mine; thy kitchen-knave am I,  
And mighty through thy meats and drinks am I."  
Then Arthur all at once gone mad replies,  
"Go therefore," and so gives the quest to him—  
Him—here—a villain fitter to stick swine  
Than ride abroad redressing women's wrong,  
Or sit beside a noble gentlewoman.'

Then half-ashamed and part-amazed, the lord  
Now looked at one and now at other, left  
The damsel by the peacock in his pride,  
And, seating Gareth at another board,  
Sat down beside him, ate and then began.

'Friend, whether thou be kitchen-knave, or not,  
Or whether it be the maiden's fantasy,  
And whether she be mad, or else the King,  
Or both or neither, or thyself be mad,  
I ask not:but thou strikest a strong stroke,  
For strong thou art and goodly therewithal,  
And saver of my life; and therefore now,  
For here be mighty men to joust with, weigh  
Whether thou wilt not with thy damsel back  
To crave again Sir Lancelot of the King.  
Thy pardon; I but speak for thine avail,  
The saver of my life.'

And Gareth said,  
'Full pardon, but I follow up the quest,  
Despite of Day and Night and Death and Hell.'

So when, next morn, the lord whose life he saved

Had, some brief space, conveyed them on their way  
And left them with God-speed, Sir Gareth spake,  
'Lead, and I follow.' Haughtily she replied.

'I fly no more: I allow thee for an hour.  
Lion and stout have isled together, knave,  
In time of flood. Nay, furthermore, methinks  
Some ruth is mine for thee. Back wilt thou, fool?  
For hard by here is one will overthrow  
And slay thee: then will I to court again,  
And shame the King for only yielding me  
My champion from the ashes of his hearth.'

To whom Sir Gareth answered courteously,  
'Say thou thy say, and I will do my deed.  
Allow me for mine hour, and thou wilt find  
My fortunes all as fair as hers who lay  
Among the ashes and wedded the King's son.'

Then to the shore of one of those long loops  
Wherethrough the serpent river coiled, they came.  
Rough-thicketed were the banks and steep; the stream  
Full, narrow; this a bridge of single arc  
Took at a leap; and on the further side  
Arose a silk pavilion, gay with gold  
In streaks and rays, and all Lent-lily in hue,  
Save that the dome was purple, and above,  
Crimson, a slender banneret fluttering.  
And therefore the lawless warrior paced  
Unarmed, and calling, 'Damsel, is this he,  
The champion thou hast brought from Arthur's hall?  
For whom we let thee pass.' 'Nay, nay,' she said,  
'Sir Morning-Star. The King in utter scorn  
Of thee and thy much folly hath sent thee here  
His kitchen-knave: and look thou to thyself:  
See that he fall not on thee suddenly,  
And slay thee unarmed: he is not knight but knave.'

Then at his call, 'O daughters of the Dawn,  
And servants of the Morning-Star, approach,  
Arm me,' from out the silken curtain-folds  
Barefooted and bare-headed three fair girls  
In gilt and rosy raiment came: their feet

In dewy grasses glistened; and the hair  
All over glanced with dewdrop or with gem  
Like sparkles in the stone Avanturine.  
These armed him in blue arms, and gave a shield  
Blue also, and thereon the morning star.  
And Gareth silent gazed upon the knight,  
Who stood a moment, ere his horse was brought,  
Glorying; and in the stream beneath him, shone  
Immingled with Heaven's azure waveringly,  
The gay pavilion and the naked feet,  
His arms, the rosy raiment, and the star.

Then she that watched him, 'Wherefore stare ye so?  
Thou shakest in thy fear:there yet is time:  
Flee down the valley before he get to horse.  
Who will cry shame?Thou art not knight but knave.'

Said Gareth, 'Damsel, whether knave or knight,  
Far liefer had I fight a score of times  
Than hear thee so missay me and revile.  
Fair words were best for him who fights for thee;  
But truly foul are better, for they send  
That strength of anger through mine arms, I know  
That I shall overthrow him.'

And he that bore  
The star, when mounted, cried from o'er the bridge,  
'A kitchen-knave, and sent in scorn of me!  
Such fight not I, but answer scorn with scorn.  
For this were shame to do him further wrong  
Than set him on his feet, and take his horse  
And arms, and so return him to the King.  
Come, therefore, leave thy lady lightly, knave.  
Avoid:for it beseemeth not a knave  
To ride with such a lady.'

'Dog, thou liest.  
I spring from loftier lineage than thine own.'  
He spake; and all at fiery speed the two  
Shocked on the central bridge, and either spear  
Bent but not brake, and either knight at once,  
Hurled as a stone from out of a catapult  
Beyond his horse's crupper and the bridge,

Fell, as if dead; but quickly rose and drew,  
And Gareth lashed so fiercely with his brand  
He drave his enemy backward down the bridge,  
The damsel crying, 'Well-stricken, kitchen-knave!'  
Till Gareth's shield was cloven; but one stroke  
Laid him that clove it grovelling on the ground.

Then cried the fallen, 'Take not my life: I yield.'  
And Gareth, 'So this damsel ask it of me  
Good—I accord it easily as a grace.'  
She reddening, 'Insolent scullion: I of thee?  
I bound to thee for any favour asked!'  
'Then he shall die.' And Gareth there unlaced  
His helmet as to slay him, but she shrieked,  
'Be not so hardy, scullion, as to slay  
One nobler than thyself.' 'Damsel, thy charge  
Is an abounding pleasure to me. Knight,  
Thy life is thine at her command. Arise  
And quickly pass to Arthur's hall, and say  
His kitchen-knave hath sent thee. See thou crave  
His pardon for thy breaking of his laws.  
Myself, when I return, will plead for thee.  
Thy shield is mine—farewell; and, damsel, thou,  
Lead, and I follow.'

And fast away she fled.

Then when he came upon her, spake, 'Methought,  
Knave, when I watched thee striking on the bridge  
The savour of thy kitchen came upon me  
A little faintlier: but the wind hath changed:  
I scent it twenty-fold.' And then she sang,  
"O morning star" (not that tall felon there  
Whom thou by sorcery or unhappiness  
Or some device, hast foully overthrown),  
"O morning star that smilest in the blue,  
O star, my morning dream hath proven true,  
Smile sweetly, thou! my love hath smiled on me."

'But thou begone, take counsel, and away,  
For hard by here is one that guards a ford—  
The second brother in their fool's parable—  
Will pay thee all thy wages, and to boot.

Care not for shame:thou art not knight but knave.'

To whom Sir Gareth answered, laughingly,  
'Parables?Hear a parable of the knave.

When I was kitchen-knave among the rest  
Fierce was the hearth, and one of my co-mates  
Owned a rough dog, to whom he cast his coat,  
"Guard it," and there was none to meddle with it.  
And such a coat art thou, and thee the King  
Gave me to guard, and such a dog am I,  
To worry, and not to flee—and—knight or knave—  
The knave that doth thee service as full knight  
Is all as good, meseems, as any knight  
Toward thy sister's freeing.'

'Ay, Sir Knave!

Ay, knave, because thou strikest as a knight,  
Being but knave, I hate thee all the more.'

'Fair damsel, you should worship me the more,  
That, being but knave, I throw thine enemies.'

'Ay, ay,' she said, 'but thou shalt meet thy match.'

So when they touched the second river-loop,  
Huge on a huge red horse, and all in mail  
Burnished to blinding, shone the Noonday Sun  
Beyond a raging shallow.As if the flower,  
That blows a globe of after arrowlets,  
Ten thousand-fold had grown, flashed the fierce shield,  
All sun; and Gareth's eyes had flying blots  
Before them when he turned from watching him.  
He from beyond the roaring shallow roared,  
'What doest thou, brother, in my marches here?'  
And she athwart the shallow shrilled again,  
'Here is a kitchen-knave from Arthur's hall  
Hath overthrown thy brother, and hath his arms.'  
'Ugh!' cried the Sun, and vizoring up a red  
And cipher face of rounded foolishness,  
Pushed horse across the foamings of the ford,  
Whom Gareth met midstream:no room was there  
For lance or tourney-skill:four strokes they struck  
With sword, and these were mighty; the new knight  
Had fear he might be shamed; but as the Sun

Heaved up a ponderous arm to strike the fifth,  
The hoof of his horse slipt in the stream, the stream  
Descended, and the Sun was washed away.

Then Gareth laid his lance athwart the ford;  
So drew him home; but he that fought no more,  
As being all bone-battered on the rock,  
Yielded; and Gareth sent him to the King,  
'Myself when I return will plead for thee.'  
'Lead, and I follow.' Quietly she led.  
'Hath not the good wind, damsel, changed again?'  
'Nay, not a point: nor art thou victor here.  
There lies a ridge of slate across the ford;  
His horse thereon stumbled—ay, for I saw it.

"O Sun" (not this strong fool whom thou, Sir Knave,  
Hast overthrown through mere unhappiness),  
"O Sun, that wakenest all to bliss or pain,  
O moon, that layest all to sleep again,  
Shine sweetly: twice my love hath smiled on me."

What knowest thou of lovesong or of love?  
Nay, nay, God wot, so thou wert nobly born,  
Thou hast a pleasant presence. Yea, perchance,—

"O dewy flowers that open to the sun,  
O dewy flowers that close when day is done,  
Blow sweetly: twice my love hath smiled on me."

'What knowest thou of flowers, except, belike,  
To garnish meats with? hath not our good King  
Who lent me thee, the flower of kitchendom,  
A foolish love for flowers? what stick ye round  
The pasty? wherewithal deck the boar's head?  
Flowers? nay, the boar hath rosemaries and bay.

"O birds, that warble to the morning sky,  
O birds that warble as the day goes by,  
Sing sweetly: twice my love hath smiled on me."

'What knowest thou of birds, lark, mavis, merle,  
Linnet? what dream ye when they utter forth  
May-music growing with the growing light,  
Their sweet sun-worship? these be for the snare  
(So runs thy fancy) these be for the spit,  
Larding and basting. See thou have not now



Larded thy last, except thou turn and fly.  
There stands the third fool of their allegory.'

For there beyond a bridge of treble bow,  
All in a rose-red from the west, and all  
Naked it seemed, and glowing in the broad  
Deep-dimpled current underneath, the knight,  
That named himself the Star of Evening, stood.

And Gareth, 'Wherefore waits the madman there  
Naked in open dayshine?' 'Nay,' she cried,  
'Not naked, only wrapt in hardened skins  
That fit him like his own; and so ye cleave  
His armour off him, these will turn the blade.'

Then the third brother shouted o'er the bridge,  
'O brother-star, why shine ye here so low?  
Thy ward is higher up: but have ye slain  
The damsel's champion?' and the damsel cried,

'No star of thine, but shot from Arthur's heaven  
With all disaster unto thine and thee!  
For both thy younger brethren have gone down  
Before this youth; and so wilt thou, Sir Star;  
Art thou not old?'  
'Old, damsel, old and hard,  
Old, with the might and breath of twenty boys.'  
Said Gareth, 'Old, and over-bold in brag!  
But that same strength which threw the Morning Star  
Can throw the Evening.'

Then that other blew  
A hard and deadly note upon the horn.  
'Approach and arm me!' With slow steps from out  
An old storm-beaten, russet, many-stained  
Pavilion, forth a grizzled damsel came,  
And armed him in old arms, and brought a helm  
With but a drying evergreen for crest,  
And gave a shield whereon the Star of Even  
Half-tarnished and half-bright, his emblem, shone.  
But when it glittered o'er the saddle-bow,  
They madly hurled together on the bridge;  
And Gareth overthrew him, lighted, drew,  
There met him drawn, and overthrew him again,

But up like fire he started:and as oft  
As Gareth brought him grovelling on his knees,  
So many a time he vaulted up again;  
Till Gareth panted hard, and his great heart,  
Foredooming all his trouble was in vain,  
Laboured within him, for he seemed as one  
That all in later, sadder age begins  
To war against ill uses of a life,  
But these from all his life arise, and cry,  
'Thou hast made us lords, and canst not put us down!'  
He half despairs; so Gareth seemed to strike  
Vainly, the damsel clamouring all the while,  
'Well done, knave-knight, well-stricken, O good knight-knave—  
O knave, as noble as any of all the knights—  
Shame me not, shame me not.I have prophesied—  
Strike, thou art worthy of the Table Round—  
His arms are old, he trusts the hardened skin—  
Strike—strike—the wind will never change again.'  
And Gareth hearing ever stronglier smote,  
And hewed great pieces of his armour off him,  
But lashed in vain against the hardened skin,  
And could not wholly bring him under, more  
Than loud Southwesterns, rolling ridge on ridge,  
The buoy that rides at sea, and dips and springs  
For ever; till at length Sir Gareth's brand  
Clashed his, and brake it utterly to the hilt.  
'I have thee now;' but forth that other sprang,  
And, all unknightlike, writhed his wiry arms  
Around him, till he felt, despite his mail,  
Strangled, but straining even his uttermost  
Cast, and so hurled him headlong o'er the bridge  
Down to the river, sink or swim, and cried,  
'Lead, and I follow.'

But the damsel said,  
'I lead no longer; ride thou at my side;  
Thou art the kingliest of all kitchen-knaves.  
"O trefoil, sparkling on the rainy plain,  
O rainbow with three colours after rain,  
Shine sweetly:thrice my love hath smiled on me."

'Sir,—and, good faith, I fain had added—Knight,  
But that I heard thee call thyself a knave,—  
Shamed am I that I so rebuked, reviled,  
Missaid thee; noble I am; and thought the King  
Scorned me and mine; and now thy pardon, friend,  
For thou hast ever answered courteously,  
And wholly bold thou art, and meek withal  
As any of Arthur's best, but, being knave,  
Hast mazed my wit:I marvel what thou art.'

'Damsel,' he said, 'you be not all to blame,  
Saving that you mistrusted our good King  
Would handle scorn, or yield you, asking, one  
Not fit to cope your quest.You said your say;  
Mine answer was my deed.Good sooth!I hold  
He scarce is knight, yea but half-man, nor meet  
To fight for gentle damsel, he, who lets  
His heart be stirred with any foolish heat  
At any gentle damsel's waywardness.  
Shamed? care not! thy foul sayings fought for me:  
And seeing now thy words are fair, methinks  
There rides no knight, not Lancelot, his great self,  
Hath force to quell me.'

Nigh upon that hour  
When the lone hern forgets his melancholy,  
Lets down his other leg, and stretching, dreams  
Of goodly supper in the distant pool,  
Then turned the noble damsel smiling at him,  
And told him of a cavern hard at hand,  
Where bread and baken meats and good red wine  
Of Southland, which the Lady Lyonors  
Had sent her coming champion, waited him.

Anon they past a narrow comb wherein  
Where slabs of rock with figures, knights on horse  
Sculptured, and deckt in slowly-waning hues.  
'Sir Knave, my knight, a hermit once was here,  
Whose holy hand hath fashioned on the rock  
The war of Time against the soul of man.  
And yon four fools have sucked their allegory  
From these damp walls, and taken but the form.

Know ye not these?' and Gareth lookt and read—  
In letters like to those the vexillary  
Hath left crag-carven o'er the streaming Gelt—  
'PHOSPHORUS,' then 'MERIDIES'—'HESPERUS'—  
'NOX'—'MORS,' beneath five figures, armed men,  
Slab after slab, their faces forward all,  
And running down the Soul, a Shape that fled  
With broken wings, torn raiment and loose hair,  
For help and shelter to the hermit's cave.  
'Follow the faces, and we find it. Look,  
Who comes behind?'

For one—delayed at first  
Through helping back the dislocated Kay  
To Camelot, then by what thereafter chanced,  
The damsel's headlong error through the wood—  
Sir Lancelot, having swum the river-loops—  
His blue shield-lions covered—softly drew  
Behind the twain, and when he saw the star  
Gleam, on Sir Gareth's turning to him, cried,  
'Stay, felon knight, I avenge me for my friend.'  
And Gareth crying pricked against the cry;  
But when they closed—in a moment—at one touch  
Of that skilled spear, the wonder of the world—  
Went sliding down so easily, and fell,  
That when he found the grass within his hands  
He laughed; the laughter jarred upon Lynette:  
Harshly she asked him, 'Shamed and overthrown,  
And tumbled back into the kitchen-knave,  
Why laugh ye? that ye blew your boast in vain?'  
'Nay, noble damsel, but that I, the son  
Of old King Lot and good Queen Bellicent,  
And victor of the bridges and the ford,  
And knight of Arthur, here lie thrown by whom  
I know not, all through mere unhappiness—  
Device and sorcery and unhappiness—  
Out, sword; we are thrown!' And Lancelot answered, 'Prince,  
O Gareth—through the mere unhappiness  
Of one who came to help thee, not to harm,  
Lancelot, and all as glad to find thee whole,

As on the day when Arthur knighted him.'

Then Gareth, 'Thou—Lancelot!—thine the hand  
That threw me? An some chance to mar the boast  
Thy brethren of thee make—which could not chance—  
Had sent thee down before a lesser spear,  
Shamed had I been, and sad—O Lancelot—thou!'

Whereat the maiden, petulant, 'Lancelot,  
Why came ye not, when called? and wherefore now  
Come ye, not called? I gloried in my knave,  
Who being still rebuked, would answer still  
Courteous as any knight—but now, if knight,  
The marvel dies, and leaves me fooled and tricked,  
And only wondering wherefore played upon:  
And doubtful whether I and mine be scorned.  
Where should be truth if not in Arthur's hall,  
In Arthur's presence? Knight, knave, prince and fool,  
I hate thee and for ever.'

And Lancelot said,  
'Blessed be thou, Sir Gareth! knight art thou  
To the King's best wish. O damsel, be you wise  
To call him shamed, who is but overthrown?  
Thrown have I been, nor once, but many a time.  
Victor from vanquished issues at the last,  
And overthrower from being overthrown.  
With sword we have not striven; and thy good horse  
And thou are weary; yet not less I felt  
Thy manhood through that wearied lance of thine.  
Well hast thou done; for all the stream is freed,  
And thou hast wreaked his justice on his foes,  
And when reviled, hast answered graciously,  
And makest merry when overthrown. Prince, Knight  
Hail, Knight and Prince, and of our Table Round!'

And then when turning to Lynette he told  
The tale of Gareth, petulantly she said,  
'Ay well—ay well—for worse than being fooled  
Of others, is to fool one's self. A cave,  
Sir Lancelot, is hard by, with meats and drinks  
And forage for the horse, and flint for fire.  
But all about it flies a honeysuckle.

Seek, till we find.'And when they sought and found,  
Sir Gareth drank and ate, and all his life  
Past into sleep; on whom the maiden gazed.  
'Sound sleep be thine! sound cause to sleep hast thou.  
Wake lusty! Seem I not as tender to him  
As any mother? Ay, but such a one  
As all day long hath rated at her child,  
And vext his day, but blesses him asleep—  
Good lord, how sweetly smells the honeysuckle  
In the hushed night, as if the world were one  
Of utter peace, and love, and gentleness!  
O Lancelot, Lancelot'—and she clapt her hands—  
'Full merry am I to find my goodly knave  
Is knight and noble. See now, sworn have I,  
Else yon black felon had not let me pass,  
To bring thee back to do the battle with him.  
Thus an thou goest, he will fight thee first;  
Who doubts thee victor? so will my knight-knave  
Miss the full flower of this accomplishment.'

Said Lancelot, 'Peradventure he, you name,  
May know my shield. Let Gareth, an he will,  
Change his for mine, and take my charger, fresh,  
Not to be spurred, loving the battle as well  
As he that rides him.' 'Lancelot-like,' she said,  
'Courteous in this, Lord Lancelot, as in all.'

And Gareth, wakening, fiercely clutched the shield;  
'Ramp ye lance-splintering lions, on whom all spears  
Are rotten sticks! ye seem agape to roar!  
Yea, ramp and roar at leaving of your lord!—  
Care not, good beasts, so well I care for you.  
O noble Lancelot, from my hold on these  
Streams virtue—fire—through one that will not shame  
Even the shadow of Lancelot under shield.  
Hence: let us go.'

Silent the silent field  
They traversed. Arthur's harp though summer-wan,  
In counter motion to the clouds, allured  
The glance of Gareth dreaming on his liege.  
A star shot: 'Lo,' said Gareth, 'the foe falls!'

An owl whoopt:'Hark the victor pealing there!'  
Suddenly she that rode upon his left  
Clung to the shield that Lancelot lent him, crying,  
'Yield, yield him this again:'tis he must fight:  
I curse the tongue that all through yesterday  
Reviled thee, and hath wrought on Lancelot now  
To lend thee horse and shield:wonders ye have done;  
Miracles ye cannot:here is glory enow  
In having flung the three:I see thee maimed,  
Mangled:I swear thou canst not fling the fourth.'

'And wherefore, damsel? tell me all ye know.  
You cannot scare me; nor rough face, or voice,  
Brute bulk of limb, or boundless savagery  
Appal me from the quest.'

'Nay, Prince,' she cried,  
'God wot, I never looked upon the face,  
Seeing he never rides abroad by day;  
But watched him have I like a phantom pass  
Chilling the night:nor have I heard the voice.  
Always he made his mouthpiece of a page  
Who came and went, and still reported him  
As closing in himself the strength of ten,  
And when his anger tare him, massacring  
Man, woman, lad and girl—yea, the soft babe!  
Some hold that he hath swallowed infant flesh,  
Monster!O Prince, I went for Lancelot first,  
The quest is Lancelot's:give him back the shield.'

Said Gareth laughing, 'An he fight for this,  
Belike he wins it as the better man:  
Thus—and not else!'

But Lancelot on him urged  
All the devisings of their chivalry  
When one might meet a mightier than himself;  
How best to manage horse, lance, sword and shield,  
And so fill up the gap where force might fail  
With skill and fineness.Instant were his words.

Then Gareth, 'Here be rules.I know but one—  
To dash against mine enemy and win.  
Yet have I seen thee victor in the joust,

And seen thy way."Heaven help thee,' sighed Lynette.

Then for a space, and under cloud that grew  
To thunder-gloom palling all stars, they rode  
In converse till she made her palfrey halt,  
Lifted an arm, and softly whispered, 'There.'  
And all the three were silent seeing, pitched  
Beside the Castle Perilous on flat field,  
A huge pavilion like a mountain peak  
Sunder the glooming crimson on the marge,  
Black, with black banner, and a long black horn  
Beside it hanging; which Sir Gareth graspt,  
And so, before the two could hinder him,  
Sent all his heart and breath through all the horn.  
Echoed the walls; a light twinkled; anon  
Came lights and lights, and once again he blew;  
Whereon were hollow tramlings up and down  
And muffled voices heard, and shadows past;  
Till high above him, circled with her maids,  
The Lady Lyonors at a window stood,  
Beautiful among lights, and waving to him  
White hands, and courtesy; but when the Prince  
Three times had blown—after long hush—at last—  
The huge pavilion slowly yielded up,  
Through those black foldings, that which housed therein.  
High on a nightblack horse, in nightblack arms,  
With white breast-bone, and barren ribs of Death,  
And crowned with fleshless laughter—some ten steps—  
In the half-light—through the dim dawn—advanced  
The monster, and then paused, and spake no word.

But Gareth spake and all indignantly,  
'Fool, for thou hast, men say, the strength of ten,  
Canst thou not trust the limbs thy God hath given,  
But must, to make the terror of thee more,  
Trick thyself out in ghastly imageries  
Of that which Life hath done with, and the clod,  
Less dull than thou, will hide with mantling flowers  
As if for pity?'But he spake no word;  
Which set the horror higher:a maiden swooned;  
The Lady Lyonors wrung her hands and wept,



As doomed to be the bride of Night and Death;  
Sir Gareth's head prickled beneath his helm;  
And even Sir Lancelot through his warm blood felt  
Ice strike, and all that marked him were aghast.

At once Sir Lancelot's charger fiercely neighed,  
And Death's dark warhorse bounded forward with him.

Then those that did not blink the terror, saw  
That Death was cast to ground, and slowly rose.

But with one stroke Sir Gareth split the skull.  
Half fell to right and half to left and lay.

Then with a stronger buffet he clove the helm  
As throughly as the skull; and out from this  
Issued the bright face of a blooming boy  
Fresh as a flower new-born, and crying, 'Knight,  
Slay me not: my three brethren bad me do it,  
To make a horror all about the house,  
And stay the world from Lady Lyonors.

They never dreamed the passes would be past.'  
Answered Sir Gareth graciously to one  
Not many a moon his younger, 'My fair child,  
What madness made thee challenge the chief knight  
Of Arthur's hall?' 'Fair Sir, they bad me do it.  
They hate the King, and Lancelot, the King's friend,  
They hoped to slay him somewhere on the stream,  
They never dreamed the passes could be past.'

Then sprang the happier day from underground;  
And Lady Lyonors and her house, with dance  
And revel and song, made merry over Death,  
As being after all their foolish fears  
And horrors only proven a blooming boy.  
So large mirth lived and Gareth won the quest.

And he that told the tale in older times  
Says that Sir Gareth wedded Lyonors,  
But he, that told it later, says Lynette.

## The Marriage of Geraint

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The brave Geraint, a knight of Arthur's court,  
A tributary prince of Devon, one  
Of that great Order of the Table Round,  
Had married Enid, Yniol's only child,  
And loved her, as he loved the light of Heaven.  
And as the light of Heaven varies, now  
At sunrise, now at sunset, now by night  
With moon and trembling stars, so loved Geraint  
To make her beauty vary day by day,  
In crimsons and in purples and in gems.  
And Enid, but to please her husband's eye,  
Who first had found and loved her in a state  
Of broken fortunes, daily fronted him  
In some fresh splendour; and the Queen herself,  
Grateful to Prince Geraint for service done,  
Loved her, and often with her own white hands  
Arrayed and decked her, as the loveliest,  
Next after her own self, in all the court.  
And Enid loved the Queen, and with true heart  
Adored her, as the stateliest and the best  
And loveliest of all women upon earth.  
And seeing them so tender and so close,  
Long in their common love rejoiced Geraint.  
But when a rumour rose about the Queen,  
Touching her guilty love for Lancelot,  
Though yet there lived no proof, nor yet was heard  
The world's loud whisper breaking into storm,  
Not less Geraint believed it; and there fell  
A horror on him, lest his gentle wife,  
Through that great tenderness for Guinevere,  
Had suffered, or should suffer any taint

In nature:wherefore going to the King,  
He made this pretext, that his pryncedom lay  
Close on the borders of a territory,  
Wherein were bandit earls, and caitiff knights,  
Assassins, and all flyers from the hand  
Of Justice, and whatever loathes a law:  
And therefore, till the King himself should please  
To cleanse this common sewer of all his realm,  
He craved a fair permission to depart,  
And there defend his marches; and the King  
Mused for a little on his plea, but, last,  
Allowing it, the Prince and Enid rode,  
And fifty knights rode with them, to the shores  
Of Severn, and they past to their own land;  
Where, thinking, that if ever yet was wife  
True to her lord, mine shall be so to me,  
He compassed her with sweet observances  
And worship, never leaving her, and grew  
Forgetful of his promise to the King,  
Forgetful of the falcon and the hunt,  
Forgetful of the tilt and tournament,  
Forgetful of his glory and his name,  
Forgetful of his pryncedom and its cares.  
And this forgetfulness was hateful to her.  
And by and by the people, when they met  
In twos and threes, or fuller companies,  
Began to scoff and jeer and babble of him  
As of a prince whose manhood was all gone,  
And molten down in mere uxoriousness.  
And this she gathered from the people's eyes:  
This too the women who attired her head,  
To please her, dwelling on his boundless love,  
Told Enid, and they saddened her the more:  
And day by day she thought to tell Geraint,  
But could not out of bashful delicacy;  
While he that watched her sadden, was the more  
Suspicious that her nature had a taint.

At last, it chanced that on a summer morn  
(They sleeping each by either) the new sun

Beat through the blindless casement of the room,  
And heated the strong warrior in his dreams;  
Who, moving, cast the coverlet aside,  
And bared the knotted column of his throat,  
The massive square of his heroic breast,  
And arms on which the standing muscle sloped,  
As slopes a wild brook o'er a little stone,  
Running too vehemently to break upon it.  
And Enid woke and sat beside the couch,  
Admiring him, and thought within herself,  
Was ever man so grandly made as he?  
Then, like a shadow, past the people's talk  
And accusation of uxoriousness  
Across her mind, and bowing over him,  
Low to her own heart piteously she said:  
    'O noble breast and all-puissant arms,  
Am I the cause, I the poor cause that men  
Reproach you, saying all your force is gone?  
I am the cause, because I dare not speak  
And tell him what I think and what they say.  
And yet I hate that he should linger here;  
I cannot love my lord and not his name.  
Far liefer had I gird his harness on him,  
And ride with him to battle and stand by,  
And watch his mightful hand striking great blows  
At caitiffs and at wrongers of the world.  
Far better were I laid in the dark earth,  
Not hearing any more his noble voice,  
Not to be folded more in these dear arms,  
And darkened from the high light in his eyes,  
Than that my lord through me should suffer shame.  
Am I so bold, and could I so stand by,  
And see my dear lord wounded in the strife,  
And maybe pierced to death before mine eyes,  
And yet not dare to tell him what I think,  
And how men slur him, saying all his force  
Is melted into mere effeminacy?  
O me, I fear that I am no true wife.'  
    Half inwardly, half audibly she spoke,

And the strong passion in her made her weep  
True tears upon his broad and naked breast,  
And these awoke him, and by great mischance  
He heard but fragments of her later words,  
And that she feared she was not a true wife.  
And then he thought, 'In spite of all my care,  
For all my pains, poor man, for all my pains,  
She is not faithful to me, and I see her  
Weeping for some gay knight in Arthur's hall.'  
Then though he loved and revered her too much  
To dream she could be guilty of foul act,  
Right through his manful breast darted the pang  
That makes a man, in the sweet face of her  
Whom he loves most, lonely and miserable.  
At this he hurled his huge limbs out of bed,  
And shook his drowsy squire awake and cried,  
'My charger and her palfrey;' then to her,  
'I will ride forth into the wilderness;  
For though it seems my spurs are yet to win,  
I have not fallen so low as some would wish.  
And thou, put on thy worst and meanest dress  
And ride with me.' And Enid asked, amazed,  
'If Enid errs, let Enid learn her fault.'  
But he, 'I charge thee, ask not, but obey.'  
Then she bethought her of a faded silk,  
A faded mantle and a faded veil,  
And moving toward a cedarn cabinet,  
Wherein she kept them folded reverently  
With sprigs of summer laid between the folds,  
She took them, and arrayed herself therein,  
Remembering when first he came on her  
Drest in that dress, and how he loved her in it,  
And all her foolish fears about the dress,  
And all his journey to her, as himself  
Had told her, and their coming to the court.

For Arthur on the Whitsuntide before  
Held court at old Caerleon upon Usk.  
There on a day, he sitting high in hall,  
Before him came a forester of Dean,

Wet from the woods, with notice of a hart  
Taller than all his fellows, milky-white,  
First seen that day: these things he told the King.  
Then the good King gave order to let blow  
His horns for hunting on the morrow morn.  
And when the King petitioned for his leave  
To see the hunt, allowed it easily.  
So with the morning all the court were gone.  
But Guinevere lay late into the morn,  
Lost in sweet dreams, and dreaming of her love  
For Lancelot, and forgetful of the hunt;  
But rose at last, a single maiden with her,  
Took horse, and forded Usk, and gained the wood;  
There, on a little knoll beside it, stayed  
Waiting to hear the hounds; but heard instead  
A sudden sound of hoofs, for Prince Geraint,  
Late also, wearing neither hunting-dress  
Nor weapon, save a golden-hilted brand,  
Came quickly flashing through the shallow ford  
Behind them, and so galloped up the knoll.  
A purple scarf, at either end whereof  
There swung an apple of the purest gold,  
Swayed round about him, as he galloped up  
To join them, glancing like a dragon-fly  
In summer suit and silks of holiday.  
Low bowed the tributary Prince, and she,  
Sweet and statelily, and with all grace  
Of womanhood and queenhood, answered him:  
'Late, late, Sir Prince,' she said, 'later than we!'  
'Yea, noble Queen,' he answered, 'and so late  
That I but come like you to see the hunt,  
Not join it.' 'Therefore wait with me,' she said;  
'For on this little knoll, if anywhere,  
There is good chance that we shall hear the hounds:  
Here often they break covert at our feet.'

And while they listened for the distant hunt,  
And chiefly for the baying of Cavall,  
King Arthur's hound of deepest mouth, there rode  
Full slowly by a knight, lady, and dwarf;

Whereof the dwarf lagged latest, and the knight  
Had vizor up, and showed a youthful face,  
Imperious, and of haughtiest lineaments.  
And Guinevere, not mindful of his face  
In the King's hall, desired his name, and sent  
Her maiden to demand it of the dwarf;  
Who being vicious, old and irritable,  
And doubling all his master's vice of pride,  
Made answer sharply that she should not know.  
'Then will I ask it of himself,' she said.  
'Nay, by my faith, thou shalt not,' cried the dwarf;  
'Thou art not worthy even to speak of him;'  
And when she put her horse toward the knight,  
Struck at her with his whip, and she returned  
Indignant to the Queen; whereat Geraint  
Exclaiming, 'Surely I will learn the name,'  
Made sharply to the dwarf, and asked it of him,  
Who answered as before; and when the Prince  
Had put his horse in motion toward the knight,  
Struck at him with his whip, and cut his cheek.  
The Prince's blood spirted upon the scarf,  
Dyeing it; and his quick, instinctive hand  
Caught at the hilt, as to abolish him:  
But he, from his exceeding manfulness  
And pure nobility of temperament,  
Wroth to be wroth at such a worm, refrained  
From even a word, and so returning said:  
    'I will avenge this insult, noble Queen,  
Done in your maiden's person to yourself:  
And I will track this vermin to their earths:  
For though I ride unarmed, I do not doubt  
To find, at some place I shall come at, arms  
On loan, or else for pledge; and, being found,  
Then will I fight him, and will break his pride,  
And on the third day will again be here,  
So that I be not fallen in fight. Farewell.'  
    'Farewell, fair Prince,' answered the stately Queen.  
'Be prosperous in this journey, as in all;  
And may you light on all things that you love,

And live to wed with her whom first you love:  
But ere you wed with any, bring your bride,  
And I, were she the daughter of a king,  
Yea, though she were a beggar from the hedge,  
Will clothe her for her bridals like the sun.'

And Prince Geraint, now thinking that he heard  
The noble hart at bay, now the far horn,  
A little vext at losing of the hunt,  
A little at the vile occasion, rode,  
By ups and downs, through many a grassy glade  
And valley, with fixt eye following the three.  
At last they issued from the world of wood,  
And climbed upon a fair and even ridge,  
And showed themselves against the sky, and sank.  
And thither there came Geraint, and underneath  
Beheld the long street of a little town  
In a long valley, on one side whereof,  
White from the mason's hand, a fortress rose;  
And on one side a castle in decay,  
Beyond a bridge that spanned a dry ravine:  
And out of town and valley came a noise  
As of a broad brook o'er a shingly bed  
Brawling, or like a clamour of the rooks  
At distance, ere they settle for the night.

And onward to the fortress rode the three,  
And entered, and were lost behind the walls.  
'So,' thought Geraint, 'I have tracked him to his earth.'  
And down the long street riding wearily,  
Found every hostel full, and everywhere  
Was hammer laid to hoof, and the hot hiss  
And bustling whistle of the youth who scoured  
His master's armour; and of such a one  
He asked, 'What means the tumult in the town?'  
Who told him, scouring still, 'The sparrow-hawk!'  
Then riding close behind an ancient churl,  
Who, smitten by the dusty sloping beam,  
Went sweating underneath a sack of corn,  
Asked yet once more what meant the hubbub here?  
Who answered gruffly, 'Ugh! the sparrow-hawk.'



Then riding further past an armourer's,  
Who, with back turned, and bowed above his work,  
Sat riveting a helmet on his knee,  
He put the self-same query, but the man  
Not turning round, nor looking at him, said:  
'Friend, he that labours for the sparrow-hawk  
Has little time for idle questioners.'  
Whereat Geraint flashed into sudden spleen:  
'A thousand pips eat up your sparrow-hawk!  
Tits, wrens, and all winged nothings peck him dead!  
Ye think the rustic cackle of your bourg  
The murmur of the world! What is it to me?  
O wretched set of sparrows, one and all,  
Who pipe of nothing but of sparrow-hawks!  
Speak, if ye be not like the rest, hawk-mad,  
Where can I get me harbourage for the night?  
And arms, arms, arms to fight my enemy? Speak!'  
Whereat the armourer turning all amazed  
And seeing one so gay in purple silks,  
Came forward with the helmet yet in hand  
And answered, 'Pardon me, O stranger knight;  
We hold a tourney here tomorrow morn,  
And there is scanty time for half the work.  
Arms? truth! I know not: all are wanted here.  
Harbourage? truth, good truth, I know not, save,  
It may be, at Earl Yniol's, o'er the bridge  
Yonder. He spoke and fell to work again.

Then rode Geraint, a little spleenful yet,  
Across the bridge that spanned the dry ravine.  
There musing sat the hoary-headed Earl,  
(His dress a suit of frayed magnificence,  
Once fit for feasts of ceremony) and said:  
'Whither, fair son?' to whom Geraint replied,  
'O friend, I seek a harbourage for the night.'  
Then Yniol, 'Enter therefore and partake  
The slender entertainment of a house  
Once rich, now poor, but ever open-doored.'  
'Thanks, venerable friend,' replied Geraint;  
'So that ye do not serve me sparrow-hawks

For supper, I will enter, I will eat  
With all the passion of a twelve hours' fast.'  
Then sighed and smiled the hoary-headed Earl,  
And answered, 'Graver cause than yours is mine  
To curse this hedgerow thief, the sparrow-hawk:  
But in, go in; for save yourself desire it,  
We will not touch upon him even in jest.'

Then rode Geraint into the castle court,  
His charger trampling many a prickly star  
Of sprouted thistle on the broken stones.  
He looked and saw that all was ruinous.  
Here stood a shattered archway plumed with fern;  
And here had fallen a great part of a tower,  
Whole, like a crag that tumbles from the cliff,  
And like a crag was gay with wilding flowers:  
And high above a piece of turret stair,  
Worn by the feet that now were silent, wound  
Bare to the sun, and monstrous ivy-stems  
Claspt the gray walls with hairy-fibred arms,  
And sucked the joining of the stones, and looked  
A knot, beneath, of snakes, aloft, a grove.

And while he waited in the castle court,  
The voice of Enid, Yniol's daughter, rang  
Clear through the open casement of the hall,  
Singing; and as the sweet voice of a bird,  
Heard by the lander in a lonely isle,  
Moves him to think what kind of bird it is  
That sings so delicately clear, and make  
Conjecture of the plumage and the form;  
So the sweet voice of Enid moved Geraint;  
And made him like a man abroad at morn  
When first the liquid note beloved of men  
Comes flying over many a windy wave  
To Britain, and in April suddenly  
Breaks from a coppice gemmed with green and red,  
And he suspends his converse with a friend,  
Or it may be the labour of his hands,  
To think or say, 'There is the nightingale;'  
So fared it with Geraint, who thought and said,

'Here, by God's grace, is the one voice for me.'

It chanced the song that Enid sang was one  
Of Fortune and her wheel, and Enid sang:

'Turn, Fortune, turn thy wheel and lower the proud;  
Turn thy wild wheel through sunshine, storm, and cloud;  
Thy wheel and thee we neither love nor hate.

'Turn, Fortune, turn thy wheel with smile or frown;  
With that wild wheel we go not up or down;  
Our hoard is little, but our hearts are great.

'Smile and we smile, the lords of many lands;  
Frown and we smile, the lords of our own hands;  
For man is man and master of his fate.

'Turn, turn thy wheel above the staring crowd;  
Thy wheel and thou are shadows in the cloud;  
Thy wheel and thee we neither love nor hate.'

'Hark, by the bird's song ye may learn the nest,'  
Said Yniol; 'enter quickly.' Entering then,  
Right o'er a mount of newly-fallen stones,  
The dusky-raftered many-cobwebbed hall,  
He found an ancient dame in dim brocade;  
And near her, like a blossom vermeil-white,  
That lightly breaks a faded flower-sheath,  
Moved the fair Enid, all in faded silk,  
Her daughter. In a moment thought Geraint,  
'Here by God's rood is the one maid for me.'  
But none spake word except the hoary Earl:  
'Enid, the good knight's horse stands in the court;  
Take him to stall, and give him corn, and then  
Go to the town and buy us flesh and wine;  
And we will make us merry as we may.  
Our hoard is little, but our hearts are great.'

He spake: the Prince, as Enid past him, fain  
To follow, strode a stride, but Yniol caught  
His purple scarf, and held, and said, 'Forbear!  
Rest! the good house, though ruined, O my son,  
Endures not that her guest should serve himself.'  
And reverencing the custom of the house  
Geraint, from utter courtesy, forbore.

So Enid took his charger to the stall;

And after went her way across the bridge,  
And reached the town, and while the Prince and Earl  
Yet spoke together, came again with one,  
A youth, that following with a costrel bore  
The means of goodly welcome, flesh and wine.  
And Enid brought sweet cakes to make them cheer,  
And in her veil enfolded, manchet bread.  
And then, because their hall must also serve  
For kitchen, boiled the flesh, and spread the board,  
And stood behind, and waited on the three.  
And seeing her so sweet and serviceable,  
Geraint had longing in him evermore  
To stoop and kiss the tender little thumb,  
That crost the trencher as she laid it down:  
But after all had eaten, then Geraint,  
For now the wine made summer in his veins,  
Let his eye rove in following, or rest  
On Enid at her lowly handmaid-work,  
Now here, now there, about the dusky hall;  
Then suddenly address the hoary Earl:  
    'Fair Host and Earl, I pray your courtesy;  
This sparrow-hawk, what is he? tell me of him.  
His name? but no, good faith, I will not have it:  
For if he be the knight whom late I saw  
Ride into that new fortress by your town,  
White from the mason's hand, then have I sworn  
From his own lips to have it—I am Geraint  
Of Devon—for this morning when the Queen  
Sent her own maiden to demand the name,  
His dwarf, a vicious under-shapen thing,  
Struck at her with his whip, and she returned  
Indignant to the Queen; and then I swore  
That I would track this caitiff to his hold,  
And fight and break his pride, and have it of him.  
And all unarmed I rode, and thought to find  
Arms in your town, where all the men are mad;  
They take the rustic murmur of their bourg  
For the great wave that echoes round the world;  
They would not hear me speak:but if ye know

Where I can light on arms, or if yourself  
Should have them, tell me, seeing I have sworn  
That I will break his pride and learn his name,  
Avenging this great insult done the Queen.'

Then cried Earl Yniol, 'Art thou he indeed,  
Geraint, a name far-sounded among men  
For noble deeds? and truly I, when first  
I saw you moving by me on the bridge,  
Felt ye were somewhat, yea, and by your state  
And presence might have guessed you one of those  
That eat in Arthur's hall in Camelot.  
Nor speak I now from foolish flattery;  
For this dear child hath often heard me praise  
Your feats of arms, and often when I paused  
Hath asked again, and ever loved to hear;  
So grateful is the noise of noble deeds  
To noble hearts who see but acts of wrong:  
O never yet had woman such a pair  
Of suitors as this maiden: first Limours,  
A creature wholly given to brawls and wine,  
Drunk even when he wooed; and be he dead  
I know not, but he past to the wild land.  
The second was your foe, the sparrow-hawk,  
My curse, my nephew—I will not let his name  
Slip from my lips if I can help it—he,  
When that I knew him fierce and turbulent  
Refused her to him, then his pride awoke;  
And since the proud man often is the mean,  
He sowed a slander in the common ear,  
Affirming that his father left him gold,  
And in my charge, which was not rendered to him;  
Bribed with large promises the men who served  
About my person, the more easily  
Because my means were somewhat broken into  
Through open doors and hospitality;  
Raised my own town against me in the night  
Before my Enid's birthday, sacked my house;  
From mine own earldom foully ousted me;  
Built that new fort to overawe my friends,

For truly there are those who love me yet;  
And keeps me in this ruinous castle here,  
Where doubtless he would put me soon to death,  
But that his pride too much despises me:  
And I myself sometimes despise myself;  
For I have let men be, and have their way;  
Am much too gentle, have not used my power:  
Nor know I whether I be very base  
Or very manful, whether very wise  
Or very foolish; only this I know,  
That whatsoever evil happen to me,  
I seem to suffer nothing heart or limb,  
But can endure it all most patiently.'

'Well said, true heart,' replied Geraint, 'but arms,  
That if the sparrow-hawk, this nephew, fight  
In next day's tourney I may break his pride.'

And Yniol answered, 'Arms, indeed, but old  
And rusty, old and rusty, Prince Geraint,  
Are mine, and therefore at thy asking, thine.  
But in this tournament can no man tilt,  
Except the lady he loves best be there.  
Two forks are fixt into the meadow ground,  
And over these is placed a silver wand,  
And over that a golden sparrow-hawk,  
The prize of beauty for the fairest there.  
And this, what knight soever be in field  
Lays claim to for the lady at his side,  
And tilts with my good nephew thereupon,  
Who being apt at arms and big of bone  
Has ever won it for the lady with him,  
And toppling over all antagonism  
Has earned himself the name of sparrow-hawk.'  
But thou, that hast no lady, canst not fight.'

To whom Geraint with eyes all bright replied,  
Leaning a little toward him, 'Thy leave!  
Let me lay lance in rest, O noble host,  
For this dear child, because I never saw,  
Though having seen all beauties of our time,  
Nor can see elsewhere, anything so fair.

And if I fall her name will yet remain  
Untarnished as before; but if I live,  
So aid me Heaven when at mine uttermost,  
As I will make her truly my true wife.'

Then, howsoever patient, Yniol's heart  
Danced in his bosom, seeing better days,  
And looking round he saw not Enid there,  
(Who hearing her own name had stolen away)  
But that old dame, to whom full tenderly  
And folding all her hand in his he said,  
'Mother, a maiden is a tender thing,  
And best by her that bore her understood.  
Go thou to rest, but ere thou go to rest  
Tell her, and prove her heart toward the Prince.'

So spake the kindly-hearted Earl, and she  
With frequent smile and nod departing found,  
Half disarrayed as to her rest, the girl;  
Whom first she kissed on either cheek, and then  
On either shining shoulder laid a hand,  
And kept her off and gazed upon her face,  
And told them all their converse in the hall,  
Proving her heart:but never light and shade  
Coursed one another more on open ground  
Beneath a troubled heaven, than red and pale  
Across the face of Enid hearing her;  
While slowly falling as a scale that falls,  
When weight is added only grain by grain,  
Sank her sweet head upon her gentle breast;  
Nor did she lift an eye nor speak a word,  
Rapt in the fear and in the wonder of it;  
So moving without answer to her rest  
She found no rest, and ever failed to draw  
The quiet night into her blood, but lay  
Contemplating her own unworthiness;  
And when the pale and bloodless east began  
To quicken to the sun, arose, and raised  
Her mother too, and hand in hand they moved  
Down to the meadow where the jousts were held,  
And waited there for Yniol and Geraint.

And thither came the twain, and when Geraint  
Beheld her first in field, awaiting him,  
He felt, were she the prize of bodily force,  
Himself beyond the rest pushing could move  
The chair of Idris. Yniol's rusted arms  
Were on his princely person, but through these  
Princelike his bearing shone; and errant knights  
And ladies came, and by and by the town  
Flowed in, and settling circled all the lists.  
And there they fixt the forks into the ground,  
And over these they placed the silver wand,  
And over that the golden sparrow-hawk.  
Then Yniol's nephew, after trumpet blown,  
Spake to the lady with him and proclaimed,  
'Advance and take, as fairest of the fair,  
What I these two years past have won for thee,  
The prize of beauty.' Loudly spake the Prince,  
'Forbear: there is a worthier,' and the knight  
With some surprise and thrice as much disdain  
Turned, and beheld the four, and all his face  
Glowed like the heart of a great fire at Yule,  
So burnt he was with passion, crying out,  
'Do battle for it then,' no more; and thrice  
They clashed together, and thrice they brake their spears.  
Then each, dishorsed and drawing, lashed at each  
So often and with such blows, that all the crowd  
Wondered, and now and then from distant walls  
There came a clapping as of phantom hands.  
So twice they fought, and twice they breathed, and still  
The dew of their great labour, and the blood  
Of their strong bodies, flowing, drained their force.  
But either's force was matched till Yniol's cry,  
'Remember that great insult done the Queen,'  
Increased Geraint's, who heaved his blade aloft,  
And cracked the helmet through, and bit the bone,  
And felled him, and set foot upon his breast,  
And said, 'Thy name?' 'To whom the fallen man  
Made answer, groaning, 'Edyrn, son of Nudd!  
Ashamed am I that I should tell it thee.



My pride is broken: men have seen my fall.'  
'Then, Edyrn, son of Nudd,' replied Geraint,  
'These two things shalt thou do, or else thou diest.  
First, thou thyself, with damsel and with dwarf,  
Shalt ride to Arthur's court, and coming there,  
Crave pardon for that insult done the Queen,  
And shalt abide her judgment on it; next,  
Thou shalt give back their earldom to thy kin.  
These two things shalt thou do, or thou shalt die.'  
And Edyrn answered, 'These things will I do,  
For I have never yet been overthrown,  
And thou hast overthrown me, and my pride  
Is broken down, for Enid sees my fall!'  
And rising up, he rode to Arthur's court,  
And there the Queen forgave him easily.  
And being young, he changed and came to loathe  
His crime of traitor, slowly drew himself  
Bright from his old dark life, and fell at last  
In the great battle fighting for the King.

But when the third day from the hunting-morn  
Made a low splendour in the world, and wings  
Moved in her ivy, Enid, for she lay  
With her fair head in the dim-yellow light,  
Among the dancing shadows of the birds,  
Woke and bethought her of her promise given  
No later than last eve to Prince Geraint—  
So bent he seemed on going the third day,  
He would not leave her, till her promise given—  
To ride with him this morning to the court,  
And there be made known to the stately Queen,  
And there be wedded with all ceremony.  
At this she cast her eyes upon her dress,  
And thought it never yet had looked so mean.  
For as a leaf in mid-November is  
To what it is in mid-October, seemed  
The dress that now she looked on to the dress  
She looked on ere the coming of Geraint.  
And still she looked, and still the terror grew  
Of that strange bright and dreadful thing, a court,

All staring at her in her faded silk:  
And softly to her own sweet heart she said:  
    'This noble prince who won our earldom back,  
So splendid in his acts and his attire,  
Sweet heaven, how much I shall discredit him!  
Would he could tarry with us here awhile,  
But being so beholden to the Prince,  
It were but little grace in any of us,  
Bent as he seemed on going this third day,  
To seek a second favour at his hands.  
Yet if he could but tarry a day or two,  
Myself would work eye dim, and finger lame,  
Far liefer than so much discredit him.'

    And Enid fell in longing for a dress  
All branched and flowered with gold, a costly gift  
Of her good mother, given her on the night  
Before her birthday, three sad years ago,  
That night of fire, when Edyrn sacked their house,  
And scattered all they had to all the winds:  
For while the mother showed it, and the two  
Were turning and admiring it, the work  
To both appeared so costly, rose a cry  
That Edyrn's men were on them, and they fled  
With little save the jewels they had on,  
Which being sold and sold had bought them bread:  
And Edyrn's men had caught them in their flight,  
And placed them in this ruin; and she wished  
The Prince had found her in her ancient home;  
Then let her fancy flit across the past,  
And roam the goodly places that she knew;  
And last bethought her how she used to watch,  
Near that old home, a pool of golden carp;  
And one was patched and blurred and lustreless  
Among his burnished brethren of the pool;  
And half asleep she made comparison  
Of that and these to her own faded self  
And the gay court, and fell asleep again;  
And dreamt herself was such a faded form  
Among her burnished sisters of the pool;

But this was in the garden of a king;  
And though she lay dark in the pool, she knew  
That all was bright; that all about were birds  
Of sunny plume in gilded trellis-work;  
That all the turf was rich in plots that looked  
Each like a garnet or a turkis in it;  
And lords and ladies of the high court went  
In silver tissue talking things of state;  
And children of the King in cloth of gold  
Glanced at the doors or gamboled down the walks;  
And while she thought 'They will not see me,' came  
A stately queen whose name was Guinevere,  
And all the children in their cloth of gold  
Ran to her, crying, 'If we have fish at all  
Let them be gold; and charge the gardeners now  
To pick the faded creature from the pool,  
And cast it on the mixen that it die.'  
And therewithal one came and seized on her,  
And Enid started waking, with her heart  
All overshadowed by the foolish dream,  
And lo! it was her mother grasping her  
To get her well awake; and in her hand  
A suit of bright apparel, which she laid  
Flat on the couch, and spoke exultingly:  
    'See here, my child, how fresh the colours look,  
How fast they hold like colours of a shell  
That keeps the wear and polish of the wave.  
Why not? It never yet was worn, I trow:  
Look on it, child, and tell me if ye know it.'  
    And Enid looked, but all confused at first,  
Could scarce divide it from her foolish dream:  
Then suddenly she knew it and rejoiced,  
And answered, 'Yea, I know it; your good gift,  
So sadly lost on that unhappy night;  
Your own good gift!' 'Yea, surely,' said the dame,  
'And gladly given again this happy morn.  
For when the jousts were ended yesterday,  
Went Yniol through the town, and everywhere  
He found the sack and plunder of our house

All scattered through the houses of the town;  
And gave command that all which once was ours  
Should now be ours again:and yester-eve,  
While ye were talking sweetly with your Prince,  
Came one with this and laid it in my hand,  
For love or fear, or seeking favour of us,  
Because we have our earldom back again.  
And yester-eve I would not tell you of it,  
But kept it for a sweet surprise at morn.  
Yea, truly is it not a sweet surprise?  
For I myself unwillingly have worn  
My faded suit, as you, my child, have yours,  
And howsoever patient, Yniol his.  
Ah, dear, he took me from a goodly house,  
With store of rich apparel, sumptuous fare,  
And page, and maid, and squire, and seneschal,  
And pastime both of hawk and hound, and all  
That appertains to noble maintenance.  
Yea, and he brought me to a goodly house;  
But since our fortune swerved from sun to shade,  
And all through that young traitor, cruel need  
Constrained us, but a better time has come;  
So clothe yourself in this, that better fits  
Our mended fortunes and a Prince's bride:  
For though ye won the prize of fairest fair,  
And though I heard him call you fairest fair,  
Let never maiden think, however fair,  
She is not fairer in new clothes than old.  
And should some great court-lady say, the Prince  
Hath picked a ragged-robin from the hedge,  
And like a madman brought her to the court,  
Then were ye shamed, and, worse, might shame the Prince  
To whom we are beholden; but I know,  
That when my dear child is set forth at her best,  
That neither court nor country, though they sought  
Through all the provinces like those of old  
That lighted on Queen Esther, has her match.'

Here ceased the kindly mother out of breath;  
And Enid listened brightening as she lay;

Then, as the white and glittering star of morn  
Parts from a bank of snow, and by and by  
Slips into golden cloud, the maiden rose,  
And left her maiden couch, and robed herself,  
Helped by the mother's careful hand and eye,  
Without a mirror, in the gorgeous gown;  
Who, after, turned her daughter round, and said,  
She never yet had seen her half so fair;  
And called her like that maiden in the tale,  
Whom Gwydion made by glamour out of flowers  
And sweeter than the bride of Cassivelaun,  
Flur, for whose love the Roman Caesar first  
Invaded Britain, 'But we beat him back,  
As this great Prince invaded us, and we,  
Not beat him back, but welcomed him with joy  
And I can scarcely ride with you to court,  
For old am I, and rough the ways and wild;  
But Yniol goes, and I full oft shall dream  
I see my princess as I see her now,  
Clothed with my gift, and gay among the gay.'

But while the women thus rejoiced, Geraint  
Woke where he slept in the high hall, and called  
For Enid, and when Yniol made report  
Of that good mother making Enid gay  
In such apparel as might well beseem  
His princess, or indeed the stately Queen,  
He answered: 'Earl, entreat her by my love,  
Albeit I give no reason but my wish,  
That she ride with me in her faded silk.'  
Yniol with that hard message went; it fell  
Like flaws in summer laying lusty corn:  
For Enid, all abashed she knew not why,  
Dared not to glance at her good mother's face,  
But silently, in all obedience,  
Her mother silent too, nor helping her,  
Laid from her limbs the costly-broidered gift,  
And robed them in her ancient suit again,  
And so descended. Never man rejoiced  
More than Geraint to greet her thus attired;

And glancing all at once as keenly at her  
As careful robins eye the delver's toil,  
Made her cheek burn and either eyelid fall,  
But rested with her sweet face satisfied;  
Then seeing cloud upon the mother's brow,  
Her by both hands she caught, and sweetly said,  
    'O my new mother, be not wroth or grieved  
At thy new son, for my petition to her.  
When late I left Caerleon, our great Queen,  
In words whose echo lasts, they were so sweet,  
Made promise, that whatever bride I brought,  
Herself would clothe her like the sun in Heaven.  
Thereafter, when I reached this ruined hall,  
Beholding one so bright in dark estate,  
I vowed that could I gain her, our fair Queen,  
No hand but hers, should make your Enid burst  
Sunlike from cloud—and likewise thought perhaps,  
That service done so graciously would bind  
The two together; fain I would the two  
Should love each other: how can Enid find  
A nobler friend? Another thought was mine;  
I came among you here so suddenly,  
That though her gentle presence at the lists  
Might well have served for proof that I was loved,  
I doubted whether daughter's tenderness,  
Or easy nature, might not let itself  
Be moulded by your wishes for her weal;  
Or whether some false sense in her own self  
Of my contrasting brightness, overbore  
Her fancy dwelling in this dusky hall;  
And such a sense might make her long for court  
And all its perilous glories: and I thought,  
That could I somehow prove such force in her  
Linked with such love for me, that at a word  
(No reason given her) she could cast aside  
A splendour dear to women, new to her,  
And therefore dearer; or if not so new,  
Yet therefore tenfold dearer by the power  
Of intermitted usage; then I felt

That I could rest, a rock in ebbs and flows,  
Fixt on her faith. Now, therefore, I do rest,  
A prophet certain of my prophecy,  
That never shadow of mistrust can cross  
Between us. Grant me pardon for my thoughts:  
And for my strange petition I will make  
Amends hereafter by some gaudy-day,  
When your fair child shall wear your costly gift  
Beside your own warm hearth, with, on her knees,  
Who knows? another gift of the high God,  
Which, maybe, shall have learned to lisp you thanks.'

He spoke: the mother smiled, but half in tears,  
Then brought a mantle down and wrapt her in it,  
And claspt and kissed her, and they rode away.

Now thrice that morning Guinevere had climbed  
The giant tower, from whose high crest, they say,  
Men saw the goodly hills of Somerset,  
And white sails flying on the yellow sea;  
But not to goodly hill or yellow sea  
Looked the fair Queen, but up the vale of Usk,  
By the flat meadow, till she saw them come;  
And then descending met them at the gates,  
Embraced her with all welcome as a friend,  
And did her honour as the Prince's bride,  
And clothed her for her bridals like the sun;  
And all that week was old Caerleon gay,  
For by the hands of Dubric, the high saint,  
They twain were wedded with all ceremony.

And this was on the last year's Whitsuntide.  
But Enid ever kept the faded silk,  
Remembering how first he came on her,  
Drest in that dress, and how he loved her in it,  
And all her foolish fears about the dress,  
And all his journey toward her, as himself  
Had told her, and their coming to the court.

And now this morning when he said to her,  
'Put on your worst and meanest dress,' she found  
And took it, and arrayed herself therein.

## Geraint and Enid

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O purblind race of miserable men,  
How many among us at this very hour  
Do forge a life-long trouble for ourselves,  
By taking true for false, or false for true;  
Here, through the feeble twilight of this world  
Groping, how many, until we pass and reach  
That other, where we see as we are seen!

So fared it with Geraint, who issuing forth  
That morning, when they both had got to horse,  
Perhaps because he loved her passionately,  
And felt that tempest brooding round his heart,  
Which, if he spoke at all, would break perforce  
Upon a head so dear in thunder, said:  
'Not at my side. I charge thee ride before,  
Ever a good way on before; and this  
I charge thee, on thy duty as a wife,  
Whatever happens, not to speak to me,  
No, not a word!' and Enid was aghast;  
And forth they rode, but scarce three paces on,  
When crying out, 'Effeminate as I am,  
I will not fight my way with gilded arms,  
All shall be iron;' he loosed a mighty purse,  
Hung at his belt, and hurled it toward the squire.  
So the last sight that Enid had of home  
Was all the marble threshold flashing, strown  
With gold and scattered coinage, and the squire  
Chafing his shoulder: then he cried again,  
'To the wilds!' and Enid leading down the tracks  
Through which he had her lead him on, they past  
The marches, and by bandit-haunted holds,  
Gray swamps and pools, waste places of the hern,



And wildernesses, perilous paths, they rode:  
Round was their pace at first, but slackened soon:  
A stranger meeting them had surely thought  
They rode so slowly and they looked so pale,  
That each had suffered some exceeding wrong.  
For he was ever saying to himself,  
'O I that wasted time to tend upon her,  
To compass her with sweet observances,  
To dress her beautifully and keep her true'—  
And there he broke the sentence in his heart  
Abruptly, as a man upon his tongue  
May break it, when his passion masters him.  
And she was ever praying the sweet heavens  
To save her dear lord whole from any wound.  
And ever in her mind she cast about  
For that unnoticed failing in herself,  
Which made him look so cloudy and so cold;  
Till the great plover's human whistle amazed  
Her heart, and glancing round the waste she feared  
In ever wavering brake an ambushade.  
Then thought again, 'If there be such in me,  
I might amend it by the grace of Heaven,  
If he would only speak and tell me of it.'

But when the fourth part of the day was gone,  
Then Enid was aware of three tall knights  
On horseback, wholly armed, behind a rock  
In shadow, waiting for them, caitiffs all;  
And heard one crying to his fellow, 'Look,  
Here comes a laggard hanging down his head,  
Who seems no bolder than a beaten hound;  
Come, we will slay him and will have his horse  
And armour, and his damsel shall be ours.'

Then Enid pondered in her heart, and said:  
'I will go back a little to my lord,  
And I will tell him all their caitiff talk;  
For, be he wroth even to slaying me,  
Far liefer by his dear hand had I die,  
Than that my lord should suffer loss or shame.'

Then she went back some paces of return,

Met his full frown timidly firm, and said;  
'My lord, I saw three bandits by the rock  
Waiting to fall on you, and heard them boast  
That they would slay you, and possess your horse  
And armour, and your damsel should be theirs.'

He made a wrathful answer: 'Did I wish  
Your warning or your silence? one command  
I laid upon you, not to speak to me,  
And thus ye keep it! Well then, look—for now,  
Whether ye wish me victory or defeat,  
Long for my life, or hunger for my death,  
Yourself shall see my vigour is not lost.'

Then Enid waited pale and sorrowful,  
And down upon him bare the bandit three.  
And at the midmost charging, Prince Geraint  
Drove the long spear a cubit through his breast  
And out beyond; and then against his brace  
Of comrades, each of whom had broken on him  
A lance that splintered like an icicle,  
Swung from his brand a windy buffet out  
Once, twice, to right, to left, and stunned the twain  
Or slew them, and dismounting like a man  
That skins the wild beast after slaying him,  
Stript from the three dead wolves of woman born  
The three gay suits of armour which they wore,  
And let the bodies lie, but bound the suits  
Of armour on their horses, each on each,  
And tied the bridle-reins of all the three  
Together, and said to her, 'Drive them on  
Before you;' and she drove them through the waste.

He followed nearer; ruth began to work  
Against his anger in him, while he watched  
The being he loved best in all the world,  
With difficulty in mild obedience  
Driving them on: he fain had spoken to her,  
And loosed in words of sudden fire the wrath  
And smouldered wrong that burnt him all within;  
But evermore it seemed an easier thing  
At once without remorse to strike her dead,

Than to cry 'Halt,' and to her own bright face  
Accuse her of the least immodesty:  
And thus tongue-tied, it made him wroth the more  
That she could speak whom his own ear had heard  
Call herself false:and suffering thus he made  
Minutes an age:but in scarce longer time  
Than at Caerleon the full-tided Usk,  
Before he turn to fall seaward again,  
Pauses, did Enid, keeping watch, behold  
In the first shallow shade of a deep wood,  
Before a gloom of stubborn-shafted oaks,  
Three other horsemen waiting, wholly armed,  
Whereof one seemed far larger than her lord,  
And shook her pulses, crying, 'Look, a prize!  
Three horses and three goodly suits of arms,  
And all in charge of whom? a girl:set on.'  
'Nay,' said the second, 'yonder comes a knight.'  
The third, 'A craven; how he hangs his head.'  
The giant answered merrily, 'Yea, but one?  
Wait here, and when he passes fall upon him.'

And Enid pondered in her heart and said,  
'I will abide the coming of my lord,  
And I will tell him all their villainy.  
My lord is weary with the fight before,  
And they will fall upon him unawares.  
I needs must disobey him for his good;  
How should I dare obey him to his harm?  
Needs must I speak, and though he kill me for it,  
I save a life dearer to me than mine.'

And she abode his coming, and said to him  
With timid firmness, 'Have I leave to speak?'  
He said, 'Ye take it, speaking,' and she spoke.

'There lurk three villains yonder in the wood,  
And each of them is wholly armed, and one  
Is larger-limbed than you are, and they say  
That they will fall upon you while ye pass.'

To which he flung a wrathful answer back:  
'And if there were an hundred in the wood,  
And every man were larger-limbed than I,

And all at once should sally out upon me,  
I swear it would not ruffle me so much  
As you that not obey me. Stand aside,  
And if I fall, cleave to the better man.'

And Enid stood aside to wait the event,  
Not dare to watch the combat, only breathe  
Short fits of prayer, at every stroke a breath.  
And he, she dreaded most, bare down upon him.  
Aimed at the helm, his lance erred; but Geraint's,  
A little in the late encounter strained,  
Struck through the bulky bandit's corselet home,  
And then brake short, and down his enemy rolled,  
And there lay still; as he that tells the tale  
Saw once a great piece of a promontory,  
That had a sapling growing on it, slide  
From the long shore-cliff's windy walls to the beach,  
And there lie still, and yet the sapling grew:  
So lay the man transfixt. His craven pair  
Of comrades making slowlier at the Prince,  
When now they saw their bulwark fallen, stood;  
On whom the victor, to confound them more,  
Spurred with his terrible war-cry; for as one,  
That listens near a torrent mountain-brook,  
All through the crash of the near cataract hears  
The drumming thunder of the huger fall  
At distance, were the soldiers wont to hear  
His voice in battle, and be kindled by it,  
And foemen scared, like that false pair who turned  
Flying, but, overtaken, died the death  
Themselves had wrought on many an innocent.

Thereon Geraint, dismounting, picked the lance  
That pleased him best, and drew from those dead wolves  
Their three gay suits of armour, each from each,  
And bound them on their horses, each on each,  
And tied the bridle-reins of all the three  
Together, and said to her, 'Drive them on  
Before you,' and she drove them through the wood.

He followed nearer still: the pain she had  
To keep them in the wild ways of the wood,

Two sets of three laden with jingling arms,  
Together, served a little to disedge  
The sharpness of that pain about her heart:  
And they themselves, like creatures gently born  
But into bad hands fallen, and now so long  
By bandits groomed, pricked their light ears, and felt  
Her low firm voice and tender government.

So through the green gloom of the wood they past,  
And issuing under open heavens beheld  
A little town with towers, upon a rock,  
And close beneath, a meadow gemlike chased  
In the brown wild, and mowers mowing in it:  
And down a rocky pathway from the place  
There came a fair-haired youth, that in his hand  
Bare victual for the mowers:and Geraint  
Had ruth again on Enid looking pale:  
Then, moving downward to the meadow ground,  
He, when the fair-haired youth came by him, said,  
'Friend, let her eat; the damsel is so faint.'  
'Yea, willingly,' replied the youth; 'and thou,  
My lord, eat also, though the fare is coarse,  
And only meet for mowers;' then set down  
His basket, and dismounting on the sward  
They let the horses graze, and ate themselves.  
And Enid took a little delicately,  
Less having stomach for it than desire  
To close with her lord's pleasure; but Geraint  
Ate all the mowers' victual unawares,  
And when he found all empty, was amazed;  
And 'Boy,' said he, 'I have eaten all, but take  
A horse and arms for guerdon; choose the best.'  
He, reddening in extremity of delight,  
'My lord, you overpay me fifty-fold.'  
'Ye will be all the wealthier,' cried the Prince.  
'I take it as free gift, then,' said the boy,  
'Not guerdon; for myself can easily,  
While your good damsel rests, return, and fetch  
Fresh victual for these mowers of our Earl;  
For these are his, and all the field is his,

And I myself am his; and I will tell him  
How great a man thou art:he loves to know  
When men of mark are in his territory:  
And he will have thee to his palace here,  
And serve thee costlier than with mowers' fare.'

Then said Geraint, 'I wish no better fare:  
I never ate with angrier appetite  
Than when I left your mowers dinnerless.  
And into no Earl's palace will I go.  
I know, God knows, too much of palaces!  
And if he want me, let him come to me.  
But hire us some fair chamber for the night,  
And stalling for the horses, and return  
With victual for these men, and let us know.'

'Yea, my kind lord,' said the glad youth, and went,  
Held his head high, and thought himself a knight,  
And up the rocky pathway disappeared,  
Leading the horse, and they were left alone.

But when the Prince had brought his errant eyes  
Home from the rock, sideways he let them glance  
At Enid, where she droopt:his own false doom,  
That shadow of mistrust should never cross  
Betwixt them, came upon him, and he sighed;  
Then with another humorous ruth remarked  
The lusty mowers labouring dinnerless,  
And watched the sun blaze on the turning scythe,  
And after nodded sleepily in the heat.  
But she, remembering her old ruined hall,  
And all the windy clamour of the daws  
About her hollow turret, plucked the grass  
There growing longest by the meadow's edge,  
And into many a listless annulet,  
Now over, now beneath her marriage ring,  
Wove and unwove it, till the boy returned  
And told them of a chamber, and they went;  
Where, after saying to her, 'If ye will,  
Call for the woman of the house,' to which  
She answered, 'Thanks, my lord;' the two remained  
Apart by all the chamber's width, and mute

As two creatures voiceless through the fault of birth,  
Or two wild men supporters of a shield,  
Painted, who stare at open space, nor glance  
The one at other, parted by the shield.

On a sudden, many a voice along the street,  
And heel against the pavement echoing, burst  
Their drowse; and either started while the door,  
Pushed from without, drave backward to the wall,  
And midmost of a rout of roisterers,  
Femininely fair and dissolutely pale,  
Her suitor in old years before Geraint,  
Entered, the wild lord of the place, Limours.  
He moving up with pliant courtliness,  
Greeted Geraint full face, but stealthily,  
In the mid-warmth of welcome and graspt hand,  
Found Enid with the corner of his eye,  
And knew her sitting sad and solitary.  
Then cried Geraint for wine and goodly cheer  
To feed the sudden guest, and sumptuously  
According to his fashion, bad the host  
Call in what men soever were his friends,  
And feast with these in honour of their Earl;  
'And care not for the cost; the cost is mine.'

And wine and food were brought, and Earl Limours  
Drank till he jested with all ease, and told  
Free tales, and took the word and played upon it,  
And made it of two colours; for his talk,  
When wine and free companions kindled him,  
Was wont to glance and sparkle like a gem  
Of fifty facets; thus he moved the Prince  
To laughter and his comrades to applause.  
Then, when the Prince was merry, asked Limours,  
'Your leave, my lord, to cross the room, and speak  
To your good damsel there who sits apart,  
And seems so lonely?' 'My free leave,' he said;  
'Get her to speak: she doth not speak to me.'  
Then rose Limours, and looking at his feet,  
Like him who tries the bridge he fears may fail,  
Crost and came near, lifted adoring eyes,

Bowed at her side and uttered whisperingly:  
'Enid, the pilot star of my lone life,  
Enid, my early and my only love,  
Enid, the loss of whom hath turned me wild—  
What chance is this? how is it I see you here?  
Ye are in my power at last, are in my power.  
Yet fear me not:I call mine own self wild,  
But keep a touch of sweet civility  
Here in the heart of waste and wilderness.  
I thought, but that your father came between,  
In former days you saw me favourably.  
And if it were so do not keep it back:  
Make me a little happier:let me know it:  
Owe you me nothing for a life half-lost?  
Yea, yea, the whole dear debt of all you are.  
And, Enid, you and he, I see with joy,  
Ye sit apart, you do not speak to him,  
You come with no attendance, page or maid,  
To serve you—doth he love you as of old?  
For, call it lovers' quarrels, yet I know  
Though men may bicker with the things they love,  
They would not make them laughable in all eyes,  
Not while they loved them; and your wretched dress,  
A wretched insult on you, dumbly speaks  
Your story, that this man loves you no more.  
Your beauty is no beauty to him now:  
A common chance—right well I know it—palled—  
For I know men:nor will ye win him back,  
For the man's love once gone never returns.  
But here is one who loves you as of old;  
With more exceeding passion than of old:  
Good, speak the word:my followers ring him round:  
He sits unarmed; I hold a finger up;  
They understand:nay; I do not mean blood:  
Nor need ye look so scared at what I say:  
My malice is no deeper than a moat,  
No stronger than a wall:there is the keep;  
He shall not cross us more; speak but the word:  
Or speak it not; but then by Him that made me



The one true lover whom you ever owned,  
I will make use of all the power I have.  
O pardon me! the madness of that hour,  
When first I parted from thee, moves me yet.'

At this the tender sound of his own voice  
And sweet self-pity, or the fancy of it,  
Made his eye moist; but Enid feared his eyes,  
Moist as they were, wine-heated from the feast;  
And answered with such craft as women use,  
Guilty or guiltless, to stave off a chance  
That breaks upon them perilously, and said:

'Earl, if you love me as in former years,  
And do not practise on me, come with morn,  
And snatch me from him as by violence;  
Leave me tonight: I am weary to the death.'

Low at leave-taking, with his brandished plume  
Brushing his instep, bowed the all-amorous Earl,  
And the stout Prince bad him a loud good-night.  
He moving homeward babbled to his men,  
How Enid never loved a man but him,  
Nor cared a broken egg-shell for her lord.

But Enid left alone with Prince Geraint,  
Debating his command of silence given,  
And that she now perforce must violate it,  
Held commune with herself, and while she held  
He fell asleep, and Enid had no heart  
To wake him, but hung o'er him, wholly pleased  
To find him yet unwounded after fight,  
And hear him breathing low and equally.  
Anon she rose, and stepping lightly, heaped  
The pieces of his armour in one place,  
All to be there against a sudden need;  
Then dozed awhile herself, but overtoiled  
By that day's grief and travel, evermore  
Seemed catching at a rootless thorn, and then  
Went slipping down horrible precipices,  
And strongly striking out her limbs awoke;  
Then thought she heard the wild Earl at the door,  
With all his rout of random followers,

Sound on a dreadful trumpet, summoning her;  
Which was the red cock shouting to the light,  
As the gray dawn stole o'er the dewy world,  
And glimmered on his armour in the room.  
And once again she rose to look at it,  
But touched it unawares: jangling, the casque  
Fell, and he started up and stared at her.  
Then breaking his command of silence given,  
She told him all that Earl Limours had said,  
Except the passage that he loved her not;  
Nor left untold the craft herself had used;  
But ended with apology so sweet,  
Low-spoken, and of so few words, and seemed  
So justified by that necessity,  
That though he thought 'was it for him she wept  
In Devon?' he but gave a wrathful groan,  
Saying, 'Your sweet faces make good fellows fools  
And traitors. Call the host and bid him bring  
Charger and palfrey.' So she glided out  
Among the heavy breathings of the house,  
And like a household Spirit at the walls  
Beat, till she woke the sleepers, and returned:  
Then tending her rough lord, though all unasked,  
In silence, did him service as a squire;  
Till issuing armed he found the host and cried,  
'Thy reckoning, friend?' and ere he learnt it, 'Take  
Five horses and their armours;' and the host  
Suddenly honest, answered in amaze,  
'My lord, I scarce have spent the worth of one!'  
'Ye will be all the wealthier,' said the Prince,  
And then to Enid, 'Forward! and today  
I charge you, Enid, more especially,  
What thing soever ye may hear, or see,  
Or fancy (though I count it of small use  
To charge you) that ye speak not but obey.'

And Enid answered, 'Yea, my lord, I know  
Your wish, and would obey; but riding first,  
I hear the violent threats you do not hear,  
I see the danger which you cannot see:

Then not to give you warning, that seems hard;  
Almost beyond me: yet I would obey.'

'Yea so,' said he, 'do it: be not too wise;  
Seeing that ye are wedded to a man,  
Not all mismated with a yawning clown,  
But one with arms to guard his head and yours,  
With eyes to find you out however far,  
And ears to hear you even in his dreams.'

With that he turned and looked as keenly at her  
As careful robins eye the delver's toil;  
And that within her, which a wanton fool,  
Or hasty judger would have called her guilt,  
Made her cheek burn and either eyelid fall.  
And Geraint looked and was not satisfied.

Then forward by a way which, beaten broad,  
Led from the territory of false Limours  
To the waste earldom of another earl,  
Doorm, whom his shaking vassals called the Bull,  
Went Enid with her sullen follower on.  
Once she looked back, and when she saw him ride  
More near by many a rood than yesternorn,  
It wellnigh made her cheerful; till Geraint  
Waving an angry hand as who should say  
'Ye watch me,' saddened all her heart again.  
But while the sun yet beat a dewy blade,  
The sound of many a heavily-galloping hoof  
Smote on her ear, and turning round she saw  
Dust, and the points of lances bicker in it.  
Then not to disobey her lord's behest,  
And yet to give him warning, for he rode  
As if he heard not, moving back she held  
Her finger up, and pointed to the dust.  
At which the warrior in his obstinacy,  
Because she kept the letter of his word,  
Was in a manner pleased, and turning, stood.  
And in the moment after, wild Limours,  
Borne on a black horse, like a thunder-cloud  
Whose skirts are loosened by the breaking storm,  
Half ridden off with by the thing he rode,

And all in passion uttering a dry shriek,  
Dashed down on Geraint, who closed with him, and bore  
Down by the length of lance and arm beyond  
The crupper, and so left him stunned or dead,  
And overthrew the next that followed him,  
And blindly rushed on all the rout behind.  
But at the flash and motion of the man  
They vanished panic-stricken, like a shoal  
Of darting fish, that on a summer morn  
Adown the crystal dykes at Camelot  
Come slipping o'er their shadows on the sand,  
But if a man who stands upon the brink  
But lift a shining hand against the sun,  
There is not left the twinkle of a fin  
Betwixt the cressy islets white in flower;  
So, scared but at the motion of the man,  
Fled all the boon companions of the Earl,  
And left him lying in the public way;  
So vanish friendships only made in wine.

Then like a stormy sunlight smiled Geraint,  
Who saw the chargers of the two that fell  
Start from their fallen lords, and wildly fly,  
Mixt with the flyers. 'Horse and man,' he said,  
'All of one mind and all right-honest friends!  
Not a hoof left: and I methinks till now  
Was honest—paid with horses and with arms;  
I cannot steal or plunder, no nor beg:  
And so what say ye, shall we strip him there  
Your lover? has your palfrey heart enough  
To bear his armour? shall we fast, or dine?  
No?—then do thou, being right honest, pray  
That we may meet the horsemen of Earl Doorm,  
I too would still be honest.' Thus he said:  
And sadly gazing on her bridle-reins,  
And answering not one word, she led the way.

But as a man to whom a dreadful loss  
Falls in a far land and he knows it not,  
But coming back he learns it, and the loss  
So pains him that he sickens nigh to death;

So fared it with Geraint, who being pricked  
In combat with the follower of Limours,  
Bled underneath his armour secretly,  
And so rode on, nor told his gentle wife  
What ailed him, hardly knowing it himself,  
Till his eye darkened and his helmet wagged;  
And at a sudden swerving of the road,  
Though happily down on a bank of grass,  
The Prince, without a word, from his horse fell.

And Enid heard the clashing of his fall,  
Suddenly came, and at his side all pale  
Dismounting, loosed the fastenings of his arms,  
Nor let her true hand falter, nor blue eye  
Moisten, till she had lighted on his wound,  
And tearing off her veil of faded silk  
Had bared her forehead to the blistering sun,  
And swathed the hurt that drained her dear lord's life.  
Then after all was done that hand could do,  
She rested, and her desolation came  
Upon her, and she wept beside the way.

And many past, but none regarded her,  
For in that realm of lawless turbulence,  
A woman weeping for her murdered mate  
Was cared as much for as a summer shower:  
One took him for a victim of Earl Doorm,  
Nor dared to waste a perilous pity on him:  
Another hurrying past, a man-at-arms,  
Rode on a mission to the bandit Earl;  
Half whistling and half singing a coarse song,  
He drove the dust against her veiless eyes:  
Another, flying from the wrath of Doorm  
Before an ever-fancied arrow, made  
The long way smoke beneath him in his fear;  
At which her palfrey whinnying lifted heel,  
And scoured into the coppices and was lost,  
While the great charger stood, grieved like a man.

But at the point of noon the huge Earl Doorm,  
Broad-faced with under-fringe of russet beard,  
Bound on a foray, rolling eyes of prey,

Came riding with a hundred lances up;  
But ere he came, like one that hails a ship,  
Cried out with a big voice, 'What, is he dead?'  
'No, no, not dead!' she answered in all haste.  
'Would some of your people take him up,  
And bear him hence out of this cruel sun?  
Most sure am I, quite sure, he is not dead.'

Then said Earl Doorm: 'Well, if he be not dead,  
Why wail ye for him thus? ye seem a child.  
And be he dead, I count you for a fool;  
Your wailing will not quicken him: dead or not,  
Ye mar a comely face with idiot tears.  
Yet, since the face is comely—some of you,  
Here, take him up, and bear him to our hall:  
An if he live, we will have him of our band;  
And if he die, why earth has earth enough  
To hide him. See ye take the charger too,  
A noble one.'

He spake, and past away,  
But left two brawny spearmen, who advanced,  
Each growling like a dog, when his good bone  
Seems to be plucked at by the village boys  
Who love to vex him eating, and he fears  
To lose his bone, and lays his foot upon it,  
Gnawing and growling: so the ruffians growled,  
Fearing to lose, and all for a dead man,  
Their chance of booty from the morning's raid,  
Yet raised and laid him on a litter-bier,  
Such as they brought upon their forays out  
For those that might be wounded; laid him on it  
All in the hollow of his shield, and took  
And bore him to the naked hall of Doorm,  
(His gentle charger following him unled)  
And cast him and the bier in which he lay  
Down on an oaken settle in the hall,  
And then departed, hot in haste to join  
Their luckier mates, but growling as before,  
And cursing their lost time, and the dead man,  
And their own Earl, and their own souls, and her.

They might as well have blest her:she was deaf  
To blessing or to cursing save from one.

So for long hours sat Enid by her lord,  
There in the naked hall, propping his head,  
And chafing his pale hands, and calling to him.  
Till at the last he wakened from his swoon,  
And found his own dear bride propping his head,  
And chafing his faint hands, and calling to him;  
And felt the warm tears falling on his face;  
And said to his own heart, 'She weeps for me:'  
And yet lay still, and feigned himself as dead,  
That he might prove her to the uttermost,  
And say to his own heart, 'She weeps for me.'

But in the falling afternoon returned  
The huge Earl Doorm with plunder to the hall.  
His lusty spearmen followed him with noise:  
Each hurling down a heap of things that rang  
Against his pavement, cast his lance aside,  
And doffed his helm:and then there fluttered in,  
Half-bold, half-frighted, with dilated eyes,  
A tribe of women, dressed in many hues,  
And mingled with the spearmen:and Earl Doorm  
Struck with a knife's haft hard against the board,  
And called for flesh and wine to feed his spears.  
And men brought in whole hogs and quarter beeves,  
And all the hall was dim with steam of flesh:  
And none spake word, but all sat down at once,  
And ate with tumult in the naked hall,  
Feeding like horses when you hear them feed;  
Till Enid shrank far back into herself,  
To shun the wild ways of the lawless tribe.  
But when Earl Doorm had eaten all he would,  
He rolled his eyes about the hall, and found  
A damsel drooping in a corner of it.  
Then he remembered her, and how she wept;  
And out of her there came a power upon him;  
And rising on the sudden he said, 'Eat!  
I never yet beheld a thing so pale.  
God's curse, it makes me mad to see you weep.'

Eat! Look yourself. Good luck had your good man,  
For were I dead who is it would weep for me?  
Sweet lady, never since I first drew breath  
Have I beheld a lily like yourself.  
And so there lived some colour in your cheek,  
There is not one among my gentlewomen  
Were fit to wear your slipper for a glove.  
But listen to me, and by me be ruled,  
And I will do the thing I have not done,  
For ye shall share my earldom with me, girl,  
And we will live like two birds in one nest,  
And I will fetch you forage from all fields,  
For I compel all creatures to my will.'

He spoke: the brawny spearman let his cheek  
Bulge with the unswallowed piece, and turning stared;  
While some, whose souls the old serpent long had drawn  
Down, as the worm draws in the withered leaf  
And makes it earth, hissed each at other's ear  
What shall not be recorded—women they,  
Women, or what had been those gracious things,  
But now desired the humbling of their best,  
Yea, would have helped him to it: and all at once  
They hated her, who took no thought of them,  
But answered in low voice, her meek head yet  
Drooping, 'I pray you of your courtesy,  
He being as he is, to let me be.'

She spake so low he hardly heard her speak,  
But like a mighty patron, satisfied  
With what himself had done so graciously,  
Assumed that she had thanked him, adding, 'Yea,  
Eat and be glad, for I account you mine.'

She answered meekly, 'How should I be glad  
Henceforth in all the world at anything,  
Until my lord arise and look upon me?'

Here the huge Earl cried out upon her talk,  
As all but empty heart and weariness  
And sickly nothing; suddenly seized on her,  
And bare her by main violence to the board,  
And thrust the dish before her, crying, 'Eat.'



'No, no,' said Enid, vext, 'I will not eat  
Till yonder man upon the bier arise,  
And eat with me.' 'Drink, then,' he answered. 'Here!'  
(And filled a horn with wine and held it to her,)  
'Lo! I, myself, when flushed with fight, or hot,  
God's curse, with anger—often I myself,  
Before I well have drunken, scarce can eat:  
Drink therefore and the wine will change thy will.'

'Not so,' she cried, 'by Heaven, I will not drink  
Till my dear lord arise and bid me do it,  
And drink with me; and if he rise no more,  
I will not look at wine until I die.'

At this he turned all red and paced his hall,  
Now gnawed his under, now his upper lip,  
And coming up close to her, said at last:  
'Girl, for I see ye scorn my courtesies,  
Take warning: yonder man is surely dead;  
And I compel all creatures to my will.  
Not eat nor drink? And wherefore wail for one,  
Who put your beauty to this flout and scorn  
By dressing it in rags? Amazed am I,  
Beholding how ye butt against my wish,  
That I forbear you thus: cross me no more.  
At least put off to please me this poor gown,  
This silken rag, this beggar-woman's weed:  
I love that beauty should go beautifully:  
For see ye not my gentlewomen here,  
How gay, how suited to the house of one  
Who loves that beauty should go beautifully?  
Rise therefore; robe yourself in this: obey.'

He spoke, and one among his gentlewomen  
Displayed a splendid silk of foreign loom,  
Where like a shoaling sea the lovely blue  
Played into green, and thicker down the front  
With jewels than the sward with drops of dew,  
When all night long a cloud clings to the hill,  
And with the dawn ascending lets the day  
Strike where it clung: so thickly shone the gems.

But Enid answered, harder to be moved

Than hardest tyrants in their day of power,  
With life-long injuries burning unavenged,  
And now their hour has come; and Enid said:

'In this poor gown my dear lord found me first,  
And loved me serving in my father's hall:  
In this poor gown I rode with him to court,  
And there the Queen arrayed me like the sun:  
In this poor gown he bad me clothe myself,  
When now we rode upon this fatal quest  
Of honour, where no honour can be gained:  
And this poor gown I will not cast aside  
Until himself arise a living man,  
And bid me cast it. I have griefs enough:  
Pray you be gentle, pray you let me be:  
I never loved, can never love but him:  
Yea, God, I pray you of your gentleness,  
He being as he is, to let me be.'

Then strode the brute Earl up and down his hall,  
And took his russet beard between his teeth;  
Last, coming up quite close, and in his mood  
Crying, 'I count it of no more avail,  
Dame, to be gentle than ungentle with you;  
Take my salute,' unknighly with flat hand,  
However lightly, smote her on the cheek.

Then Enid, in her utter helplessness,  
And since she thought, 'He had not dared to do it,  
Except he surely knew my lord was dead,'  
Sent forth a sudden sharp and bitter cry,  
As of a wild thing taken in the trap,  
Which sees the trapper coming through the wood.

This heard Geraint, and grasping at his sword,  
(It lay beside him in the hollow shield),  
Made but a single bound, and with a sweep of it  
Shore through the swarthy neck, and like a ball  
The russet-bearded head rolled on the floor.  
So died Earl Doorm by him he counted dead.  
And all the men and women in the hall  
Rose when they saw the dead man rise, and fled  
Yelling as from a spectre, and the two

Were left alone together, and he said:

'Enid, I have used you worse than that dead man;  
Done you more wrong:we both have undergone  
That trouble which has left me thrice your own:  
Henceforward I will rather die than doubt.  
And here I lay this penance on myself,  
Not, though mine own ears heard you yestermorn—  
You thought me sleeping, but I heard you say,  
I heard you say, that you were no true wife:  
I swear I will not ask your meaning in it:  
I do believe yourself against yourself,  
And will henceforward rather die than doubt.'

And Enid could not say one tender word,  
She felt so blunt and stupid at the heart:  
She only prayed him, 'Fly, they will return  
And slay you; fly, your charger is without,  
My palfrey lost.'"Then, Enid, shall you ride  
Behind me."Yea,' said Enid, 'let us go.'  
And moving out they found the stately horse,  
Who now no more a vassal to the thief,  
But free to stretch his limbs in lawful fight,  
Neighed with all gladness as they came, and stooped  
With a low whinny toward the pair:and she  
Kissed the white star upon his noble front,  
Glad also; then Geraint upon the horse  
Mounted, and reached a hand, and on his foot  
She set her own and climbed; he turned his face  
And kissed her climbing, and she cast her arms  
About him, and at once they rode away.

And never yet, since high in Paradise  
O'er the four rivers the first roses blew,  
Came purer pleasure unto mortal kind  
Than lived through her, who in that perilous hour  
Put hand to hand beneath her husband's heart,  
And felt him hers again:she did not weep,  
But o'er her meek eyes came a happy mist  
Like that which kept the heart of Eden green  
Before the useful trouble of the rain:  
Yet not so misty were her meek blue eyes

As not to see before them on the path,  
Right in the gateway of the bandit hold,  
A knight of Arthur's court, who laid his lance  
In rest, and made as if to fall upon him.  
Then, fearing for his hurt and loss of blood,  
She, with her mind all full of what had chanced,  
Shrieked to the stranger 'Slay not a dead man!'  
'The voice of Enid,' said the knight; but she,  
Beholding it was Edyrn son of Nudd,  
Was moved so much the more, and shrieked again,  
'O cousin, slay not him who gave you life.'  
And Edyrn moving frankly forward spake:  
'My lord Geraint, I greet you with all love;  
I took you for a bandit knight of Doorm;  
And fear not, Enid, I should fall upon him,  
Who love you, Prince, with something of the love  
Wherewith we love the Heaven that chastens us.  
For once, when I was up so high in pride  
That I was halfway down the slope to Hell,  
By overthrowing me you threw me higher.  
Now, made a knight of Arthur's Table Round,  
And since I knew this Earl, when I myself  
Was half a bandit in my lawless hour,  
I come the mouthpiece of our King to Doorm  
(The King is close behind me) bidding him  
Disband himself, and scatter all his powers,  
Submit, and hear the judgment of the King.'

'He hears the judgment of the King of kings,'  
Cried the wan Prince; 'and lo, the powers of Doorm  
Are scattered,' and he pointed to the field,  
Where, huddled here and there on mound and knoll,  
Were men and women staring and aghast,  
While some yet fled; and then he plainlier told  
How the huge Earl lay slain within his hall.  
But when the knight besought him, 'Follow me,  
Prince, to the camp, and in the King's own ear  
Speak what has chanced; ye surely have endured  
Strange chances here alone;' that other flushed,  
And hung his head, and halted in reply,

Fearing the mild face of the blameless King,  
And after madness acted question asked:  
Till Edyrn crying, 'If ye will not go  
To Arthur, then will Arthur come to you,'  
'Enough,' he said, 'I follow,' and they went.  
But Enid in their going had two fears,  
One from the bandit scattered in the field,  
And one from Edyrn. Every now and then,  
When Edyrn reined his charger at her side,  
She shrank a little. In a hollow land,  
From which old fires have broken, men may fear  
Fresh fire and ruin. He, perceiving, said:

'Fair and dear cousin, you that most had cause  
To fear me, fear no longer, I am changed.  
Yourself were first the blameless cause to make  
My nature's prideful sparkle in the blood  
Break into furious flame; being repulsed  
By Yniol and yourself, I schemed and wrought  
Until I overturned him; then set up  
(With one main purpose ever at my heart)  
My haughty jousts, and took a paramour;  
Did her mock-honour as the fairest fair,  
And, toppling over all antagonism,  
So waxed in pride, that I believed myself  
Unconquerable, for I was wellnigh mad:  
And, but for my main purpose in these jousts,  
I should have slain your father, seized yourself.  
I lived in hope that sometime you would come  
To these my lists with him whom best you loved;  
And there, poor cousin, with your meek blue eyes  
The truest eyes that ever answered Heaven,  
Behold me overturn and trample on him.  
Then, had you cried, or knelt, or prayed to me,  
I should not less have killed him. And so you came,—  
But once you came,—and with your own true eyes  
Beheld the man you loved (I speak as one  
Speaks of a service done him) overthrow  
My proud self, and my purpose three years old,  
And set his foot upon me, and give me life.

There was I broken down; there was I saved:  
Though thence I rode all-shamed, hating the life  
He gave me, meaning to be rid of it.  
And all the penance the Queen laid upon me  
Was but to rest awhile within her court;  
Where first as sullen as a beast new-caged,  
And waiting to be treated like a wolf,  
Because I knew my deeds were known, I found,  
Instead of scornful pity or pure scorn,  
Such fine reserve and noble reticence,  
Manners so kind, yet stately, such a grace  
Of tenderest courtesy, that I began  
To glance behind me at my former life,  
And find that it had been the wolf's indeed:  
And oft I talked with Dubric, the high saint,  
Who, with mild heat of holy oratory,  
Subdued me somewhat to that gentleness,  
Which, when it weds with manhood, makes a man.  
And you were often there about the Queen,  
But saw me not, or marked not if you saw;  
Nor did I care or dare to speak with you,  
But kept myself aloof till I was changed;  
And fear not, cousin; I am changed indeed.'

He spoke, and Enid easily believed,  
Like simple noble natures, credulous  
Of what they long for, good in friend or foe,  
There most in those who most have done them ill.  
And when they reached the camp the King himself  
Advanced to greet them, and beholding her  
Though pale, yet happy, asked her not a word,  
But went apart with Edyrn, whom he held  
In converse for a little, and returned,  
And, gravely smiling, lifted her from horse,  
And kissed her with all pureness, brother-like,  
And showed an empty tent allotted her,  
And glancing for a minute, till he saw her  
Pass into it, turned to the Prince, and said:

'Prince, when of late ye prayed me for my leave  
To move to your own land, and there defend

Your marches, I was pricked with some reproof,  
As one that let foul wrong stagnate and be,  
By having looked too much through alien eyes,  
And wrought too long with delegated hands,  
Not used mine own:but now behold me come  
To cleanse this common sewer of all my realm,  
With Edyrn and with others:have ye looked  
At Edyrn? have ye seen how nobly changed?  
This work of his is great and wonderful.  
His very face with change of heart is changed.  
The world will not believe a man repents:  
And this wise world of ours is mainly right.  
Full seldom doth a man repent, or use  
Both grace and will to pick the vicious quitch  
Of blood and custom wholly out of him,  
And make all clean, and plant himself afresh.  
Edyrn has done it, weeding all his heart  
As I will weed this land before I go.  
I, therefore, made him of our Table Round,  
Not rashly, but have proved him everyway  
One of our noblest, our most valorous,  
Sanest and most obedient:and indeed  
This work of Edyrn wrought upon himself  
After a life of violence, seems to me  
A thousand-fold more great and wonderful  
Than if some knight of mine, risking his life,  
My subject with my subjects under him,  
Should make an onslaught single on a realm  
Of robbers, though he slew them one by one,  
And were himself nigh wounded to the death.'

So spake the King; low bowed the Prince, and felt  
His work was neither great nor wonderful,  
And past to Enid's tent; and thither came  
The King's own leech to look into his hurt;  
And Enid tended on him there; and there  
Her constant motion round him, and the breath  
Of her sweet tendance hovering over him,  
Filled all the genial courses of his blood  
With deeper and with ever deeper love,

As the south-west that blowing Bala lake  
Fills all the sacred Dee. So past the days.

But while Geraint lay healing of his hurt,  
The blameless King went forth and cast his eyes  
On each of all whom Uther left in charge  
Long since, to guard the justice of the King:  
He looked and found them wanting; and as now  
Men weed the white horse on the Berkshire hills  
To keep him bright and clean as heretofore,  
He rooted out the slothful officer  
Or guilty, which for bribe had winked at wrong,  
And in their chairs set up a stronger race  
With hearts and hands, and sent a thousand men  
To till the wastes, and moving everywhere  
Cleared the dark places and let in the law,  
And broke the bandit holds and cleansed the land.

Then, when Geraint was whole again, they past  
With Arthur to Caerleon upon Usk.  
There the great Queen once more embraced her friend,  
And clothed her in apparel like the day.  
And though Geraint could never take again  
That comfort from their converse which he took  
Before the Queen's fair name was breathed upon,  
He rested well content that all was well.  
Thence after tarrying for a space they rode,  
And fifty knights rode with them to the shores  
Of Severn, and they past to their own land.  
And there he kept the justice of the King  
So vigorously yet mildly, that all hearts  
Applauded, and the spiteful whisper died:  
And being ever foremost in the chase,  
And victor at the tilt and tournament,  
They called him the great Prince and man of men.  
But Enid, whom her ladies loved to call  
Enid the Fair, a grateful people named  
Enid the Good; and in their halls arose  
The cry of children, Enids and Geraints  
Of times to be; nor did he doubt her more,  
But rested in her fealty, till he crowned



A happy life with a fair death, and fell  
Against the heathen of the Northern Sea  
In battle, fighting for the blameless King.

## Balin and Balan

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Pellam the King, who held and lost with Lot  
In that first war, and had his realm restored  
But rendered tributary, failed of late  
To send his tribute; wherefore Arthur called  
His treasurer, one of many years, and spake,  
'Go thou with him and him and bring it to us,  
Lest we should set one truer on his throne.  
Man's word is God in man.'

His Baron said

'We go but harken: there be two strange knights  
Who sit near Camelot at a fountain-side,  
A mile beneath the forest, challenging  
And overthrowing every knight who comes.  
Wilt thou I undertake them as we pass,  
And send them to thee?'

Arthur laughed upon him.

'Old friend, too old to be so young, depart,  
Delay not thou for aught, but let them sit,  
Until they find a lustier than themselves.'

So these departed. Early, one fair dawn,  
The light-winged spirit of his youth returned  
On Arthur's heart; he armed himself and went,  
So coming to the fountain-side beheld  
Balin and Balan sitting statuelike,  
Brethren, to right and left the spring, that down,  
From underneath a plume of lady-fern,  
Sang, and the sand danced at the bottom of it.  
And on the right of Balin Balin's horse  
Was fast beside an alder, on the left  
Of Balan Balan's near a poplartree.  
'Fair Sirs,' said Arthur, 'wherefore sit ye here?'

Balin and Balan answered 'For the sake  
Of glory; we be mightier men than all  
In Arthur's court; that also have we proved;  
For whatsoever knight against us came  
Or I or he have easily overthrown.'  
'I too,' said Arthur, 'am of Arthur's hall,  
But rather proven in his Paynim wars  
Than famous jousts; but see, or proven or not,  
Whether me likewise ye can overthrow.'  
And Arthur lightly smote the brethren down,  
And lightly so returned, and no man knew.

Then Balin rose, and Balan, and beside  
The carolling water set themselves again,  
And spake no word until the shadow turned;  
When from the fringe of coppice round them burst  
A spangled pursuivant, and crying 'Sirs,  
Rise, follow! ye be sent for by the King,'  
They followed; whom when Arthur seeing asked  
'Tell me your names; why sat ye by the well?'  
Balin the stillness of a minute broke  
Saying 'An unmelodious name to thee,  
Balin, "the Savage"—that addition thine—  
My brother and my better, this man here,  
Balan. I smote upon the naked skull  
A thrall of thine in open hall, my hand  
Was gauntleted, half slew him; for I heard  
He had spoken evil of me; thy just wrath  
Sent me a three-years' exile from thine eyes.  
I have not lived my life delightsomely:  
For I that did that violence to thy thrall,  
Had often wrought some fury on myself,  
Saving for Balan: those three kingless years  
Have past—were wormwood-bitter to me. King,  
Methought that if we sat beside the well,  
And hurled to ground what knight soever spurred  
Against us, thou would'st take me gladlier back,  
And make, as ten-times worthier to be thine  
Than twenty Balins, Balan knight. I have said.  
Not so—not all. A man of thine today

Abashed us both, and brake my boast. Thy will?  
Said Arthur 'Thou hast ever spoken truth;  
Thy too fierce manhood would not let thee lie.  
Rise, my true knight. As children learn, be thou  
Wiser for falling! walk with me, and move  
To music with thine Order and the King.  
Thy chair, a grief to all the brethren, stands  
Vacant, but thou retake it, mine again!'

Thereafter, when Sir Balin entered hall,  
The Lost one Found was greeted as in Heaven  
With joy that blazed itself in woodland wealth  
Of leaf, and gayest garlandage of flowers,  
Along the walls and down the board; they sat,  
And cup clashed cup; they drank and some one sang,  
Sweet-voiced, a song of welcome, whereupon  
Their common shout in chorus, mounting, made  
Those banners of twelve battles overhead  
Stir, as they stirred of old, when Arthur's host  
Proclaimed him Victor, and the day was won.

Then Balin added to their Order lived  
A wealthier life than heretofore with these  
And Balin, till their embassy returned.

'Sir King' they brought report 'we hardly found,  
So bushed about it is with gloom, the hall  
Of him to whom ye sent us, Pellam, once  
A Christless foe of thine as ever dashed  
Horse against horse; but seeing that thy realm  
Hath prospered in the name of Christ, the King  
Took, as in rival heat, to holy things;  
And finds himself descended from the Saint  
Arimathæan Joseph; him who first  
Brought the great faith to Britain over seas;  
He boasts his life as purer than thine own;  
Eats scarce enow to keep his pulse abeat;  
Hath pushed aside his faithful wife, nor lets  
Or dame or damsel enter at his gates  
Lest he should be polluted. This gray King  
Showed us a shrine wherein were wonders—yea—  
Rich arks with priceless bones of martyrdom,

Thorns of the crown and shivers of the cross,  
And therewithal (for thus he told us) brought  
By holy Joseph thither, that same spear  
Wherewith the Roman pierced the side of Christ.  
He much amazed us; after, when we sought  
The tribute, answered "I have quite foregone  
All matters of this world:Garlon, mine heir,  
Of him demand it," which this Garlon gave  
With much ado, railing at thine and thee.

'But when we left, in those deep woods we found  
A knight of thine spear-stricken from behind,  
Dead, whom we buried; more than one of us  
Cried out on Garlon, but a woodman there  
Reported of some demon in the woods  
Was once a man, who driven by evil tongues  
From all his fellows, lived alone, and came  
To learn black magic, and to hate his kind  
With such a hate, that when he died, his soul  
Became a Fiend, which, as the man in life  
Was wounded by blind tongues he saw not whence,  
Strikes from behind.This woodman showed the cave  
From which he sallies, and wherein he dwelt.  
We saw the hoof-print of a horse, no more.'

Then Arthur, 'Let who goes before me, see  
He do not fall behind me:foully slain  
And villainously! who will hunt for me  
This demon of the woods?'Said Balin, 'I!  
So claimed the quest and rode away, but first,  
Embracing Balin, 'Good my brother, hear!  
Let not thy moods prevail, when I am gone  
Who used to lay them! hold them outer fiends,  
Who leap at thee to tear thee; shake them aside,  
Dreams ruling when wit sleeps! yea, but to dream  
That any of these would wrong thee, wrongs thyself.  
Witness their flowery welcome.Bound are they  
To speak no evil.Truly save for fears,  
My fears for thee, so rich a fellowship  
Would make me wholly blest:thou one of them,  
Be one indeed:consider them, and all

Their bearing in their common bond of love,  
No more of hatred than in Heaven itself,  
No more of jealousy than in Paradise.'

So Balan warned, and went; Balin remained:  
Who—for but three brief moons had glanced away  
From being knighted till he smote the thrall,  
And faded from the presence into years  
Of exile—now would strictlier set himself  
To learn what Arthur meant by courtesy,  
Manhood, and knighthood; wherefore hovered round  
Lancelot, but when he marked his high sweet smile  
In passing, and a transitory word  
Make knight or churl or child or damsel seem  
From being smiled at happier in themselves—  
Sighed, as a boy lame-born beneath a height,  
That glooms his valley, sighs to see the peak  
Sun-flushed, or touch at night the northern star;  
For one from out his village lately climed  
And brought report of azure lands and fair,  
Far seen to left and right; and he himself  
Hath hardly scaled with help a hundred feet  
Up from the base:so Balin marvelling oft  
How far beyond him Lancelot seemed to move,  
Groaned, and at times would mutter, 'These be gifts,  
Born with the blood, not learnable, divine,  
Beyond my reach.Well had I foughten—well—  
In those fierce wars, struck hard—and had I crowned  
With my slain self the heaps of whom I slew—  
So—better!—But this worship of the Queen,  
That honour too wherein she holds him—this,  
This was the sunshine that hath given the man  
A growth, a name that branches o'er the rest,  
And strength against all odds, and what the King  
So prizes—overprizes—gentleness.  
Her likewise would I worship an I might.  
I never can be close with her, as he  
That brought her hither.Shall I pray the King  
To let me bear some token of his Queen  
Whereon to gaze, remembering her—forget

My heats and violences? live afresh?  
What, if the Queen disdained to grant it! nay  
Being so stately-gentle, would she make  
My darkness blackness? and with how sweet grace  
She greeted my return! Bold will I be—  
Some goodly cognizance of Guinevere,  
In lieu of this rough beast upon my shield,  
Langued gules, and toothed with grinning savagery.'

And Arthur, when Sir Balin sought him, said  
'What wilt thou bear?' Balin was bold, and asked  
To bear her own crown-royal upon shield,  
Whereat she smiled and turned her to the King,  
Who answered 'Thou shalt put the crown to use.  
The crown is but the shadow of the King,  
And this a shadow's shadow, let him have it,  
So this will help him of his violences!'  
'No shadow' said Sir Balin 'O my Queen,  
But light to me! no shadow, O my King,  
But golden earnest of a gentler life!'

So Balin bare the crown, and all the knights  
Approved him, and the Queen, and all the world  
Made music, and he felt his being move  
In music with his Order, and the King.

The nightingale, full-toned in middle May,  
Hath ever and anon a note so thin  
It seems another voice in other groves;  
Thus, after some quick burst of sudden wrath,  
The music in him seemed to change, and grow  
Faint and far-off.

And once he saw the thrall  
His passion half had gauntleted to death,  
That causer of his banishment and shame,  
Smile at him, as he deemed, presumptuously:  
His arm half rose to strike again, but fell:  
The memory of that cognizance on shield  
Weighted it down, but in himself he moaned:

'Too high this mount of Camelot for me:  
These high-set courtesies are not for me.  
Shall I not rather prove the worse for these?

Fierier and stormier from restraining, break  
Into some madness even before the Queen?'

Thus, as a hearth lit in a mountain home,  
And glancing on the window, when the gloom  
Of twilight deepens round it, seems a flame  
That rages in the woodland far below,  
So when his moods were darkened, court and King  
And all the kindly warmth of Arthur's hall  
Shadowed an angry distance: yet he strove  
To learn the graces of their Table, fought  
Hard with himself, and seemed at length in peace.

Then chanced, one morning, that Sir Balin sat  
Close-bowered in that garden nigh the hall.  
A walk of roses ran from door to door;  
A walk of lilies crost it to the bower:  
And down that range of roses the great Queen  
Came with slow steps, the morning on her face;  
And all in shadow from the counter door  
Sir Lancelot as to meet her, then at once,  
As if he saw not, glanced aside, and paced  
The long white walk of lilies toward the bower.  
Followed the Queen; Sir Balin heard her 'Prince,  
Art thou so little loyal to thy Queen,  
As pass without good morrow to thy Queen?'  
To whom Sir Lancelot with his eyes on earth,  
'Fain would I still be loyal to the Queen.'  
'Yea so' she said 'but so to pass me by—  
So loyal scarce is loyal to thyself,  
Whom all men rate the king of courtesy.  
Let be: ye stand, fair lord, as in a dream.'

Then Lancelot with his hand among the flowers  
'Yea—for a dream. Last night methought I saw  
That maiden Saint who stands with lily in hand  
In yonder shrine. All round her prest the dark,  
And all the light upon her silver face  
Flowed from the spiritual lily that she held.  
Lo! these her emblems drew mine eyes—away:  
For see, how perfect-pure! As light a flush  
As hardly tints the blossom of the quince



Would mar their charm of stainless maidenhood.'

'Sweeter to me' she said 'this garden rose  
Deep-hued and many-folded! sweeter still  
The wild-wood hyacinth and the bloom of May.  
Prince, we have ridden before among the flowers  
In those fair days—not all as cool as these,  
Though season-earlier. Art thou sad? or sick?  
Our noble King will send thee his own leech—  
Sick? or for any matter angered at me?'

Then Lancelot lifted his large eyes; they dwelt  
Deep-tranced on hers, and could not fall: her hue  
Changed at his gaze: so turning side by side  
They past, and Balin started from his bower.

'Queen? subject? but I see not what I see.  
Damsel and lover? hear not what I hear.  
My father hath begotten me in his wrath.  
I suffer from the things before me, know,  
Learn nothing; am not worthy to be knight;  
A churl, a clown!' and in him gloom on gloom  
Deepened: he sharply caught his lance and shield,  
Nor stayed to crave permission of the King,  
But, mad for strange adventure, dashed away.

He took the selfsame track as Balin, saw  
The fountain where they sat together, sighed  
'Was I not better there with him?' and rode  
The skyless woods, but under open blue  
Came on the hoarhead woodman at a bough  
Wearily hewing. 'Churl, thine axe!' he cried,  
Descended, and disjointed it at a blow:  
To whom the woodman uttered wonderingly  
'Lord, thou couldst lay the Devil of these woods  
If arm of flesh could lay him.' Balin cried  
'Him, or the viler devil who plays his part,  
To lay that devil would lay the Devil in me.'  
'Nay' said the churl, 'our devil is a truth,  
I saw the flash of him but yestereven.  
And some do say that our Sir Garlon too  
Hath learned black magic, and to ride unseen.  
Look to the cave.' But Balin answered him

'Old fabler, these be fancies of the churl,  
Look to thy woodcraft,' and so leaving him,  
Now with slack rein and careless of himself,  
Now with dug spur and raving at himself,  
Now with droopt brow down the long glades he rode;  
So marked not on his right a cavern-chasm  
Yawn over darkness, where, nor far within,  
The whole day died, but, dying, gleamed on rocks  
Roof-pendent, sharp; and others from the floor,  
Tusklike, arising, made that mouth of night  
Whereout the Demon issued up from Hell.  
He marked not this, but blind and deaf to all  
Save that chained rage, which ever yelpt within,  
Past eastward from the falling sun. At once  
He felt the hollow-beaten mosses thud  
And tremble, and then the shadow of a spear,  
Shot from behind him, ran along the ground.  
Sideways he started from the path, and saw,  
With pointed lance as if to pierce, a shape,  
A light of armour by him flash, and pass  
And vanish in the woods; and followed this,  
But all so blind in rage that unawares  
He burst his lance against a forest bough,  
Dishorsed himself, and rose again, and fled  
Far, till the castle of a King, the hall  
Of Pellam, lichen-bearded, grayly draped  
With streaming grass, appeared, low-built but strong;  
The ruinous donjon as a knoll of moss,  
The battlement overtopt with ivytods,  
A home of bats, in every tower an owl.  
Then spake the men of Pellam crying 'Lord,  
Why wear ye this crown-royal upon shield?'  
Said Balin 'For the fairest and the best  
Of ladies living gave me this to bear.'  
So stalled his horse, and strode across the court,  
But found the greetings both of knight and King  
Faint in the low dark hall of banquet:leaves  
Laid their green faces flat against the panes,  
Sprays grated, and the cankered boughs without

Whined in the wood; for all was hushed within,  
Till when at feast Sir Garlon likewise asked  
'Why wear ye that crown-royal?' Balin said  
'The Queen we worship, Lancelot, I, and all,  
As fairest, best and purest, granted me  
To bear it!' Such a sound (for Arthur's knights  
Were hated strangers in the hall) as makes  
The white swan-mother, sitting, when she hears  
A strange knee rustle through her secret reeds,  
Made Garlon, hissing; then he sourly smiled.  
'Fairest I grant her: I have seen; but best,  
Best, purest? thou from Arthur's hall, and yet  
So simple! hast thou eyes, or if, are these  
So far besotted that they fail to see  
This fair wife-worship cloaks a secret shame?  
Truly, ye men of Arthur be but babes.'

A goblet on the board by Balin, bossed  
With holy Joseph's legend, on his right  
Stood, all of massiest bronze: one side had sea  
And ship and sail and angels blowing on it:  
And one was rough with wattling, and the walls  
Of that low church he built at Glastonbury.  
This Balin graspt, but while in act to hurl,  
Through memory of that token on the shield  
Relaxed his hold: 'I will be gentle' he thought  
'And passing gentle' caught his hand away,  
Then fiercely to Sir Garlon 'Eyes have I  
That saw today the shadow of a spear,  
Shot from behind me, run along the ground;  
Eyes too that long have watched how Lancelot draws  
From homage to the best and purest, might,  
Name, manhood, and a grace, but scanty thine,  
Who, sitting in thine own hall, canst endure  
To mouth so huge a foulness—to thy guest,  
Me, me of Arthur's Table. Felon talk!  
Let be! no more!  
But not the less by night  
The scorn of Garlon, poisoning all his rest,  
Stung him in dreams. At length, and dim through leaves

Blinkt the white morn, sprays grated, and old boughs  
Whined in the wood. He rose, descended, met  
The scorner in the castle court, and fain,  
For hate and loathing, would have past him by;  
But when Sir Garlon uttered mocking-wise;  
'What, wear ye still that same crown-scandalous?'  
His countenance blackened, and his forehead veins  
Bloated, and branched; and tearing out of sheath  
The brand, Sir Balin with a fiery 'Ha!  
So thou be shadow, here I make thee ghost,'  
Hard upon helm smote him, and the blade flew  
Splintering in six, and clinkt upon the stones.  
Then Garlon, reeling slowly backward, fell,  
And Balin by the banneret of his helm  
Dragged him, and struck, but from the castle a cry  
Sounded across the court, and—men-at-arms,  
A score with pointed lances, making at him—  
He dashed the pummel at the foremost face,  
Beneath a low door dipt, and made his feet  
Wings through a glimmering gallery, till he marked  
The portal of King Pellam's chapel wide  
And inward to the wall; he stept behind;  
Thence in a moment heard them pass like wolves  
Howling; but while he stared about the shrine,  
In which he scarce could spy the Christ for Saints,  
Beheld before a golden altar lie  
The longest lance his eyes had ever seen,  
Point-painted red; and seizing thereupon  
Pushed through an open casement down, leaned on it,  
Leapt in a semicircle, and lit on earth;  
Then hand at ear, and harkening from what side  
The blindfold rummage buried in the walls  
Might echo, ran the counter path, and found  
His charger, mounted on him and away.  
An arrow whizzed to the right, one to the left,  
One overhead; and Pellam's feeble cry  
'Stay, stay him! he defileth heavenly things  
With earthly uses'—made him quickly dive  
Beneath the boughs, and race through many a mile

Of dense and open, till his goodly horse,  
Arising wearily at a fallen oak,  
Stumbled headlong, and cast him face to ground.

Half-wroth he had not ended, but all glad,  
Knightlike, to find his charger yet unblamed,  
Sir Balin drew the shield from off his neck,  
Stared at the priceless cognizance, and thought  
'I have shamed thee so that now thou shamest me,  
Thee will I bear no more,' high on a branch  
Hung it, and turned aside into the woods,  
And there in gloom cast himself all along,  
Moaning 'My violences, my violences!'

But now the wholesome music of the wood  
Was dumb'd by one from out the hall of Mark,  
A damsel-errant, warbling, as she rode  
The woodland alleys, Vivien, with her Squire.

'The fire of Heaven has killed the barren cold,  
And kindled all the plain and all the wold.  
The new leaf ever pushes off the old.  
The fire of Heaven is not the flame of Hell.

'Old priest, who mumble worship in your quire—  
Old monk and nun, ye scorn the world's desire,  
Yet in your frosty cells ye feel the fire!  
The fire of Heaven is not the flame of Hell.

'The fire of Heaven is on the dusty ways.  
The wayside blossoms open to the blaze.  
The whole wood-world is one full peal of praise.  
The fire of Heaven is not the flame of Hell.

'The fire of Heaven is lord of all things good,  
And starve not thou this fire within thy blood,  
But follow Vivien through the fiery flood!  
The fire of Heaven is not the flame of Hell!'

Then turning to her Squire 'This fire of Heaven,  
This old sun-worship, boy, will rise again,  
And beat the cross to earth, and break the King  
And all his Table.'

Then they reached a glade,  
Where under one long lane of cloudless air  
Before another wood, the royal crown

Sparkled, and swaying upon a restless elm  
Drew the vague glance of Vivien, and her Squire;  
Amazed were these; 'Lo there' she cried—'a crown—  
Borne by some high lord-prince of Arthur's hall,  
And there a horse! the rider? where is he?  
See, yonder lies one dead within the wood.  
Not dead; he stirs!—but sleeping. I will speak.  
Hail, royal knight, we break on thy sweet rest,  
Not, doubtless, all unearned by noble deeds.  
But bounden art thou, if from Arthur's hall,  
To help the weak. Behold, I fly from shame,  
A lustful King, who sought to win my love  
Through evil ways: the knight, with whom I rode,  
Hath suffered misadventure, and my squire  
Hath in him small defence; but thou, Sir Prince,  
Wilt surely guide me to the warrior King,  
Arthur the blameless, pure as any maid,  
To get me shelter for my maidenhood.  
I charge thee by that crown upon thy shield,  
And by the great Queen's name, arise and hence.'

And Balin rose, 'Thither no more! nor Prince  
Nor knight am I, but one that hath defamed  
The cognizance she gave me: here I dwell  
Savage among the savage woods, here die—  
Die: let the wolves' black maws ensepulchre  
Their brother beast, whose anger was his lord.  
O me, that such a name as Guinevere's,  
Which our high Lancelot hath so lifted up,  
And been thereby uplifted, should through me,  
My violence, and my villainy, come to shame.'

Thereat she suddenly laughed and shrill, anon  
Sighed all as suddenly. Said Balin to her  
'Is this thy courtesy—to mock me, ha?  
Hence, for I will not with thee.' Again she sighed  
'Pardon, sweet lord! we maidens often laugh  
When sick at heart, when rather we should weep.  
I knew thee wronged. I brake upon thy rest,  
And now full loth am I to break thy dream,  
But thou art man, and canst abide a truth,

Though bitter.Hither, boy—and mark me well.  
Dost thou remember at Caerleon once—  
A year ago—nay, then I love thee not—  
Ay, thou rememberest well—one summer dawn—  
By the great tower—Caerleon upon Usk—  
Nay, truly we were hidden:this fair lord,  
The flower of all their vestal knighthood, knelt  
In amorous homage—knelt—what else?—O ay  
Knelt, and drew down from out his night-black hair  
And mumbled that white hand whose ringed caress  
Had wandered from her own King's golden head,  
And lost itself in darkness, till she cried—  
I thought the great tower would crash down on both—  
"Rise, my sweet King, and kiss me on the lips,  
Thou art my King."This lad, whose lightest word  
Is mere white truth in simple nakedness,  
Saw them embrace:he reddens, cannot speak,  
So bashful, he! but all the maiden Saints,  
The deathless mother-maidenhood of Heaven,  
Cry out upon her.Up then, ride with me!  
Talk not of shame! thou canst not, an thou would'st,  
Do these more shame than these have done themselves.'

She lied with ease; but horror-stricken he,  
Remembering that dark bower at Camelot,  
Breathed in a dismal whisper 'It is truth.'

Sunnily she smiled 'And even in this lone wood,  
Sweet lord, ye do right well to whisper this.  
Fools prate, and perish traitors.Woods have tongues,  
As walls have ears:but thou shalt go with me,  
And we will speak at first exceeding low.  
Meet is it the good King be not deceived.  
See now, I set thee high on vantage ground,  
From whence to watch the time, and eagle-like  
Stoop at thy will on Lancelot and the Queen.'

She ceased; his evil spirit upon him leapt,  
He ground his teeth together, sprang with a yell,  
Tore from the branch, and cast on earth, the shield,  
Drove his mailed heel athwart the royal crown,  
Stamp all into defacement, hurled it from him

Among the forest weeds, and cursed the tale,  
The told-of, and the teller.  
That weird yell,  
Unearthlier than all shriek of bird or beast,  
Thrilled through the woods; and Balan lurking there  
(His quest was unaccomplished) heard and thought  
'The scream of that Wood-devil I came to quell!'  
Then nearing 'Lo! he hath slain some brother-knight,  
And tramples on the goodly shield to show  
His loathing of our Order and the Queen.  
My quest, meseems, is here. Or devil or man  
Guard thou thine head.' Sir Balin spake not word,  
But snatched a sudden buckler from the Squire,  
And vaulted on his horse, and so they crashed  
In onset, and King Pellam's holy spear,  
Reputed to be red with sinless blood,  
Redded at once with sinful, for the point  
Across the maiden shield of Balan pricked  
The hauberk to the flesh; and Balin's horse  
Was wearied to the death, and, when they clashed,  
Rolling back upon Balin, crushed the man  
Inward, and either fell, and swooned away.

Then to her Squire muttered the damsel 'Fools!  
This fellow hath wrought some foulness with his Queen:  
Else never had he borne her crown, nor raved  
And thus foamed over at a rival name:  
But thou, Sir Chick, that scarce hast broken shell,  
Art yet half-yolk, not even come to down—  
Who never sawest Caerleon upon Usk—  
And yet hast often pleaded for my love—  
See what I see, be thou where I have been,  
Or else Sir Chick—dismount and loose their casques  
I fain would know what manner of men they be.'  
And when the Squire had loosed them, 'Goodly!—look!  
They might have cropt the myriad flower of May,  
And butt each other here, like brainless bulls,  
Dead for one heifer!  
Then the gentle Squire  
'I hold them happy, so they died for love:



And, Vivien, though ye beat me like your dog,  
I too could die, as now I live, for thee.'

'Live on, Sir Boy,' she cried. 'I better prize  
The living dog than the dead lion: away!  
I cannot brook to gaze upon the dead.'  
Then leapt her palfrey o'er the fallen oak,  
And bounding forward 'Leave them to the wolves.'

But when their foreheads felt the cooling air,  
Balin first woke, and seeing that true face,  
Familiar up from cradle-time, so wan,  
Crawled slowly with low moans to where he lay,  
And on his dying brother cast himself  
Dying; and he lifted faint eyes; he felt  
One near him; all at once they found the world,  
Staring wild-wide; then with a childlike wail  
And drawing down the dim disastrous brow  
That o'er him hung, he kissed it, moaned and spake;

'O Balin, Balin, I that fain had died  
To save thy life, have brought thee to thy death.  
Why had ye not the shield I knew? and why  
Trampled ye thus on that which bare the Crown?'

Then Balin told him brokenly, and in gasps,  
All that had chanced, and Balin moaned again.

'Brother, I dwelt a day in Pellam's hall:  
This Garlon mocked me, but I heeded not.  
And one said "Eat in peace! a liar is he,  
And hates thee for the tribute!" this good knight  
Told me, that twice a wanton damsel came,  
And sought for Garlon at the castle-gates,  
Whom Pellam drove away with holy heat.  
I well believe this damsel, and the one  
Who stood beside thee even now, the same.  
"She dwells among the woods" he said "and meets  
And dallies with him in the Mouth of Hell."  
Foul are their lives; foul are their lips; they lied.  
Pure as our own true Mother is our Queen."

'O brother' answered Balin 'woe is me!  
My madness all thy life has been thy doom,  
Thy curse, and darkened all thy day; and now

The night has come. I scarce can see thee now.

Goodnight! for we shall never bid again  
Goodmorrow—Dark my doom was here, and dark  
It will be there. I see thee now no more.

I would not mine again should darken thine,  
Goodnight, true brother.

Balan answered low

'Goodnight, true brother here! goodmorrow there!

We two were born together, and we die

Together by one doom:' and while he spoke

Closed his death-drowsing eyes, and slept the sleep

With Balin, either locked in either's arm.

## Merlin and Vivien

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A storm was coming, but the winds were still,  
And in the wild woods of Broceliande,  
Before an oak, so hollow, huge and old  
It looked a tower of ivied masonwork,  
At Merlin's feet the wily Vivien lay.

For he that always bare in bitter grudge  
The slights of Arthur and his Table, Mark  
The Cornish King, had heard a wandering voice,  
A minstrel of Caerlon by strong storm  
Blown into shelter at Tintagil, say  
That out of naked knightlike purity  
Sir Lancelot worshipt no unmarried girl  
But the great Queen herself, fought in her name,  
Sware by her—vows like theirs, that high in heaven  
Love most, but neither marry, nor are given  
In marriage, angels of our Lord's report.

He ceased, and then—for Vivien sweetly said  
(She sat beside the banquet nearest Mark),  
'And is the fair example followed, Sir,  
In Arthur's household?'—answered innocently:

'Ay, by some few—ay, truly—youths that hold  
It more beseems the perfect virgin knight  
To worship woman as true wife beyond  
All hopes of gaining, than as maiden girl.  
They place their pride in Lancelot and the Queen.  
So passionate for an utter purity  
Beyond the limit of their bond, are these,  
For Arthur bound them not to singleness.  
Brave hearts and clean! and yet—God guide them—young.'

Then Mark was half in heart to hurl his cup  
Straight at the speaker, but forbore: he rose

To leave the hall, and, Vivien following him,  
Turned to her: 'Here are snakes within the grass;  
And you methinks, O Vivien, save ye fear  
The monkish manhood, and the mask of pure  
Worn by this court, can stir them till they sting.'

And Vivien answered, smiling scornfully,  
'Why fear? because that fostered at thy court  
I savour of thy—virtues? fear them? no.  
As Love, if Love is perfect, casts out fear,  
So Hate, if Hate is perfect, casts out fear.  
My father died in battle against the King,  
My mother on his corpse in open field;  
She bore me there, for born from death was I  
Among the dead and sown upon the wind—  
And then on thee! and shown the truth betimes,  
That old true filth, and bottom of the well  
Where Truth is hidden. Gracious lessons thine  
And maxims of the mud!' "This Arthur pure!  
Great Nature through the flesh herself hath made  
Gives him the lie! There is no being pure,  
My cherub; saith not Holy Writ the same?"—  
If I were Arthur, I would have thy blood.  
Thy blessing, stainless King! I bring thee back,  
When I have ferreted out their burrowings,  
The hearts of all this Order in mine hand—  
Ay—so that fate and craft and folly close,  
Perchance, one curl of Arthur's golden beard.  
To me this narrow grizzled fork of thine  
Is cleaner-fashioned—Well, I loved thee first,  
That warps the wit.'

Loud laughed the graceless Mark,  
But Vivien, into Camelot stealing, lodged  
Low in the city, and on a festal day  
When Guinevere was crossing the great hall  
Cast herself down, knelt to the Queen, and wailed.

'Why kneel ye there? What evil hath ye wrought?  
Rise!' and the damsel bidden rise arose  
And stood with folded hands and downward eyes  
Of glancing corner, and all meekly said,

'None wrought, but suffered much, an orphan maid!  
My father died in battle for thy King,  
My mother on his corpse—in open field,  
The sad sea-sounding wastes of Lyonesse—  
Poor wretch—no friend!—and now by Mark the King  
For that small charm of feature mine, pursued—  
If any such be mine—I fly to thee.  
Save, save me thou—Woman of women—thine  
The wreath of beauty, thine the crown of power,  
Be thine the balm of pity, O Heaven's own white  
Earth-angel, stainless bride of stainless King—  
Help, for he follows! take me to thyself!  
O yield me shelter for mine innocency  
Among thy maidens!

Here her slow sweet eyes  
Fear-tremulous, but humbly hopeful, rose  
Fixt on her hearer's, while the Queen who stood  
All glittering like May sunshine on May leaves  
In green and gold, and plumed with green replied,  
'Peace, child! of overpraise and overblame  
We choose the last. Our noble Arthur, him  
Ye scarce can overpraise, will hear and know.  
Nay—we believe all evil of thy Mark—  
Well, we shall test thee farther; but this hour  
We ride a-hawking with Sir Lancelot.  
He hath given us a fair falcon which he trained;  
We go to prove it. Bide ye here the while.'

She past; and Vivien murmured after 'Go!  
I bide the while.' Then through the portal-arch  
Peering askance, and muttering broken-wise,  
As one that labours with an evil dream,  
Beheld the Queen and Lancelot get to horse.

'Is that the Lancelot? goodly—ay, but gaunt:  
Courteous—amends for gauntness—takes her hand—  
That glance of theirs, but for the street, had been  
A clinging kiss—how hand lingers in hand!  
Let go at last!—they ride away—to hawk  
For waterfowl. Royaller game is mine.  
For such a supersensual sensual bond

As that gray cricket chirpt of at our hearth—  
Touch flax with flame—a glance will serve—the liars!  
Ah little rat that borest in the dyke  
Thy hole by night to let the boundless deep  
Down upon far-off cities while they dance—  
Or dream—of thee they dreamed not—nor of me  
These—ay, but each of either:ride, and dream  
The mortal dream that never yet was mine—  
Ride, ride and dream until ye wake—to me!  
Then, narrow court and lubber King, farewell!  
For Lancelot will be gracious to the rat,  
And our wise Queen, if knowing that I know,  
Will hate, loathe, fear—but honour me the more.'

Yet while they rode together down the plain,  
Their talk was all of training, terms of art,  
Diet and seeling, jesses, leash and lure.  
'She is too noble' he said 'to check at pies,  
Nor will she rake:there is no baseness in her.'  
Here when the Queen demanded as by chance  
'Know ye the stranger woman?"Let her be,'  
Said Lancelot and unhooded casting off  
The goodly falcon free; she towered; her bells,  
Tone under tone, shrilled; and they lifted up  
Their eager faces, wondering at the strength,  
Boldness and royal knighthood of the bird  
Who pounced her quarry and slew it.Many a time  
As once—of old—among the flowers—they rode.

But Vivien half-forgotten of the Queen  
Among her damsels broidering sat, heard, watched  
And whispered:through the peaceful court she crept  
And whispered:then as Arthur in the highest  
Leavened the world, so Vivien in the lowest,  
Arriving at a time of golden rest,  
And sowing one ill hint from ear to ear,  
While all the heathen lay at Arthur's feet,  
And no quest came, but all was joust and play,  
Leavened his hall.They heard and let her be.

Thereafter as an enemy that has left  
Death in the living waters, and withdrawn,

The wily Vivien stole from Arthur's court.

She hated all the knights, and heard in thought  
Their lavish comment when her name was named.  
For once, when Arthur walking all alone,  
Vext at a rumour issued from herself  
Of some corruption crept among his knights,  
Had met her, Vivien, being greeted fair,  
Would fain have wrought upon his cloudy mood  
With reverent eyes mock-loyal, shaken voice,  
And fluttered adoration, and at last  
With dark sweet hints of some who prized him more  
Than who should prize him most; at which the King  
Had gazed upon her blankly and gone by:  
But one had watched, and had not held his peace:  
It made the laughter of an afternoon  
That Vivien should attempt the blameless King.  
And after that, she set herself to gain  
Him, the most famous man of all those times,  
Merlin, who knew the range of all their arts,  
Had built the King his havens, ships, and halls,  
Was also Bard, and knew the starry heavens;  
The people called him Wizard; whom at first  
She played about with slight and sprightly talk,  
And vivid smiles, and faintly-venomed points  
Of slander, glancing here and grazing there;  
And yielding to his kindlier moods, the Seer  
Would watch her at her petulance, and play,  
Even when they seemed unloveable, and laugh  
As those that watch a kitten; thus he grew  
Tolerant of what he half disdained, and she,  
Perceiving that she was but half disdained,  
Began to break her sports with graver fits,  
Turn red or pale, would often when they met  
Sigh fully, or all-silent gaze upon him  
With such a fixt devotion, that the old man,  
Though doubtful, felt the flattery, and at times  
Would flatter his own wish in age for love,  
And half believe her true: for thus at times  
He wavered; but that other clung to him,

Fixt in her will, and so the seasons went.

Then fell on Merlin a great melancholy;  
He walked with dreams and darkness, and he found  
A doom that ever poised itself to fall,  
An ever-moaning battle in the mist,  
World-war of dying flesh against the life,  
Death in all life and lying in all love,  
The meanest having power upon the highest,  
And the high purpose broken by the worm.

So leaving Arthur's court he gained the beach;  
There found a little boat, and stept into it;  
And Vivien followed, but he marked her not.  
She took the helm and he the sail; the boat  
Drave with a sudden wind across the deeps,  
And touching Breton sands, they disembarked.  
And then she followed Merlin all the way,  
Even to the wild woods of Broceliande.  
For Merlin once had told her of a charm,  
The which if any wrought on anyone  
With woven paces and with waving arms,  
The man so wrought on ever seemed to lie  
Closed in the four walls of a hollow tower,  
From which was no escape for evermore;  
And none could find that man for evermore,  
Nor could he see but him who wrought the charm  
Coming and going, and he lay as dead  
And lost to life and use and name and fame.  
And Vivien ever sought to work the charm  
Upon the great Enchanter of the Time,  
As fancying that her glory would be great  
According to his greatness whom she quenched.

There lay she all her length and kissed his feet,  
As if in deepest reverence and in love.  
A twist of gold was round her hair; a robe  
Of samite without price, that more exprest  
Than hid her, clung about her lissome limbs,  
In colour like the satin-shining palm  
On sallows in the windy gleams of March:  
And while she kissed them, crying, 'Trample me,



Dear feet, that I have followed through the world,  
And I will pay you worship; tread me down  
And I will kiss you for it;' he was mute:  
So dark a forethought rolled about his brain,  
As on a dull day in an Ocean cave  
The blind wave feeling round his long sea-hall  
In silence:wherefore, when she lifted up  
A face of sad appeal, and spake and said,  
'O Merlin, do ye love me?' and again,  
'O Merlin, do ye love me?' and once more,  
'Great Master, do ye love me?' he was mute.  
And lissome Vivien, holding by his heel,  
Writhed toward him, slided up his knee and sat,  
Behind his ankle twined her hollow feet  
Together, curved an arm about his neck,  
Clung like a snake; and letting her left hand  
Droop from his mighty shoulder, as a leaf,  
Made with her right a comb of pearl to part  
The lists of such a board as youth gone out  
Had left in ashes:then he spoke and said,  
Not looking at her, 'Who are wise in love  
Love most, say least,' and Vivien answered quick,  
'I saw the little elf-god eyeless once  
In Arthur's arras hall at Camelot:  
But neither eyes nor tongue—O stupid child!  
Yet you are wise who say it; let me think  
Silence is wisdom:I am silent then,  
And ask no kiss;' then adding all at once,  
'And lo, I clothe myself with wisdom,' drew  
The vast and shaggy mantle of his beard  
Across her neck and bosom to her knee,  
And called herself a gilded summer fly  
Caught in a great old tyrant spider's web,  
Who meant to eat her up in that wild wood  
Without one word.So Vivien called herself,  
But rather seemed a lovely baleful star  
Veiled in gray vapour; till he sadly smiled:  
'To what request for what strange boon,' he said,  
'Are these your pretty tricks and fooleries,

O Vivien, the preamble? yet my thanks,  
For these have broken up my melancholy.'

And Vivien answered smiling saucily,  
'What, O my Master, have ye found your voice?  
I bid the stranger welcome.Thanks at last!  
But yesterday you never opened lip,  
Except indeed to drink:no cup had we:  
In mine own lady palms I culled the spring  
That gathered trickling dropwise from the cleft,  
And made a pretty cup of both my hands  
And offered you it kneeling:then you drank  
And knew no more, nor gave me one poor word;  
O no more thanks than might a goat have given  
With no more sign of reverence than a beard.  
And when we halted at that other well,  
And I was faint to swooning, and you lay  
Foot-gilt with all the blossom-dust of those  
Deep meadows we had traversed, did you know  
That Vivien bathed your feet before her own?  
And yet no thanks:and all through this wild wood  
And all this morning when I fondled you:  
Boon, ay, there was a boon, one not so strange—  
How had I wronged you? surely ye are wise,  
But such a silence is more wise than kind.'

And Merlin locked his hand in hers and said:  
'O did ye never lie upon the shore,  
And watch the curled white of the coming wave  
Glassed in the slippery sand before it breaks?  
Even such a wave, but not so pleasurable,  
Dark in the glass of some presageful mood,  
Had I for three days seen, ready to fall.  
And then I rose and fled from Arthur's court  
To break the mood.You followed me unasked;  
And when I looked, and saw you following me still,  
My mind involved yourself the nearest thing  
In that mind-mist:for shall I tell you truth?  
You seemed that wave about to break upon me  
And sweep me from my hold upon the world,  
My use and name and fame.Your pardon, child.

Your pretty sports have brightened all again.  
And ask your boon, for boon I owe you thrice,  
Once for wrong done you by confusion, next  
For thanks it seems till now neglected, last  
For these your dainty gambols:wherefore ask;  
And take this boon so strange and not so strange.'

And Vivien answered smiling mournfully:  
'O not so strange as my long asking it,  
Not yet so strange as you yourself are strange,  
Nor half so strange as that dark mood of yours.  
I ever feared ye were not wholly mine;  
And see, yourself have owned ye did me wrong.  
The people call you prophet:let it be:  
But not of those that can expound themselves.  
Take Vivien for expounder; she will call  
That three-days-long presageful gloom of yours  
No presage, but the same mistrustful mood  
That makes you seem less noble than yourself,  
Whenever I have asked this very boon,  
Now asked again:for see you not, dear love,  
That such a mood as that, which lately gloomed  
Your fancy when ye saw me following you,  
Must make me fear still more you are not mine,  
Must make me yearn still more to prove you mine,  
And make me wish still more to learn this charm  
Of woven paces and of waving hands,  
As proof of trust.O Merlin, teach it me.  
The charm so taught will charm us both to rest.  
For, grant me some slight power upon your fate,  
I, feeling that you felt me worthy trust,  
Should rest and let you rest, knowing you mine.  
And therefore be as great as ye are named,  
Not muffled round with selfish reticence.  
How hard you look and how denyingly!  
O, if you think this wickedness in me,  
That I should prove it on you unawares,  
That makes me passing wrathful; then our bond  
Had best be loosed for ever:but think or not,  
By Heaven that hears I tell you the clean truth,

As clean as blood of babes, as white as milk:  
O Merlin, may this earth, if ever I,  
If these unwitty wandering wits of mine,  
Even in the jumbled rubbish of a dream,  
Have tript on such conjectural treachery—  
May this hard earth cleave to the Nadir hell  
Down, down, and close again, and nip me flat,  
If I be such a traitress. Yield my boon,  
Till which I scarce can yield you all I am;  
And grant my re-reiterated wish,  
The great proof of your love: because I think,  
However wise, ye hardly know me yet.'

And Merlin loosed his hand from hers and said,  
'I never was less wise, however wise,  
Too curious Vivien, though you talk of trust,  
Than when I told you first of such a charm.  
Yea, if ye talk of trust I tell you this,  
Too much I trusted when I told you that,  
And stirred this vice in you which ruined man  
Through woman the first hour; for howsoe'er  
In children a great curiousness be well,  
Who have to learn themselves and all the world,  
In you, that are no child, for still I find  
Your face is practised when I spell the lines,  
I call it,—well, I will not call it vice:  
But since you name yourself the summer fly,  
I well could wish a cobweb for the gnat,  
That settles, beaten back, and beaten back  
Settles, till one could yield for weariness:  
But since I will not yield to give you power  
Upon my life and use and name and fame,  
Why will ye never ask some other boon?  
Yea, by God's rood, I trusted you too much.'

And Vivien, like the tenderest-hearted maid  
That ever bided tryst at village stile,  
Made answer, either eyelid wet with tears:  
'Nay, Master, be not wrathful with your maid;  
Caress her: let her feel herself forgiven  
Who feels no heart to ask another boon.

I think ye hardly know the tender rhyme  
Of "trust me not at all or all in all."

I heard the great Sir Lancelot sing it once,  
And it shall answer for me. Listen to it.

"In Love, if Love be Love, if Love be ours,  
Faith and unfaith can ne'er be equal powers:  
Unfaith in aught is want of faith in all.

"It is the little rift within the lute,  
That by and by will make the music mute,  
And ever widening slowly silence all.

"The little rift within the lover's lute  
Or little pitted speck in garnered fruit,  
That rotting inward slowly moulders all.

"It is not worth the keeping: let it go:  
But shall it? answer, darling, answer, no.  
And trust me not at all or all in all."

O Master, do ye love my tender rhyme?'

And Merlin looked and half believed her true,  
So tender was her voice, so fair her face,  
So sweetly gleamed her eyes behind her tears  
Like sunlight on the plain behind a shower:  
And yet he answered half indignantly:

'Far other was the song that once I heard  
By this huge oak, sung nearly where we sit:  
For here we met, some ten or twelve of us,  
To chase a creature that was current then  
In these wild woods, the hart with golden horns.  
It was the time when first the question rose  
About the founding of a Table Round,  
That was to be, for love of God and men  
And noble deeds, the flower of all the world.  
And each incited each to noble deeds.  
And while we waited, one, the youngest of us,  
We could not keep him silent, out he flashed,  
And into such a song, such fire for fame,  
Such trumpet-glowings in it, coming down  
To such a stern and iron-clashing close,  
That when he stopt we longed to hurl together,  
And should have done it; but the beauteous beast

Scared by the noise upstarted at our feet,  
And like a silver shadow slipt away  
Through the dim land; and all day long we rode  
Through the dim land against a rushing wind,  
That glorious roundel echoing in our ears,  
And chased the flashes of his golden horns  
Till they vanished by the fairy well  
That laughs at iron—as our warriors did—  
Where children cast their pins and nails, and cry,  
"Laugh, little well!" but touch it with a sword,  
It buzzes fiercely round the point; and there  
We lost him: such a noble song was that.  
But, Vivien, when you sang me that sweet rhyme,  
I felt as though you knew this cursed charm,  
Were proving it on me, and that I lay  
And felt them slowly ebbing, name and fame.'

And Vivien answered smiling mournfully:  
'O mine have ebbed away for evermore,  
And all through following you to this wild wood,  
Because I saw you sad, to comfort you.  
Lo now, what hearts have men! they never mount  
As high as woman in her selfless mood.  
And touching fame, howe'er ye scorn my song,  
Take one verse more—the lady speaks it—this:

"My name, once mine, now thine, is closelier mine,  
For fame, could fame be mine, that fame were thine,  
And shame, could shame be thine, that shame were mine.  
So trust me not at all or all in all."

'Says she not well? and there is more—this rhyme  
Is like the fair pearl-necklace of the Queen,  
That burst in dancing, and the pearls were spilt;  
Some lost, some stolen, some as relics kept.  
But nevermore the same two sister pearls  
Ran down the silken thread to kiss each other  
On her white neck—so is it with this rhyme:  
It lives dispersedly in many hands,  
And every minstrel sings it differently;  
Yet is there one true line, the pearl of pearls:  
"Man dreams of Fame while woman wakes to love."

Yea! Love, though Love were of the grossest, carves  
A portion from the solid present, eats  
And uses, careless of the rest; but Fame,  
The Fame that follows death is nothing to us;  
And what is Fame in life but half-disfame,  
And counterchanged with darkness? ye yourself  
Know well that Envy calls you Devil's son,  
And since ye seem the Master of all Art,  
They fain would make you Master of all vice.'

And Merlin locked his hand in hers and said,  
'I once was looking for a magic weed,  
And found a fair young squire who sat alone,  
Had carved himself a knightly shield of wood,  
And then was painting on it fancied arms,  
Azure, an Eagle rising or, the Sun  
In dexter chief; the scroll "I follow fame."  
And speaking not, but leaning over him  
I took his brush and blotted out the bird,  
And made a Gardener putting in a graff,  
With this for motto, "Rather use than fame."  
You should have seen him blush; but afterwards  
He made a stalwart knight. O Vivien,  
For you, methinks you think you love me well;  
For me, I love you somewhat; rest: and Love  
Should have some rest and pleasure in himself,  
Not ever be too curious for a boon,  
Too prurient for a proof against the grain  
Of him ye say ye love: but Fame with men,  
Being but ampler means to serve mankind,  
Should have small rest or pleasure in herself,  
But work as vassal to the larger love,  
That dwarfs the petty love of one to one.  
Use gave me Fame at first, and Fame again  
Increasing gave me use. Lo, there my boon!  
What other? for men sought to prove me vile,  
Because I fain had given them greater wits:  
And then did Envy call me Devil's son:  
The sick weak beast seeking to help herself  
By striking at her better, missed, and brought

Her own claw back, and wounded her own heart.  
Sweet were the days when I was all unknown,  
But when my name was lifted up, the storm  
Broke on the mountain and I cared not for it.  
Right well know I that Fame is half-disfame,  
Yet needs must work my work. That other fame,  
To one at least, who hath not children, vague,  
The cackle of the unborn about the grave,  
I cared not for it: a single misty star,  
Which is the second in a line of stars  
That seem a sword beneath a belt of three,  
I never gazed upon it but I dreamt  
Of some vast charm concluded in that star  
To make fame nothing. Wherefore, if I fear,  
Giving you power upon me through this charm,  
That you might play me falsely, having power,  
However well ye think ye love me now  
(As sons of kings loving in pupilage  
Have turned to tyrants when they came to power)  
I rather dread the loss of use than fame;  
If you—and not so much from wickedness,  
As some wild turn of anger, or a mood  
Of overstrained affection, it may be,  
To keep me all to your own self,—or else  
A sudden spurt of woman's jealousy,—  
Should try this charm on whom ye say ye love.'

And Vivien answered smiling as in wrath:  
'Have I not sworn? I am not trusted. Good!  
Well, hide it, hide it; I shall find it out;  
And being found take heed of Vivien.  
A woman and not trusted, doubtless I  
Might feel some sudden turn of anger born  
Of your misfaith; and your fine epithet  
Is accurate too, for this full love of mine  
Without the full heart back may merit well  
Your term of overstrained. So used as I,  
My daily wonder is, I love at all.  
And as to woman's jealousy, O why not?  
O to what end, except a jealous one,



And one to make me jealous if I love,  
Was this fair charm invented by yourself?  
I well believe that all about this world  
Ye cage a buxom captive here and there,  
Closed in the four walls of a hollow tower  
From which is no escape for evermore.'

Then the great Master merrily answered her:  
'Full many a love in loving youth was mine;  
I needed then no charm to keep them mine  
But youth and love; and that full heart of yours  
Whereof ye prattle, may now assure you mine;  
So live uncharmed. For those who wrought it first,  
The wrist is parted from the hand that waved,  
The feet unmortised from their ankle-bones  
Who paced it, ages back: but will ye hear  
The legend as in guerdon for your rhyme?

'There lived a king in the most Eastern East,  
Less old than I, yet older, for my blood  
Hath earnest in it of far springs to be.  
A tawny pirate anchored in his port,  
Whose bark had plundered twenty nameless isles;  
And passing one, at the high peep of dawn,  
He saw two cities in a thousand boats  
All fighting for a woman on the sea.  
And pushing his black craft among them all,  
He lightly scattered theirs and brought her off,  
With loss of half his people arrow-slain;  
A maid so smooth, so white, so wonderful,  
They said a light came from her when she moved:  
And since the pirate would not yield her up,  
The King impaled him for his piracy;  
Then made her Queen: but those isle-nurtured eyes  
Waged such unwilling though successful war  
On all the youth, they sickened; councils thinned,  
And armies waned, for magnet-like she drew  
The rustiest iron of old fighters' hearts;  
And beasts themselves would worship; camels knelt  
Unbidden, and the brutes of mountain back  
That carry kings in castles, bowed black knees

Of homage, ringing with their serpent hands,  
To make her smile, her golden ankle-bells.  
What wonder, being jealous, that he sent  
His horns of proclamation out through all  
The hundred under-kingdoms that he swayed  
To find a wizard who might teach the King  
Some charm, which being wrought upon the Queen  
Might keep her all his own: to such a one  
He promised more than ever king has given,  
A league of mountain full of golden mines,  
A province with a hundred miles of coast,  
A palace and a princess, all for him:  
But on all those who tried and failed, the King  
Pronounced a dismal sentence, meaning by it  
To keep the list low and pretenders back,  
Or like a king, not to be trifled with—  
Their heads should moulder on the city gates.  
And many tried and failed, because the charm  
Of nature in her overbore their own:  
And many a wizard brow bleached on the walls:  
And many weeks a troop of carrion crows  
Hung like a cloud above the gateway towers.'

And Vivien breaking in upon him, said:  
'I sit and gather honey; yet, methinks,  
Thy tongue has tript a little: ask thyself.  
The lady never made unwilling war  
With those fine eyes: she had her pleasure in it,  
And made her good man jealous with good cause.  
And lived there neither dame nor damsel then  
Wroth at a lover's loss? were all as tame,  
I mean, as noble, as the Queen was fair?  
Not one to flirt a venom at her eyes,  
Or pinch a murderous dust into her drink,  
Or make her paler with a poisoned rose?  
Well, those were not our days: but did they find  
A wizard? Tell me, was he like to thee?

She ceased, and made her lithe arm round his neck  
Tighten, and then drew back, and let her eyes  
Speak for her, glowing on him, like a bride's

On her new lord, her own, the first of men.

He answered laughing, 'Nay, not like to me.  
At last they found—his foragers for charms—  
A little glassy-headed hairless man,  
Who lived alone in a great wild on grass;  
Read but one book, and ever reading grew  
So grated down and filed away with thought,  
So lean his eyes were monstrous; while the skin  
Clung but to crate and basket, ribs and spine.  
And since he kept his mind on one sole aim,  
Nor ever touched fierce wine, nor tasted flesh,  
Nor owned a sensual wish, to him the wall  
That sunders ghosts and shadow-casting men  
Became a crystal, and he saw them through it,  
And heard their voices talk behind the wall,  
And learnt their elemental secrets, powers  
And forces; often o'er the sun's bright eye  
Drew the vast eyelid of an inky cloud,  
And lashed it at the base with slanting storm;  
Or in the noon of mist and driving rain,  
When the lake whitened and the pinewood roared,  
And the cairned mountain was a shadow, sunned  
The world to peace again: here was the man.  
And so by force they dragged him to the King.  
And then he taught the King to charm the Queen  
In such-wise, that no man could see her more,  
Nor saw she save the King, who wrought the charm,  
Coming and going, and she lay as dead,  
And lost all use of life: but when the King  
Made proffer of the league of golden mines,  
The province with a hundred miles of coast,  
The palace and the princess, that old man  
Went back to his old wild, and lived on grass,  
And vanished, and his book came down to me.'

And Vivien answered smiling saucily:  
'Ye have the book: the charm is written in it:  
Good: take my counsel: let me know it at once:  
For keep it like a puzzle chest in chest,  
With each chest locked and padlocked thirty-fold,

And whelm all this beneath as vast a mound  
As after furious battle turfs the slain  
On some wild down above the windy deep,  
I yet should strike upon a sudden means  
To dig, pick, open, find and read the charm:  
Then, if I tried it, who should blame me then?'

And smiling as a master smiles at one  
That is not of his school, nor any school  
But that where blind and naked Ignorance  
Delivers brawling judgments, unashamed,  
On all things all day long, he answered her:

'Thou read the book, my pretty Vivien!  
O ay, it is but twenty pages long,  
But every page having an ample marge,  
And every marge enclosing in the midst  
A square of text that looks a little blot,  
The text no larger than the limbs of fleas;  
And every square of text an awful charm,  
Writ in a language that has long gone by.  
So long, that mountains have arisen since  
With cities on their flanks—thou read the book!  
And ever margin scribbled, crost, and crammed  
With comment, densest condensation, hard  
To mind and eye; but the long sleepless nights  
Of my long life have made it easy to me.  
And none can read the text, not even I;  
And none can read the comment but myself;  
And in the comment did I find the charm.  
O, the results are simple; a mere child  
Might use it to the harm of anyone,  
And never could undo it:ask no more:  
For though you should not prove it upon me,  
But keep that oath ye sware, ye might, perchance,  
Assay it on some one of the Table Round,  
And all because ye dream they babble of you.'

And Vivien, frowning in true anger, said:  
'What dare the full-fed liars say of me?  
They ride abroad redressing human wrongs!  
They sit with knife in meat and wine in horn!

They bound to holy vows of chastity!  
Were I not woman, I could tell a tale.  
But you are man, you well can understand  
The shame that cannot be explained for shame.  
Not one of all the drove should touch me:swine!

Then answered Merlin careless of her words:  
'You breathe but accusation vast and vague,  
Spleen-born, I think, and proofless.If ye know,  
Set up the charge ye know, to stand or fall!'

And Vivien answered frowning wrathfully:  
'O ay, what say ye to Sir Valence, him  
Whose kinsman left him watcher o'er his wife  
And two fair babes, and went to distant lands;  
Was one year gone, and on returning found  
Not two but three? there lay the reckling, one  
But one hour old!What said the happy sire?'  
A seven-months' babe had been a truer gift.  
Those twelve sweet moons confused his fatherhood.'

Then answered Merlin, 'Nay, I know the tale.  
Sir Valence wedded with an outland dame:  
Some cause had kept him sundered from his wife:  
One child they had:it lived with her:she died:  
His kinsman travelling on his own affair  
Was charged by Valence to bring home the child.  
He brought, not found it therefore:take the truth.'

'O ay,' said Vivien, 'overtrue a tale.  
What say ye then to sweet Sir Sagramore,  
That ardent man? "to pluck the flower in season,"  
So says the song, "I trow it is no treason."  
O Master, shall we call him overquick  
To crop his own sweet rose before the hour?'

And Merlin answered, 'Overquick art thou  
To catch a loathly plume fallen from the wing  
Of that foul bird of rapine whose whole prey  
Is man's good name:he never wronged his bride.  
I know the tale.An angry gust of wind  
Puffed out his torch among the myriad-roomed  
And many-corridored complexities  
Of Arthur's palace:then he found a door,

And darkling felt the sculptured ornament  
That wreathen round it made it seem his own;  
And wearied out made for the couch and slept,  
A stainless man beside a stainless maid;  
And either slept, nor knew of other there;  
Till the high dawn piercing the royal rose  
In Arthur's casement glimmered chastely down,  
Blushing upon them blushing, and at once  
He rose without a word and parted from her:  
But when the thing was blazed about the court,  
The brute world howling forced them into bonds,  
And as it chanced they are happy, being pure.'

'O ay,' said Vivien, 'that were likely too.'

What say ye then to fair Sir Percivale  
And of the horrid foulness that he wrought,  
The saintly youth, the spotless lamb of Christ,  
Or some black wether of St Satan's fold.  
What, in the precincts of the chapel-yard,  
Among the knightly brasses of the graves,  
And by the cold Hic Jacets of the dead!'

And Merlin answered careless of her charge,  
'A sober man is Percivale and pure;  
But once in life was flustered with new wine,  
Then paced for coolness in the chapel-yard;  
Where one of Satan's shepherdesses caught  
And meant to stamp him with her master's mark;  
And that he sinned is not believable;  
For, look upon his face!—but if he sinned,  
The sin that practice burns into the blood,  
And not the one dark hour which brings remorse,  
Will brand us, after, of whose fold we be:  
Or else were he, the holy king, whose hymns  
Are chanted in the minster, worse than all.  
But is your spleen frothed out, or have ye more?'

And Vivien answered frowning yet in wrath:  
'O ay; what say ye to Sir Lancelot, friend  
Traitor or true? that commerce with the Queen,  
I ask you, is it clamoured by the child,  
Or whispered in the corner? do ye know it?'

To which he answered sadly, 'Yea, I know it.  
Sir Lancelot went ambassador, at first,  
To fetch her, and she watched him from her walls.  
A rumour runs, she took him for the King,  
So fixt her fancy on him:let them be.  
But have ye no one word of loyal praise  
For Arthur, blameless King and stainless man?'

She answered with a low and chuckling laugh:  
'Man! is he man at all, who knows and winks?  
Sees what his fair bride is and does, and winks?  
By which the good King means to blind himself,  
And blinds himself and all the Table Round  
To all the foulness that they work.Myself  
Could call him (were it not for womanhood)  
The pretty, popular cause such manhood earns,  
Could call him the main cause of all their crime;  
Yea, were he not crowned King, coward, and fool.'

Then Merlin to his own heart, loathing, said:  
'O true and tender!O my liege and King!  
O selfless man and stainless gentleman,  
Who wouldst against thine own eye-witness fain  
Have all men true and leal, all women pure;  
How, in the mouths of base interpreters,  
From over-fineness not intelligible  
To things with every sense as false and foul  
As the poached filth that floods the middle street,  
Is thy white blamelessness accounted blame!'

But Vivien, deeming Merlin overborne  
By instance, recommenced, and let her tongue  
Rage like a fire among the noblest names,  
Polluting, and imputing her whole self,  
Defaming and defacing, till she left  
Not even Lancelot brave, nor Galahad clean.

Her words had issue other than she willed.  
He dragged his eyebrow bushes down, and made  
A snowy penthouse for his hollow eyes,  
And muttered in himself, 'Tell her the charm!  
So, if she had it, would she rail on me  
To snare the next, and if she have it not

So will she rail. What did the wanton say?  
"Not mount as high;" we scarce can sink as low:  
For men at most differ as Heaven and earth,  
But women, worst and best, as Heaven and Hell.  
I know the Table Round, my friends of old;  
All brave, and many generous, and some chaste.  
She cloaks the scar of some repulse with lies;  
I well believe she tempted them and failed,  
Being so bitter: for fine plots may fail,  
Though harlots paint their talk as well as face  
With colours of the heart that are not theirs.  
I will not let her know: nine tithes of times  
Face-flatterer and backbiter are the same.  
And they, sweet soul, that most impute a crime  
Are prone to it, and impute themselves,  
Wanting the mental range; or low desire  
Not to feel lowest makes them level all;  
Yea, they would pare the mountain to the plain,  
To leave an equal baseness; and in this  
Are harlots like the crowd, that if they find  
Some stain or blemish in a name of note,  
Not grieving that their greatest are so small,  
Inflate themselves with some insane delight,  
And judge all nature from her feet of clay,  
Without the will to lift their eyes, and see  
Her godlike head crowned with spiritual fire,  
And touching other worlds. I am weary of her.'

He spoke in words part heard, in whispers part,  
Half-suffocated in the hoary fell  
And many-wintered fleece of throat and chin.  
But Vivien, gathering somewhat of his mood,  
And hearing 'harlot' muttered twice or thrice,  
Leapt from her session on his lap, and stood  
Stiff as a viper frozen; loathsome sight,  
How from the rosy lips of life and love,  
Flashed the bare-grinning skeleton of death!  
White was her cheek; sharp breaths of anger puffed  
Her fairy nostril out; her hand half-clenched  
Went faltering sideways downward to her belt,



And feeling; had she found a dagger there  
(For in a wink the false love turns to hate)  
She would have stabbed him; but she found it not:  
His eye was calm, and suddenly she took  
To bitter weeping like a beaten child,  
A long, long weeping, not consolable.  
Then her false voice made way, broken with sobs:

'O crueller than was ever told in tale,  
Or sung in song! O vainly lavished love!  
O cruel, there was nothing wild or strange,  
Or seeming shameful—for what shame in love,  
So love be true, and not as yours is—nothing  
Poor Vivien had not done to win his trust  
Who called her what he called her—all her crime,  
All—all—the wish to prove him wholly hers.'

She mused a little, and then clapt her hands  
Together with a wailing shriek, and said:  
'Stabbed through the heart's affections to the heart!  
Seethed like the kid in its own mother's milk!  
Killed with a word worse than a life of blows!  
I thought that he was gentle, being great:  
O God, that I had loved a smaller man!  
I should have found in him a greater heart.  
O, I, that flattering my true passion, saw  
The knights, the court, the King, dark in your light,  
Who loved to make men darker than they are,  
Because of that high pleasure which I had  
To seat you sole upon my pedestal  
Of worship—I am answered, and henceforth  
The course of life that seemed so flowery to me  
With you for guide and master, only you,  
Becomes the sea-cliff pathway broken short,  
And ending in a ruin—nothing left,  
But into some low cave to crawl, and there,  
If the wolf spare me, weep my life away,  
Killed with inutterable unkindliness.'

She paused, she turned away, she hung her head,  
The snake of gold slid from her hair, the braid  
Slipt and uncoiled itself, she wept afresh,

And the dark wood grew darker toward the storm  
In silence, while his anger slowly died  
Within him, till he let his wisdom go  
For ease of heart, and half believed her true:  
Called her to shelter in the hollow oak,  
'Come from the storm,' and having no reply,  
Gazed at the heaving shoulder, and the face  
Hand-hidden, as for utmost grief or shame;  
Then thrice essayed, by tenderest-touching terms,  
To sleek her ruffled peace of mind, in vain.  
At last she let herself be conquered by him,  
And as the cageling newly flown returns,  
The seeming-injured simple-hearted thing  
Came to her old perch back, and settled there.  
There while she sat, half-falling from his knees,  
Half-nestled at his heart, and since he saw  
The slow tear creep from her closed eyelid yet,  
About her, more in kindness than in love,  
The gentle wizard cast a shielding arm.  
But she dislinked herself at once and rose,  
Her arms upon her breast across, and stood,  
A virtuous gentlewoman deeply wronged,  
Upright and flushed before him: then she said:  
    'There must now be no passages of love  
Betwixt us twain henceforward evermore;  
Since, if I be what I am grossly called,  
What should be granted which your own gross heart  
Would reckon worth the taking? I will go.  
In truth, but one thing now—better have died  
Thrice than have asked it once—could make me stay—  
That proof of trust—so often asked in vain!  
How justly, after that vile term of yours,  
I find with grief! I might believe you then,  
Who knows? once more. Lo! what was once to me  
Mere matter of the fancy, now hath grown  
The vast necessity of heart and life.  
Farewell; think gently of me, for I fear  
My fate or folly, passing gayer youth  
For one so old, must be to love thee still.

But ere I leave thee let me swear once more  
That if I schemed against thy peace in this,  
May yon just heaven, that darkens o'er me, send  
One flash, that, missing all things else, may make  
My scheming brain a cinder, if I lie.'

Scarce had she ceased, when out of heaven a bolt  
(For now the storm was close above them) struck,  
Furrowing a giant oak, and javelining  
With darted spikes and splinters of the wood  
The dark earth round. He raised his eyes and saw  
The tree that shone white-listed through the gloom.  
But Vivien, fearing heaven had heard her oath,  
And dazzled by the livid-flickering fork,  
And deafened with the stammering cracks and claps  
That followed, flying back and crying out,  
'O Merlin, though you do not love me, save,  
Yet save me!' clung to him and hugged him close;  
And called him dear protector in her fright,  
Nor yet forgot her practice in her fright,  
But wrought upon his mood and hugged him close.  
The pale blood of the wizard at her touch  
Took gayer colours, like an opal warmed.  
She blamed herself for telling hearsay tales:  
She shook from fear, and for her fault she wept  
Of petulancy; she called him lord and liege,  
Her seer, her bard, her silver star of eve,  
Her God, her Merlin, the one passionate love  
Of her whole life; and ever overhead  
Bellowed the tempest, and the rotten branch  
Snapt in the rushing of the river-rain  
Above them; and in change of glare and gloom  
Her eyes and neck glittering went and came;  
Till now the storm, its burst of passion spent,  
Moaning and calling out of other lands,  
Had left the ravaged woodland yet once more  
To peace; and what should not have been had been,  
For Merlin, overtalked and overworn,  
Had yielded, told her all the charm, and slept.

Then, in one moment, she put forth the charm

Of woven paces and of waving hands,  
And in the hollow oak he lay as dead,  
And lost to life and use and name and fame.

Then crying 'I have made his glory mine,'  
And shrieking out 'O fool!' the harlot leapt  
Adown the forest, and the thicket closed  
Behind her, and the forest echoed 'fool.'

## Lancelot and Elaine

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Elaine the fair, Elaine the loveable,  
Elaine, the lily maid of Astolat,  
High in her chamber up a tower to the east  
Guarded the sacred shield of Lancelot;  
Which first she placed where the morning's earliest ray  
Might strike it, and awake her with the gleam;  
Then fearing rust or soilure fashioned for it  
A case of silk, and braided thereupon  
All the devices blazoned on the shield  
In their own tinct, and added, of her wit,  
A border fantasy of branch and flower,  
And yellow-throated nestling in the nest.  
Nor rested thus content, but day by day,  
Leaving her household and good father, climbed  
That eastern tower, and entering barred her door,  
Stript off the case, and read the naked shield,  
Now guessed a hidden meaning in his arms,  
Now made a pretty history to herself  
Of every dint a sword had beaten in it,  
And every scratch a lance had made upon it,  
Conjecturing when and where: this cut is fresh;  
That ten years back; this dealt him at Caerlyle;  
That at Caerleon; this at Camelot:  
And ah God's mercy, what a stroke was there!  
And here a thrust that might have killed, but God  
Broke the strong lance, and rolled his enemy down,  
And saved him: so she lived in fantasy.

How came the lily maid by that good shield  
Of Lancelot, she that knew not even his name?  
He left it with her, when he rode to tilt  
For the great diamond in the diamond jousts,

Which Arthur had ordained, and by that name  
Had named them, since a diamond was the prize.

For Arthur, long before they crowned him King,  
Roving the trackless realms of Lyonesse,  
Had found a glen, gray boulder and black tarn.  
A horror lived about the tarn, and clave  
Like its own mists to all the mountain side:  
For here two brothers, one a king, had met  
And fought together; but their names were lost;  
And each had slain his brother at a blow;  
And down they fell and made the glen abhorred:  
And there they lay till all their bones were bleached,  
And lichened into colour with the crags:  
And he, that once was king, had on a crown  
Of diamonds, one in front, and four aside.  
And Arthur came, and labouring up the pass,  
All in a misty moonshine, unawares  
Had trodden that crowned skeleton, and the skull  
Broke from the nape, and from the skull the crown  
Rolled into light, and turning on its rims  
Fled like a glittering rivulet to the tarn:  
And down the shingly scaur he plunged, and caught,  
And set it on his head, and in his heart  
Heard murmurs, 'Lo, thou likewise shalt be King.'

Thereafter, when a King, he had the gems  
Plucked from the crown, and showed them to his knights,  
Saying, 'These jewels, whereupon I chanced  
Divinely, are the kingdom's, not the King's—  
For public use: henceforward let there be,  
Once every year, a joust for one of these:  
For so by nine years' proof we needs must learn  
Which is our mightiest, and ourselves shall grow  
In use of arms and manhood, till we drive  
The heathen, who, some say, shall rule the land  
Hereafter, which God hinder.' Thus he spoke:  
And eight years past, eight jousts had been, and still  
Had Lancelot won the diamond of the year,  
With purpose to present them to the Queen,  
When all were won; but meaning all at once

To snare her royal fancy with a boon  
Worth half her realm, had never spoken word.

Now for the central diamond and the last  
And largest, Arthur, holding then his court  
Hard on the river nigh the place which now  
Is this world's hugest, let proclaim a joust  
At Camelot, and when the time drew nigh  
Spake (for she had been sick) to Guinevere,  
'Are you so sick, my Queen, you cannot move  
To these fair jousts?' 'Yea, lord,' she said, 'ye know it.'  
'Then will ye miss,' he answered, 'the great deeds  
Of Lancelot, and his prowess in the lists,  
A sight ye love to look on.' And the Queen  
Lifted her eyes, and they dwelt languidly  
On Lancelot, where he stood beside the King.  
He thinking that he read her meaning there,  
'Stay with me, I am sick; my love is more  
Than many diamonds,' yielded; and a heart  
Love-loyal to the least wish of the Queen  
(However much he yearned to make complete  
The tale of diamonds for his destined boon)  
Urged him to speak against the truth, and say,  
'Sir King, mine ancient wound is hardly whole,  
And lets me from the saddle;' and the King  
Glanced first at him, then her, and went his way.  
No sooner gone than suddenly she began:

'To blame, my lord Sir Lancelot, much to blame!  
Why go ye not to these fair jousts? the knights  
Are half of them our enemies, and the crowd  
Will murmur, "Lo the shameless ones, who take  
Their pastime now the trustful King is gone!"'  
Then Lancelot vexed at having lied in vain:  
'Are ye so wise? ye were not once so wise,  
My Queen, that summer, when ye loved me first.  
Then of the crowd ye took no more account  
Than of the myriad cricket of the mead,  
When its own voice clings to each blade of grass,  
And every voice is nothing. As to knights,  
Them surely can I silence with all ease.

But now my loyal worship is allowed  
Of all men:many a bard, without offence,  
Has linked our names together in his lay,  
Lancelot, the flower of bravery, Guinevere,  
The pearl of beauty:and our knights at feast  
Have pledged us in this union, while the King  
Would listen smiling.How then? is there more?  
Has Arthur spoken aught? or would yourself,  
Now weary of my service and devoir,  
Henceforth be truer to your faultless lord?'

She broke into a little scornful laugh:  
'Arthur, my lord, Arthur, the faultless King,  
That passionate perfection, my good lord—  
But who can gaze upon the Sun in heaven?  
He never spake word of reproach to me,  
He never had a glimpse of mine untruth,  
He cares not for me:only here today  
There gleamed a vague suspicion in his eyes:  
Some meddling rogue has tampered with him—else  
Rapt in this fancy of his Table Round,  
And swearing men to vows impossible,  
To make them like himself:but, friend, to me  
He is all fault who hath no fault at all:  
For who loves me must have a touch of earth;  
The low sun makes the colour:I am yours,  
Not Arthur's, as ye know, save by the bond.  
And therefore hear my words:go to the jousts:  
The tiny-trumpeting gnat can break our dream  
When sweetest; and the vermin voices here  
May buzz so loud—we scorn them, but they sting.'

Then answered Lancelot, the chief of knights:  
'And with what face, after my pretext made,  
Shall I appear, O Queen, at Camelot, I  
Before a King who honours his own word,  
As if it were his God's?'

'Yea,' said the Queen,  
'A moral child without the craft to rule,  
Else had he not lost me:but listen to me,  
If I must find you wit:we hear it said



That men go down before your spear at a touch,  
But knowing you are Lancelot; your great name,  
This conquers:hide it therefore; go unknown:  
Win! by this kiss you will:and our true King  
Will then allow your pretext, O my knight,  
As all for glory; for to speak him true,  
Ye know right well, how meek soe'er he seem,  
No keener hunter after glory breathes.  
He loves it in his knights more than himself:  
They prove to him his work:win and return.'

Then got Sir Lancelot suddenly to horse,  
Wroth at himself.Not willing to be known,  
He left the barren-beaten thoroughfare,  
Chose the green path that showed the rarer foot,  
And there among the solitary downs,  
Full often lost in fancy, lost his way;  
Till as he traced a faintly-shadowed track,  
That all in loops and links among the dales  
Ran to the Castle of Astolat, he saw  
Fired from the west, far on a hill, the towers.  
Thither he made, and blew the gateway horn.  
Then came an old, dumb, myriad-wrinkled man,  
Who let him into lodging and disarmed.  
And Lancelot marvelled at the wordless man;  
And issuing found the Lord of Astolat  
With two strong sons, Sir Torre and Sir Lavaine,  
Moving to meet him in the castle court;  
And close behind them stept the lily maid  
Elaine, his daughter:mother of the house  
There was not:some light jest among them rose  
With laughter dying down as the great knight  
Approached them:then the Lord of Astolat:  
'Whence comes thou, my guest, and by what name  
Livest thou between the lips? for by thy state  
And presence I might guess thee chief of those,  
After the King, who eat in Arthur's halls.  
Him have I seen:the rest, his Table Round,  
Known as they are, to me they are unknown.'

Then answered Sir Lancelot, the chief of knights:

'Known am I, and of Arthur's hall, and known,  
What I by mere mischance have brought, my shield.  
But since I go to joust as one unknown  
At Camelot for the diamond, ask me not,  
Hereafter ye shall know me—and the shield—  
I pray you lend me one, if such you have,  
Blank, or at least with some device not mine.'

Then said the Lord of Astolat, 'Here is Torre's:  
Hurt in his first tilt was my son, Sir Torre.  
And so, God wot, his shield is blank enough.  
His ye can have.' Then added plain Sir Torre,  
'Yea, since I cannot use it, ye may have it.'  
Here laughed the father saying, 'Fie, Sir Churl,  
Is that answer for a noble knight?  
Allow him! but Lavaine, my younger here,  
He is so full of lustihood, he will ride,  
Joust for it, and win, and bring it in an hour,  
And set it in this damsel's golden hair,  
To make her thrice as wilful as before.'

'Nay, father, nay good father, shame me not  
Before this noble knight,' said young Lavaine,  
'For nothing. Surely I but played on Torre:  
He seemed so sullen, vext he could not go:  
A jest, no more! for, knight, the maiden dreamt  
That some one put this diamond in her hand,  
And that it was too slippery to be held,  
And slipt and fell into some pool or stream,  
The castle-well, belike; and then I said  
That if I went and if I fought and won it  
(But all was jest and joke among ourselves)  
Then must she keep it safelier. All was jest.  
But, father, give me leave, an if he will,  
To ride to Camelot with this noble knight:  
Win shall I not, but do my best to win:  
Young as I am, yet would I do my best.'

'So will ye grace me,' answered Lancelot,  
Smiling a moment, 'with your fellowship  
O'er these waste downs whereon I lost myself,  
Then were I glad of you as guide and friend:

And you shall win this diamond,—as I hear  
It is a fair large diamond,—if ye may,  
And yield it to this maiden, if ye will.'  
'A fair large diamond,' added plain Sir Torre,  
'Such be for queens, and not for simple maids.'  
Then she, who held her eyes upon the ground,  
Elaine, and heard her name so tost about,  
Flushed slightly at the slight disparagement  
Before the stranger knight, who, looking at her,  
Full courtly, yet not falsely, thus returned:  
'If what is fair be but for what is fair,  
And only queens are to be counted so,  
Rash were my judgment then, who deem this maid  
Might wear as fair a jewel as is on earth,  
Not violating the bond of like to like.'

He spoke and ceased: the lily maid Elaine,  
Won by the mellow voice before she looked,  
Lifted her eyes, and read his lineaments.  
The great and guilty love he bare the Queen,  
In battle with the love he bare his lord,  
Had marred his face, and marked it ere his time.  
Another sinning on such heights with one,  
The flower of all the west and all the world,  
Had been the sleeker for it: but in him  
His mood was often like a fiend, and rose  
And drove him into wastes and solitudes  
For agony, who was yet a living soul.  
Marred as he was, he seemed the goodliest man  
That ever among ladies ate in hall,  
And noblest, when she lifted up her eyes.  
However marred, of more than twice her years,  
Seamed with an ancient swordcut on the cheek,  
And bruised and bronzed, she lifted up her eyes  
And loved him, with that love which was her doom.

Then the great knight, the darling of the court,  
Loved of the loveliest, into that rude hall  
Stept with all grace, and not with half disdain  
Hid under grace, as in a smaller time,  
But kindly man moving among his kind:

Whom they with meats and vintage of their best  
And talk and minstrel melody entertained.  
And much they asked of court and Table Round,  
And ever well and readily answered he:  
But Lancelot, when they glanced at Guinevere,  
Suddenly speaking of the wordless man,  
Heard from the Baron that, ten years before,  
The heathen caught and reft him of his tongue.  
'He learnt and warned me of their fierce design  
Against my house, and him they caught and maimed;  
But I, my sons, and little daughter fled  
From bonds or death, and dwelt among the woods  
By the great river in a boatman's hut.  
Dull days were those, till our good Arthur broke  
The Pagan yet once more on Badon hill.'

'O there, great lord, doubtless,' Lavaine said, rapt  
By all the sweet and sudden passion of youth  
Toward greatness in its elder, 'you have fought.  
O tell us—for we live apart—you know  
Of Arthur's glorious wars.' And Lancelot spoke  
And answered him at full, as having been  
With Arthur in the fight which all day long  
Rang by the white mouth of the violent Glem;  
And in the four loud battles by the shore  
Of Duglas; that on Bassa; then the war  
That thundered in and out the gloomy skirts  
Of Celidon the forest; and again  
By castle Gurnion, where the glorious King  
Had on his cuirass worn our Lady's Head,  
Carved of one emerald centered in a sun  
Of silver rays, that lightened as he breathed;  
And at Caerleon had he helped his lord,  
When the strong neighings of the wild white Horse  
Set every gilded parapet shuddering;  
And up in Agned-Cathregonion too,  
And down the waste sand-shores of Trath Treroit,  
Where many a heathen fell; 'and on the mount  
Of Badon I myself beheld the King  
Charge at the head of all his Table Round,

And all his legions crying Christ and him,  
And break them; and I saw him, after, stand  
High on a heap of slain, from spur to plume  
Red as the rising sun with heathen blood,  
And seeing me, with a great voice he cried,  
"They are broken, they are broken!" for the King,  
However mild he seems at home, nor cares  
For triumph in our mimic wars, the jousts—  
For if his own knight cast him down, he laughs  
Saying, his knights are better men than he—  
Yet in this heathen war the fire of God  
Fills him: I never saw his like: there lives  
No greater leader.'

While he uttered this,  
Low to her own heart said the lily maid,  
'Save your own great self, fair lord;' and when he fell  
From talk of war to traits of pleasantry—  
Being mirthful he, but in a stately kind—  
She still took note that when the living smile  
Died from his lips, across him came a cloud  
Of melancholy severe, from which again,  
Whenever in her hovering to and fro  
The lily maid had striven to make him cheer,  
There brake a sudden-beaming tenderness  
Of manners and of nature: and she thought  
That all was nature, all, perchance, for her.  
And all night long his face before her lived,  
As when a painter, poring on a face,  
Divinely through all hindrance finds the man  
Behind it, and so paints him that his face,  
The shape and colour of a mind and life,  
Lives for his children, ever at its best  
And fullest; so the face before her lived,  
Dark-splendid, speaking in the silence, full  
Of noble things, and held her from her sleep.  
Till rathe she rose, half-cheated in the thought  
She needs must bid farewell to sweet Lavaine.  
First in fear, step after step, she stole  
Down the long tower-stairs, hesitating:

Anon, she heard Sir Lancelot cry in the court,  
'This shield, my friend, where is it?' and Lavaine  
Past inward, as she came from out the tower.  
There to his proud horse Lancelot turned, and smoothed  
The glossy shoulder, humming to himself.  
Half-envious of the flattering hand, she drew  
Nearer and stood. He looked, and more amazed  
Than if seven men had set upon him, saw  
The maiden standing in the dewy light.  
He had not dreamed she was so beautiful.  
Then came on him a sort of sacred fear,  
For silent, though he greeted her, she stood  
Rapt on his face as if it were a God's.  
Suddenly flashed on her a wild desire,  
That he should wear her favour at the tilt.  
She braved a riotous heart in asking for it.  
'Fair lord, whose name I know not—noble it is,  
I well believe, the noblest—will you wear  
My favour at this tourney?' 'Nay,' said he,  
'Fair lady, since I never yet have worn  
Favour of any lady in the lists.  
Such is my wont, as those, who know me, know.'  
'Yea, so,' she answered; 'then in wearing mine  
Needs must be lesser likelihood, noble lord,  
That those who know should know you.' And he turned  
Her counsel up and down within his mind,  
And found it true, and answered, 'True, my child.  
Well, I will wear it: fetch it out to me:  
What is it?' and she told him 'A red sleeve  
Broidered with pearls,' and brought it: then he bound  
Her token on his helmet, with a smile  
Saying, 'I never yet have done so much  
For any maiden living,' and the blood  
Sprang to her face and filled her with delight;  
But left her all the paler, when Lavaine  
Returning brought the yet-unblazoned shield,  
His brother's; which he gave to Lancelot,  
Who parted with his own to fair Elaine:  
'Do me this grace, my child, to have my shield

In keeping till I come."A grace to me,'  
She answered, 'twice today.I am your squire!'  
Whereat Lavaine said, laughing, 'Lily maid,  
For fear our people call you lily maid  
In earnest, let me bring your colour back;  
Once, twice, and thrice:now get you hence to bed:'  
So kissed her, and Sir Lancelot his own hand,  
And thus they moved away:she stayed a minute,  
Then made a sudden step to the gate, and there—  
Her bright hair blown about the serious face  
Yet rosy-kindled with her brother's kiss—  
Paused by the gateway, standing near the shield  
In silence, while she watched their arms far-off  
Sparkle, until they dipt below the downs.  
Then to her tower she climbed, and took the shield,  
There kept it, and so lived in fantasy.

Meanwhile the new companions past away  
Far o'er the long backs of the bushless downs,  
To where Sir Lancelot knew there lived a knight  
Not far from Camelot, now for forty years  
A hermit, who had prayed, laboured and prayed,  
And ever labouring had scooped himself  
In the white rock a chapel and a hall  
On massive columns, like a shorecliff cave,  
And cells and chambers:all were fair and dry;  
The green light from the meadows underneath  
Struck up and lived along the milky roofs;  
And in the meadows tremulous aspen-trees  
And poplars made a noise of falling showers.  
And thither wending there that night they bode.

But when the next day broke from underground,  
And shot red fire and shadows through the cave,  
They rose, heard mass, broke fast, and rode away:  
Then Lancelot saying, 'Hear, but hold my name  
Hidden, you ride with Lancelot of the Lake,'  
Abashed young Lavaine, whose instant reverence,  
Dearer to true young hearts than their own praise,  
But left him leave to stammer, 'Is it indeed?'  
And after muttering 'The great Lancelot,

At last he got his breath and answered, 'One,  
One have I seen—that other, our liege lord,  
The dread Pendragon, Britain's King of kings,  
Of whom the people talk mysteriously,  
He will be there—then were I stricken blind  
That minute, I might say that I had seen.'

So spake Lavaine, and when they reached the lists  
By Camelot in the meadow, let his eyes  
Run through the peopled gallery which half round  
Lay like a rainbow fallen upon the grass,  
Until they found the clear-faced King, who sat  
Robed in red samite, easily to be known,  
Since to his crown the golden dragon clung,  
And down his robe the dragon writhed in gold,  
And from the carven-work behind him crept  
Two dragons gilded, sloping down to make  
Arms for his chair, while all the rest of them  
Through knots and loops and folds innumerable  
Fled ever through the woodwork, till they found  
The new design wherein they lost themselves,  
Yet with all ease, so tender was the work:  
And, in the costly canopy o'er him set,  
Blazed the last diamond of the nameless king.

Then Lancelot answered young Lavaine and said,  
'Me you call great:mine is the firmer seat,  
The truer lance:but there is many a youth  
Now crescent, who will come to all I am  
And overcome it; and in me there dwells  
No greatness, save it be some far-off touch  
Of greatness to know well I am not great:  
There is the man.'And Lavaine gaped upon him  
As on a thing miraculous, and anon  
The trumpets blew; and then did either side,  
They that assailed, and they that held the lists,  
Set lance in rest, strike spur, suddenly move,  
Meet in the midst, and there so furiously  
Shock, that a man far-off might well perceive,  
If any man that day were left afield,  
The hard earth shake, and a low thunder of arms.



And Lancelot bode a little, till he saw  
Which were the weaker; then he hurled into it  
Against the stronger: little need to speak  
Of Lancelot in his glory! King, duke, earl,  
Count, baron—whom he smote, he overthrew.

But in the field were Lancelot's kith and kin,  
Ranged with the Table Round that held the lists,  
Strong men, and wrathful that a stranger knight  
Should do and almost overdo the deeds  
Of Lancelot; and one said to the other, 'Lo!  
What is he? I do not mean the force alone—  
The grace and versatility of the man!  
Is it not Lancelot?' 'When has Lancelot worn  
Favour of any lady in the lists?  
Not such his wont, as we, that know him, know.'  
'How then? who then?' a fury seized them all,  
A fiery family passion for the name  
Of Lancelot, and a glory one with theirs.  
They couched their spears and pricked their steeds, and thus,  
Their plumes driven backward by the wind they made  
In moving, all together down upon him  
Bare, as a wild wave in the wide North-sea,  
Green-glimmering toward the summit, bears, with all  
Its stormy crests that smoke against the skies,  
Down on a bark, and overbears the bark,  
And him that helms it, so they overbore  
Sir Lancelot and his charger, and a spear  
Down-glancing lamed the charger, and a spear  
Pricked sharply his own cuirass, and the head  
Pierced through his side, and there snapt, and remained.

Then Sir Lavaine did well and worshipfully;  
He bore a knight of old repute to the earth,  
And brought his horse to Lancelot where he lay.  
He up the side, sweating with agony, got,  
But thought to do while he might yet endure,  
And being lustily holpen by the rest,  
His party,—though it seemed half-miracle  
To those he fought with,—drave his kith and kin,  
And all the Table Round that held the lists,

Back to the barrier; then the trumpets blew  
Proclaiming his the prize, who wore the sleeve  
Of scarlet, and the pearls; and all the knights,  
His party, cried 'Advance and take thy prize  
The diamond;' but he answered, 'Diamond me  
No diamonds! for God's love, a little air!  
Prize me no prizes, for my prize is death!  
Hence will I, and I charge you, follow me not.'

He spoke, and vanished suddenly from the field  
With young Lavaine into the poplar grove.  
There from his charger down he slid, and sat,  
Gasping to Sir Lavaine, 'Draw the lance-head:'  
'Ah my sweet lord Sir Lancelot,' said Lavaine,  
'I dread me, if I draw it, you will die.'  
But he, 'I die already with it: draw—  
Draw,'—and Lavaine drew, and Sir Lancelot gave  
A marvellous great shriek and ghastly groan,  
And half his blood burst forth, and down he sank  
For the pure pain, and wholly swooned away.  
Then came the hermit out and bare him in,  
There stanced his wound; and there, in daily doubt  
Whether to live or die, for many a week  
Hid from the wide world's rumour by the grove  
Of poplars with their noise of falling showers,  
And ever-tremulous aspen-trees, he lay.

But on that day when Lancelot fled the lists,  
His party, knights of utmost North and West,  
Lords of waste marches, kings of desolate isles,  
Came round their great Pendragon, saying to him,  
'Lo, Sire, our knight, through whom we won the day,  
Hath gone sore wounded, and hath left his prize  
Untaken, crying that his prize is death.'  
'Heaven hinder,' said the King, 'that such an one,  
So great a knight as we have seen today—  
He seemed to me another Lancelot—  
Yea, twenty times I thought him Lancelot—  
He must not pass uncared for. Wherefore, rise,  
O Gawain, and ride forth and find the knight.  
Wounded and wearied needs must he be near.

I charge you that you get at once to horse.  
And, knights and kings, there breathes not one of you  
Will deem this prize of ours is rashly given:  
His prowess was too wondrous. We will do him  
No customary honour: since the knight  
Came not to us, of us to claim the prize,  
Ourselves will send it after. Rise and take  
This diamond, and deliver it, and return,  
And bring us where he is, and how he fares,  
And cease not from your quest until ye find.'

So saying, from the carven flower above,  
To which it made a restless heart, he took,  
And gave, the diamond: then from where he sat  
At Arthur's right, with smiling face arose,  
With smiling face and frowning heart, a Prince  
In the mid might and flourish of his May,  
Gawain, surnamed The Courteous, fair and strong,  
And after Lancelot, Tristram, and Geraint  
And Gareth, a good knight, but therewithal  
Sir Modred's brother, and the child of Lot,  
Nor often loyal to his word, and now  
Wroth that the King's command to sally forth  
In quest of whom he knew not, made him leave  
The banquet, and concourse of knights and kings.

So all in wrath he got to horse and went;  
While Arthur to the banquet, dark in mood,  
Past, thinking 'Is it Lancelot who hath come  
Despite the wound he spake of, all for gain  
Of glory, and hath added wound to wound,  
And ridden away to die?' So feared the King,  
And, after two days' tarriance there, returned.  
Then when he saw the Queen, embracing asked,  
'Love, are you yet so sick?' 'Nay, lord,' she said.  
'And where is Lancelot?' Then the Queen amazed,  
'Was he not with you? won he not your prize?'  
'Nay, but one like him.' 'Why that like was he.'  
And when the King demanded how she knew,  
Said, 'Lord, no sooner had ye parted from us,  
Than Lancelot told me of a common talk

That men went down before his spear at a touch,  
But knowing he was Lancelot; his great name  
Conquered; and therefore would he hide his name  
From all men, even the King, and to this end  
Had made a pretext of a hindering wound,  
That he might joust unknown of all, and learn  
If his old prowess were in aught decayed;  
And added, "Our true Arthur, when he learns,  
Will well allow me pretext, as for gain  
Of purer glory."

Then replied the King:

'Far lovelier in our Lancelot had it been,  
In lieu of idly dallying with the truth,  
To have trusted me as he hath trusted thee.  
Surely his King and most familiar friend  
Might well have kept his secret. True, indeed,  
Albeit I know my knights fantastical,  
So fine a fear in our large Lancelot  
Must needs have moved my laughter: now remains  
But little cause for laughter: his own kin—  
Ill news, my Queen, for all who love him, this!—  
His kith and kin, not knowing, set upon him;  
So that he went sore wounded from the field:  
Yet good news too: for goodly hopes are mine  
That Lancelot is no more a lonely heart.  
He wore, against his wont, upon his helm  
A sleeve of scarlet, brodered with great pearls,  
Some gentle maiden's gift.'

'Yea, lord,' she said,

'Thy hopes are mine,' and saying that, she choked,  
And sharply turned about to hide her face,  
Past to her chamber, and there flung herself  
Down on the great King's couch, and writhed upon it,  
And clenched her fingers till they bit the palm,  
And shrieked out 'Traitor' to the unhearing wall,  
Then flashed into wild tears, and rose again,  
And moved about her palace, proud and pale.

Gawain the while through all the region round  
Rode with his diamond, wearied of the quest,

Touched at all points, except the poplar grove,  
And came at last, though late, to Astolat:  
Whom glittering in enamelled arms the maid  
Glanced at, and cried, 'What news from Camelot, lord?  
What of the knight with the red sleeve?' 'He won.'  
'I knew it,' she said. 'But parted from the jousts  
Hurt in the side,' whereat she caught her breath;  
Through her own side she felt the sharp lance go;  
Thereon she smote her hand: wellnigh she swooned:  
And, while he gazed wonderingly at her, came  
The Lord of Astolat out, to whom the Prince  
Reported who he was, and on what quest  
Sent, that he bore the prize and could not find  
The victor, but had ridden a random round  
To seek him, and had wearied of the search.  
To whom the Lord of Astolat, 'Bide with us,  
And ride no more at random, noble Prince!  
Here was the knight, and here he left a shield;  
This will he send or come for: furthermore  
Our son is with him; we shall hear anon,  
Needs must hear.' To this the courteous Prince  
Accorded with his wonted courtesy,  
Courtesy with a touch of traitor in it,  
And stayed; and cast his eyes on fair Elaine:  
Where could be found face daintier? then her shape  
From forehead down to foot, perfect—again  
From foot to forehead exquisitely turned:  
'Well—if I bide, lo! this wild flower for me!'  
And oft they met among the garden yews,  
And there he set himself to play upon her  
With sallying wit, free flashes from a height  
Above her, graces of the court, and songs,  
Sighs, and slow smiles, and golden eloquence  
And amorous adulation, till the maid  
Rebelled against it, saying to him, 'Prince,  
O loyal nephew of our noble King,  
Why ask you not to see the shield he left,  
Whence you might learn his name? Why slight your King,  
And lose the quest he sent you on, and prove

No surer than our falcon yesterday,  
Who lost the hern we slipt her at, and went  
To all the winds?"Nay, by mine head,' said he,  
'I lose it, as we lose the lark in heaven,  
O damsel, in the light of your blue eyes;  
But an ye will it let me see the shield.'  
And when the shield was brought, and Gawain saw  
Sir Lancelot's azure lions, crowned with gold,  
Ramp in the field, he smote his thigh, and mocked:  
'Right was the King! our Lancelot! that true man!'  
'And right was I,' she answered merrily, 'I,  
Who dreamed my knight the greatest knight of all.'  
'And if I dreamed,' said Gawain, 'that you love  
This greatest knight, your pardon! lo, ye know it!  
Speak therefore:shall I waste myself in vain?'  
Full simple was her answer, 'What know I?  
My brethren have been all my fellowship;  
And I, when often they have talked of love,  
Wished it had been my mother, for they talked,  
Meseemed, of what they knew not; so myself—  
I know not if I know what true love is,  
But if I know, then, if I love not him,  
I know there is none other I can love.'  
'Yea, by God's death,' said he, 'ye love him well,  
But would not, knew ye what all others know,  
And whom he loves."So be it,' cried Elaine,  
And lifted her fair face and moved away:  
But he pursued her, calling, 'Stay a little!  
One golden minute's grace! he wore your sleeve:  
Would he break faith with one I may not name?  
Must our true man change like a leaf at last?  
Nay—like enow:why then, far be it from me  
To cross our mighty Lancelot in his loves!  
And, damsel, for I deem you know full well  
Where your great knight is hidden, let me leave  
My quest with you; the diamond also:here!  
For if you love, it will be sweet to give it;  
And if he love, it will be sweet to have it  
From your own hand; and whether he love or not,

A diamond is a diamond. Fare you well  
A thousand times!—a thousand times farewell!  
Yet, if he love, and his love hold, we two  
May meet at court hereafter: there, I think,  
So ye will learn the courtesies of the court,  
We two shall know each other.'

Then he gave,  
And slightly kissed the hand to which he gave,  
The diamond, and all wearied of the quest  
Leapt on his horse, and carolling as he went  
A true-love ballad, lightly rode away.

Thence to the court he past; there told the King  
What the King knew, 'Sir Lancelot is the knight.'  
And added, 'Sire, my liege, so much I learnt;  
But failed to find him, though I rode all round  
The region: but I lighted on the maid  
Whose sleeve he wore; she loves him; and to her,  
Deeming our courtesy is the truest law,  
I gave the diamond: she will render it;  
For by mine head she knows his hiding-place.'

The seldom-frowning King frowned, and replied,  
'Too courteous truly! ye shall go no more  
On quest of mine, seeing that ye forget  
Obedience is the courtesy due to kings.'

He spake and parted. Wroth, but all in awe,  
For twenty strokes of the blood, without a word,  
Lingered that other, staring after him;  
Then shook his hair, strode off, and buzzed abroad  
About the maid of Astolat, and her love.  
All ears were pricked at once, all tongues were loosed:  
'The maid of Astolat loves Sir Lancelot,  
Sir Lancelot loves the maid of Astolat.'  
Some read the King's face, some the Queen's, and all  
Had marvel what the maid might be, but most  
Predoomed her as unworthy. One old dame  
Came suddenly on the Queen with the sharp news.  
She, that had heard the noise of it before,  
But sorrowing Lancelot should have stooped so low,  
Marred her friend's aim with pale tranquillity.

So ran the tale like fire about the court,  
Fire in dry stubble a nine-days' wonder flared:  
Till even the knights at banquet twice or thrice  
Forgot to drink to Lancelot and the Queen,  
And pledging Lancelot and the lily maid  
Smiled at each other, while the Queen, who sat  
With lips severely placid, felt the knot  
Climb in her throat, and with her feet unseen  
Crushed the wild passion out against the floor  
Beneath the banquet, where all the meats became  
As wormwood, and she hated all who pledged.

But far away the maid in Astolat,  
Her guiltless rival, she that ever kept  
The one-day-seen Sir Lancelot in her heart,  
Crept to her father, while he mused alone,  
Sat on his knee, stroked his gray face and said,  
'Father, you call me wilful, and the fault  
Is yours who let me have my will, and now,  
Sweet father, will you let me lose my wits?'  
'Nay,' said he, 'surely.' 'Wherefore, let me hence,'  
She answered, 'and find out our dear Lavaine.'  
'Ye will not lose your wits for dear Lavaine:  
Bide,' answered he: 'we needs must hear anon  
Of him, and of that other.' 'Ay,' she said,  
'And of that other, for I needs must hence  
And find that other, wheresoe'er he be,  
And with mine own hand give his diamond to him,  
Lest I be found as faithless in the quest  
As yon proud Prince who left the quest to me.  
Sweet father, I behold him in my dreams  
Gaunt as it were the skeleton of himself,  
Death-pale, for lack of gentle maiden's aid.  
The gentler-born the maiden, the more bound,  
My father, to be sweet and serviceable  
To noble knights in sickness, as ye know  
When these have worn their tokens: let me hence  
I pray you.' Then her father nodding said,  
'Ay, ay, the diamond: wit ye well, my child,  
Right fain were I to learn this knight were whole,



Being our greatest:yea, and you must give it—  
And sure I think this fruit is hung too high  
For any mouth to gape for save a queen's—  
Nay, I mean nothing:so then, get you gone,  
Being so very wilful you must go.'

Lightly, her suit allowed, she slipt away,  
And while she made her ready for her ride,  
Her father's latest word hummed in her ear,  
'Being so very wilful you must go,'  
And changed itself and echoed in her heart,  
'Being so very wilful you must die.'  
But she was happy enough and shook it off,  
As we shake off the bee that buzzes at us;  
And in her heart she answered it and said,  
'What matter, so I help him back to life?'  
Then far away with good Sir Torre for guide  
Rode o'er the long backs of the bushless downs  
To Camelot, and before the city-gates  
Came on her brother with a happy face  
Making a roan horse caper and curvet  
For pleasure all about a field of flowers:  
Whom when she saw, 'Lavaine,' she cried, 'Lavaine,  
How fares my lord Sir Lancelot?'He amazed,  
'Torre and Elaine! why here? Sir Lancelot!  
How know ye my lord's name is Lancelot?'  
But when the maid had told him all her tale,  
Then turned Sir Torre, and being in his moods  
Left them, and under the strange-statued gate,  
Where Arthur's wars were rendered mystically,  
Past up the still rich city to his kin,  
His own far blood, which dwelt at Camelot;  
And her, Lavaine across the poplar grove  
Led to the caves:there first she saw the casque  
Of Lancelot on the wall:her scarlet sleeve,  
Though carved and cut, and half the pearls away,  
Streamed from it still; and in her heart she laughed,  
Because he had not loosed it from his helm,  
But meant once more perchance to tourney in it.  
And when they gained the cell wherein he slept,

His battle-writhen arms and mighty hands  
Lay naked on the wolfskin, and a dream  
Of dragging down his enemy made them move.  
Then she that saw him lying unsleek, unshorn,  
Gaunt as it were the skeleton of himself,  
Uttered a little tender dolorous cry.  
The sound not wonted in a place so still  
Woke the sick knight, and while he rolled his eyes  
Yet blank from sleep, she started to him, saying,  
'Your prize the diamond sent you by the King:'  
His eyes glistened: she fancied 'Is it for me?'  
And when the maid had told him all the tale  
Of King and Prince, the diamond sent, the quest  
Assigned to her not worthy of it, she knelt  
Full lowly by the corners of his bed,  
And laid the diamond in his open hand.  
Her face was near, and as we kiss the child  
That does the task assigned, he kissed her face.  
At once she slipt like water to the floor.  
'Alas,' he said, 'your ride hath wearied you.  
Rest must you have.' 'No rest for me,' she said;  
'Nay, for near you, fair lord, I am at rest.'  
What might she mean by that? his large black eyes,  
Yet larger through his leanness, dwelt upon her,  
Till all her heart's sad secret blazed itself  
In the heart's colours on her simple face;  
And Lancelot looked and was perplexed in mind,  
And being weak in body said no more;  
But did not love the colour; woman's love,  
Save one, he not regarded, and so turned  
Sighing, and feigned a sleep until he slept.

Then rose Elaine and glided through the fields,  
And past beneath the weirdly-sculptured gates  
Far up the dim rich city to her kin;  
There bode the night: but woke with dawn, and past  
Down through the dim rich city to the fields,  
Thence to the cave: so day by day she past  
In either twilight ghost-like to and fro  
Gliding, and every day she tended him,

And likewise many a night:and Lancelot  
Would, though he called his wound a little hurt  
Whereof he should be quickly whole, at times  
Brain-feverous in his heat and agony, seem  
Uncourteous, even he:but the meek maid  
Sweetly forbore him ever, being to him  
Meeker than any child to a rough nurse,  
Milder than any mother to a sick child,  
And never woman yet, since man's first fall,  
Did kindlier unto man, but her deep love  
Upbore her; till the hermit, skilled in all  
The simples and the science of that time,  
Told him that her fine care had saved his life.  
And the sick man forgot her simple blush,  
Would call her friend and sister, sweet Elaine,  
Would listen for her coming and regret  
Her parting step, and held her tenderly,  
And loved her with all love except the love  
Of man and woman when they love their best,  
Closest and sweetest, and had died the death  
In any knightly fashion for her sake.  
And peradventure had he seen her first  
She might have made this and that other world  
Another world for the sick man; but now  
The shackles of an old love straitened him,  
His honour rooted in dishonour stood,  
And faith unfaithful kept him falsely true.

Yet the great knight in his mid-sickness made  
Full many a holy vow and pure resolve.  
These, as but born of sickness, could not live:  
For when the blood ran lustier in him again,  
Full often the bright image of one face,  
Making a treacherous quiet in his heart,  
Dispersed his resolution like a cloud.  
Then if the maiden, while that ghostly grace  
Beamed on his fancy, spoke, he answered not,  
Or short and coldly, and she knew right well  
What the rough sickness meant, but what this meant  
She knew not, and the sorrow dimmed her sight,

And drave her ere her time across the fields  
Far into the rich city, where alone  
She murmured, 'Vain, in vain:it cannot be.  
He will not love me:how then? must I die?'  
Then as a little helpless innocent bird,  
That has but one plain passage of few notes,  
Will sing the simple passage o'er and o'er  
For all an April morning, till the ear  
Wearies to hear it, so the simple maid  
Went half the night repeating, 'Must I die?'  
And now to right she turned, and now to left,  
And found no ease in turning or in rest;  
And 'Him or death,' she muttered, 'death or him,'  
Again and like a burthen, 'Him or death.'

But when Sir Lancelot's deadly hurt was whole,  
To Astolat returning rode the three.  
There morn by morn, arraying her sweet self  
In that wherein she deemed she looked her best,  
She came before Sir Lancelot, for she thought  
'If I be loved, these are my festal robes,  
If not, the victim's flowers before he fall.'  
And Lancelot ever prest upon the maid  
That she should ask some goodly gift of him  
For her own self or hers; 'and do not shun  
To speak the wish most near to your true heart;  
Such service have ye done me, that I make  
My will of yours, and Prince and Lord am I  
In mine own land, and what I will I can.'  
Then like a ghost she lifted up her face,  
But like a ghost without the power to speak.  
And Lancelot saw that she withheld her wish,  
And bode among them yet a little space  
Till he should learn it; and one morn it chanced  
He found her in among the garden yews,  
And said, 'Delay no longer, speak your wish,  
Seeing I go today:' then out she brake:  
'Going? and we shall never see you more.  
And I must die for want of one bold word.'  
'Speak:that I live to hear,' he said, 'is yours.'

Then suddenly and passionately she spoke:  
'I have gone mad.I love you:let me die.'  
'Ah, sister,' answered Lancelot, 'what is this?'  
And innocently extending her white arms,  
'Your love,' she said, 'your love—to be your wife.'  
And Lancelot answered, 'Had I chosen to wed,  
I had been wedded earlier, sweet Elaine:  
But now there never will be wife of mine.'  
'No, no,' she cried, 'I care not to be wife,  
But to be with you still, to see your face,  
To serve you, and to follow you through the world.'  
And Lancelot answered, 'Nay, the world, the world,  
All ear and eye, with such a stupid heart  
To interpret ear and eye, and such a tongue  
To blare its own interpretation—nay,  
Full ill then should I quit your brother's love,  
And your good father's kindness.'And she said,  
'Not to be with you, not to see your face—  
Alas for me then, my good days are done.'  
'Nay, noble maid,' he answered, 'ten times nay!  
This is not love:but love's first flash in youth,  
Most common:yea, I know it of mine own self:  
And you yourself will smile at your own self  
Hereafter, when you yield your flower of life  
To one more fitly yours, not thrice your age:  
And then will I, for true you are and sweet  
Beyond mine old belief in womanhood,  
More specially should your good knight be poor,  
Endow you with broad land and territory  
Even to the half my realm beyond the seas,  
So that would make you happy:furthermore,  
Even to the death, as though ye were my blood,  
In all your quarrels will I be your knight.  
This I will do, dear damsel, for your sake,  
And more than this I cannot.'

While he spoke  
She neither blushed nor shook, but deathly-pale  
Stood grasping what was nearest, then replied:  
'Of all this will I nothing;' and so fell,

And thus they bore her swooning to her tower.

Then spake, to whom through those black walls of yew  
Their talk had pierced, her father: 'Ay, a flash,  
I fear me, that will strike my blossom dead.  
Too courteous are ye, fair Lord Lancelot.  
I pray you, use some rough discourtesy  
To blunt or break her passion.'

Lancelot said,  
'That were against me: what I can I will;'  
And there that day remained, and toward even  
Sent for his shield: full meekly rose the maid,  
Stript off the case, and gave the naked shield;  
Then, when she heard his horse upon the stones,  
Unclasping flung the casement back, and looked  
Down on his helm, from which her sleeve had gone.  
And Lancelot knew the little clinking sound;  
And she by tact of love was well aware  
That Lancelot knew that she was looking at him.  
And yet he glanced not up, nor waved his hand,  
Nor bad farewell, but sadly rode away.  
This was the one discourtesy that he used.

So in her tower alone the maiden sat:  
His very shield was gone; only the case,  
Her own poor work, her empty labour, left.  
But still she heard him, still his picture formed  
And grew between her and the pictured wall.  
Then came her father, saying in low tones,  
'Have comfort,' whom she greeted quietly.  
Then came her brethren saying, 'Peace to thee,  
Sweet sister,' whom she answered with all calm.  
But when they left her to herself again,  
Death, like a friend's voice from a distant field  
Approaching through the darkness, called; the owls  
Wailing had power upon her, and she mixt  
Her fancies with the sallow-rifted glooms  
Of evening, and the moanings of the wind.

And in those days she made a little song,  
And called her song 'The Song of Love and Death,'  
And sang it: sweetly could she make and sing.

'Sweet is true love though given in vain, in vain;  
And sweet is death who puts an end to pain:  
I know not which is sweeter, no, not I.

'Love, art thou sweet? then bitter death must be:  
Love, thou art bitter; sweet is death to me.  
O Love, if death be sweeter, let me die.

'Sweet love, that seems not made to fade away,  
Sweet death, that seems to make us loveless clay,  
I know not which is sweeter, no, not I.

'I fain would follow love, if that could be;  
I needs must follow death, who calls for me;  
Call and I follow, I follow! let me die.'

High with the last line scaled her voice, and this,  
All in a fiery dawning wild with wind  
That shook her tower, the brothers heard, and thought  
With shuddering, 'Hark the Phantom of the house  
That ever shrieks before a death,' and called  
The father, and all three in hurry and fear  
Ran to her, and lo! the blood-red light of dawn  
Flared on her face, she shrilling, 'Let me die!'

As when we dwell upon a word we know,  
Repeating, till the word we know so well  
Becomes a wonder, and we know not why,  
So dwelt the father on her face, and thought  
'Is this Elaine?' till back the maiden fell,  
Then gave a languid hand to each, and lay,  
Speaking a still good-morrow with her eyes.  
At last she said, 'Sweet brothers, yesternight  
I seemed a curious little maid again,  
As happy as when we dwelt among the woods,  
And when ye used to take me with the flood  
Up the great river in the boatman's boat.  
Only ye would not pass beyond the cape  
That has the poplar on it: there ye fixt  
Your limit, oft returning with the tide.  
And yet I cried because ye would not pass  
Beyond it, and far up the shining flood  
Until we found the palace of the King.  
And yet ye would not; but this night I dreamed

That I was all alone upon the flood,  
And then I said, "Now shall I have my will:"  
And there I woke, but still the wish remained.  
So let me hence that I may pass at last  
Beyond the poplar and far up the flood,  
Until I find the palace of the King.  
There will I enter in among them all,  
And no man there will dare to mock at me;  
But there the fine Gawain will wonder at me,  
And there the great Sir Lancelot muse at me;  
Gawain, who bad a thousand farewells to me,  
Lancelot, who coldly went, nor bad me one:  
And there the King will know me and my love,  
And there the Queen herself will pity me,  
And all the gentle court will welcome me,  
And after my long voyage I shall rest!'

'Peace,' said her father, 'O my child, ye seem  
Light-headed, for what force is yours to go  
So far, being sick? and wherefore would ye look  
On this proud fellow again, who scorns us all?'

Then the rough Torre began to heave and move,  
And bluster into stormy sobs and say,  
'I never loved him:an I meet with him,  
I care not howsoever great he be,  
Then will I strike at him and strike him down,  
Give me good fortune, I will strike him dead,  
For this discomfort he hath done the house.'

To whom the gentle sister made reply,  
'Fret not yourself, dear brother, nor be wroth,  
Seeing it is no more Sir Lancelot's fault  
Not to love me, than it is mine to love  
Him of all men who seems to me the highest.'

'Highest?' the father answered, echoing 'highest?'  
(He meant to break the passion in her) 'nay,  
Daughter, I know not what you call the highest;  
But this I know, for all the people know it,  
He loves the Queen, and in an open shame:  
And she returns his love in open shame;  
If this be high, what is it to be low?'



Then spake the lily maid of Astolat:  
'Sweet father, all too faint and sick am I  
For anger:these are slanders:never yet  
Was noble man but made ignoble talk.  
He makes no friend who never made a foe.  
But now it is my glory to have loved  
One peerless, without stain:so let me pass,  
My father, howsoe'er I seem to you,  
Not all unhappy, having loved God's best  
And greatest, though my love had no return:  
Yet, seeing you desire your child to live,  
Thanks, but you work against your own desire;  
For if I could believe the things you say  
I should but die the sooner; wherefore cease,  
Sweet father, and bid call the ghostly man  
Hither, and let me shrive me clean, and die.'

So when the ghostly man had come and gone,  
She with a face, bright as for sin forgiven,  
Besought Lavaine to write as she devised  
A letter, word for word; and when he asked  
'Is it for Lancelot, is it for my dear lord?  
Then will I bear it gladly;' she replied,  
'For Lancelot and the Queen and all the world,  
But I myself must bear it.'Then he wrote  
The letter she devised; which being writ  
And folded, 'O sweet father, tender and true,  
Deny me not,' she said—'ye never yet  
Denied my fancies—this, however strange,  
My latest:lay the letter in my hand  
A little ere I die, and close the hand  
Upon it; I shall guard it even in death.  
And when the heat is gone from out my heart,  
Then take the little bed on which I died  
For Lancelot's love, and deck it like the Queen's  
For richness, and me also like the Queen  
In all I have of rich, and lay me on it.  
And let there be prepared a chariot-bier  
To take me to the river, and a barge  
Be ready on the river, clothed in black.

I go in state to court, to meet the Queen.  
There surely I shall speak for mine own self,  
And none of you can speak for me so well.  
And therefore let our dumb old man alone  
Go with me, he can steer and row, and he  
Will guide me to that palace, to the doors.'

She ceased: her father promised; whereupon  
She grew so cheerful that they deemed her death  
Was rather in the fantasy than the blood.  
But ten slow mornings past, and on the eleventh  
Her father laid the letter in her hand,  
And closed the hand upon it, and she died.  
So that day there was dole in Astolat.

But when the next sun brake from underground,  
Then, those two brethren slowly with bent brows  
Accompanying, the sad chariot-bier  
Past like a shadow through the field, that shone  
Full-summer, to that stream whereon the barge,  
Pulled all its length in blackest samite, lay.  
There sat the lifelong creature of the house,  
Loyal, the dumb old servitor, on deck,  
Winking his eyes, and twisted all his face.  
So those two brethren from the chariot took  
And on the black decks laid her in her bed,  
Set in her hand a lily, o'er her hung  
The silken case with braided blazonings,  
And kissed her quiet brows, and saying to her  
'Sister, farewell for ever,' and again  
'Farewell, sweet sister,' parted all in tears.  
Then rose the dumb old servitor, and the dead,  
Oared by the dumb, went upward with the flood—  
In her right hand the lily, in her left  
The letter—all her bright hair streaming down—  
And all the coverlid was cloth of gold  
Drawn to her waist, and she herself in white  
All but her face, and that clear-featured face  
Was lovely, for she did not seem as dead,  
But fast asleep, and lay as though she smiled.

That day Sir Lancelot at the palace craved

Audience of Guinevere, to give at last,  
The price of half a realm, his costly gift,  
Hard-won and hardly won with bruise and blow,  
With deaths of others, and almost his own,  
The nine-years-fought-for diamonds:for he saw  
One of her house, and sent him to the Queen  
Bearing his wish, whereto the Queen agreed  
With such and so unmoved a majesty  
She might have seemed her statue, but that he,  
Low-drooping till he wellnigh kissed her feet  
For loyal awe, saw with a sidelong eye  
The shadow of some piece of pointed lace,  
In the Queen's shadow, vibrate on the walls,  
And parted, laughing in his courtly heart.

All in an oriel on the summer side,  
Vine-clad, of Arthur's palace toward the stream,  
They met, and Lancelot kneeling uttered, 'Queen,  
Lady, my liege, in whom I have my joy,  
Take, what I had not won except for you,  
These jewels, and make me happy, making them  
An armet for the roundest arm on earth,  
Or necklace for a neck to which the swan's  
Is tawnier than her cygnet's:these are words:  
Your beauty is your beauty, and I sin  
In speaking, yet O grant my worship of it  
Words, as we grant grief tears.Such sin in words  
Perchance, we both can pardon:but, my Queen,  
I hear of rumours flying through your court.  
Our bond, as not the bond of man and wife,  
Should have in it an absolute trust  
To make up that defect:let rumours be:  
When did not rumours fly? these, as I trust  
That you trust me in your own nobleness,  
I may not well believe that you believe.'

While thus he spoke, half turned away, the Queen  
Broke from the vast oriel-embowering vine  
Leaf after leaf, and tore, and cast them off,  
Till all the place whereon she stood was green;  
Then, when he ceased, in one cold passive hand

Received at once and laid aside the gems  
There on a table near her, and replied:

'It may be, I am quicker of belief  
Than you believe me, Lancelot of the Lake.  
Our bond is not the bond of man and wife.  
This good is in it, whatsoe'er of ill,  
It can be broken easier. I for you  
This many a year have done despite and wrong  
To one whom ever in my heart of hearts  
I did acknowledge nobler. What are these?  
Diamonds for me! they had been thrice their worth  
Being your gift, had you not lost your own.  
To loyal hearts the value of all gifts  
Must vary as the giver's. Not for me!  
For her! for your new fancy. Only this  
Grant me, I pray you: have your joys apart.  
I doubt not that however changed, you keep  
So much of what is graceful: and myself  
Would shun to break those bounds of courtesy  
In which as Arthur's Queen I move and rule:  
So cannot speak my mind. An end to this!  
A strange one! yet I take it with Amen.  
So pray you, add my diamonds to her pearls;  
Deck her with these; tell her, she shines me down:  
An armlet for an arm to which the Queen's  
Is haggard, or a necklace for a neck  
O as much fairer—as a faith once fair  
Was richer than these diamonds—hers not mine—  
Nay, by the mother of our Lord himself,  
Or hers or mine, mine now to work my will—  
She shall not have them.'

Saying which she seized,  
And, through the casement standing wide for heat,  
Flung them, and down they flashed, and smote the stream.  
Then from the smitten surface flashed, as it were,  
Diamonds to meet them, and they past away.  
Then while Sir Lancelot leant, in half disdain  
At love, life, all things, on the window ledge,  
Close underneath his eyes, and right across

Where these had fallen, slowly past the barge.  
Whereon the lily maid of Astolat  
Lay smiling, like a star in blackest night.

But the wild Queen, who saw not, burst away  
To weep and wail in secret; and the barge,  
On to the palace-doorway sliding, paused.  
There two stood armed, and kept the door; to whom,  
All up the marble stair, tier over tier,  
Were added mouths that gaped, and eyes that asked  
'What is it?' but that oarsman's haggard face,  
As hard and still as is the face that men  
Shape to their fancy's eye from broken rocks  
On some cliff-side, appalled them, and they said  
'He is enchanted, cannot speak—and she,  
Look how she sleeps—the Fairy Queen, so fair!  
Yea, but how pale! what are they? flesh and blood?  
Or come to take the King to Fairyland?  
For some do hold our Arthur cannot die,  
But that he passes into Fairyland.'

While thus they babbled of the King, the King  
Came girt with knights: then turned the tongueless man  
From the half-face to the full eye, and rose  
And pointed to the damsel, and the doors.  
So Arthur bad the meek Sir Percivale  
And pure Sir Galahad to uplift the maid;  
And reverently they bore her into hall.  
Then came the fine Gawain and wondered at her,  
And Lancelot later came and mused at her,  
And last the Queen herself, and pitied her:  
But Arthur spied the letter in her hand,  
Stooped, took, brake seal, and read it; this was all:

'Most noble lord, Sir Lancelot of the Lake,  
I, sometime called the maid of Astolat,  
Come, for you left me taking no farewell,  
Hither, to take my last farewell of you.  
I loved you, and my love had no return,  
And therefore my true love has been my death.  
And therefore to our Lady Guinevere,  
And to all other ladies, I make moan:

Pray for my soul, and yield me burial.  
Pray for my soul thou too, Sir Lancelot,  
As thou art a knight peerless.'

Thus he read;

And ever in the reading, lords and dames  
Wept, looking often from his face who read  
To hers which lay so silent, and at times,  
So touched were they, half-thinking that her lips,  
Who had devised the letter, moved again.

Then freely spoke Sir Lancelot to them all:

'My lord liege Arthur, and all ye that hear,  
Know that for this most gentle maiden's death  
Right heavy am I; for good she was and true,  
But loved me with a love beyond all love  
In women, whomsoever I have known.  
Yet to be loved makes not to love again;  
Not at my years, however it hold in youth.  
I swear by truth and knighthood that I gave  
No cause, not willingly, for such a love:  
To this I call my friends in testimony,  
Her brethren, and her father, who himself  
Besought me to be plain and blunt, and use,  
To break her passion, some discourtesy  
Against my nature: what I could, I did.  
I left her and I bid her no farewell;  
Though, had I dreamt the damsel would have died,  
I might have put my wits to some rough use,  
And helped her from herself.'

Then said the Queen

(Sea was her wrath, yet working after storm)  
'Ye might at least have done her so much grace,  
Fair lord, as would have helped her from her death.'  
He raised his head, their eyes met and hers fell,  
He adding,  
'Queen, she would not be content  
Save that I wedded her, which could not be.  
Then might she follow me through the world, she asked;  
It could not be. I told her that her love  
Was but the flash of youth, would darken down

To rise hereafter in a stiller flame  
Toward one more worthy of her—then would I,  
More specially were he, she wedded, poor,  
Estate them with large land and territory  
In mine own realm beyond the narrow seas,  
To keep them in all joyance: more than this  
I could not; this she would not, and she died.'

He pausing, Arthur answered, 'O my knight,  
It will be to thy worship, as my knight,  
And mine, as head of all our Table Round,  
To see that she be buried worshipfully.'

So toward that shrine which then in all the realm  
Was richest, Arthur leading, slowly went  
The marshalled Order of their Table Round,  
And Lancelot sad beyond his wont, to see  
The maiden buried, not as one unknown,  
Nor meanly, but with gorgeous obsequies,  
And mass, and rolling music, like a queen.  
And when the knights had laid her comely head  
Low in the dust of half-forgotten kings,  
Then Arthur spake among them, 'Let her tomb  
Be costly, and her image thereupon,  
And let the shield of Lancelot at her feet  
Be carven, and her lily in her hand.  
And let the story of her dolorous voyage  
For all true hearts be blazoned on her tomb  
In letters gold and azure!' which was wrought  
Thereafter; but when now the lords and dames  
And people, from the high door streaming, brake  
Disorderly, as homeward each, the Queen,  
Who marked Sir Lancelot where he moved apart,  
Drew near, and sighed in passing, 'Lancelot,  
Forgive me; mine was jealousy in love.'  
He answered with his eyes upon the ground,  
'That is love's curse; pass on, my Queen, forgiven.'  
But Arthur, who beheld his cloudy brows,  
Approached him, and with full affection said,  
'Lancelot, my Lancelot, thou in whom I have  
Most joy and most affiance, for I know

What thou hast been in battle by my side,  
And many a time have watched thee at the tilt  
Strike down the lusty and long practised knight,  
And let the younger and unskilled go by  
To win his honour and to make his name,  
And loved thy courtesies and thee, a man  
Made to be loved; but now I would to God,  
Seeing the homeless trouble in thine eyes,  
Thou couldst have loved this maiden, shaped, it seems,  
By God for thee alone, and from her face,  
If one may judge the living by the dead,  
Delicately pure and marvellously fair,  
Who might have brought thee, now a lonely man  
Wifeless and heirless, noble issue, sons  
Born to the glory of thine name and fame,  
My knight, the great Sir Lancelot of the Lake.'

Then answered Lancelot, 'Fair she was, my King,  
Pure, as you ever wish your knights to be.  
To doubt her fairness were to want an eye,  
To doubt her pureness were to want a heart—  
Yea, to be loved, if what is worthy love  
Could bind him, but free love will not be bound.'

'Free love, so bound, were freest,' said the King.  
'Let love be free; free love is for the best:  
And, after heaven, on our dull side of death,  
What should be best, if not so pure a love  
Clothed in so pure a loveliness? yet thee  
She failed to bind, though being, as I think,  
Unbound as yet, and gentle, as I know.'

And Lancelot answered nothing, but he went,  
And at the inrunning of a little brook  
Sat by the river in a cove, and watched  
The high reed wave, and lifted up his eyes  
And saw the barge that brought her moving down,  
Far-off, a blot upon the stream, and said  
Low in himself, 'Ah simple heart and sweet,  
Ye loved me, damsel, surely with a love  
Far tenderer than my Queen's. Pray for thy soul?  
Ay, that will I. Farewell too—now at last—



Farewell, fair lily. "Jealousy in love?"  
Not rather dead love's harsh heir, jealous pride?  
Queen, if I grant the jealousy as of love,  
May not your crescent fear for name and fame  
Speak, as it waxes, of a love that wanes?  
Why did the King dwell on my name to me?  
Mine own name shames me, seeming a reproach,  
Lancelot, whom the Lady of the Lake  
Caught from his mother's arms—the wondrous one  
Who passes through the vision of the night—  
She chanted snatches of mysterious hymns  
Heard on the winding waters, eve and morn  
She kissed me saying, "Thou art fair, my child,  
As a king's son," and often in her arms  
She bare me, pacing on the dusky mere.  
Would she had drowned me in it, where'er it be!  
For what am I? what profits me my name  
Of greatest knight? I fought for it, and have it:  
Pleasure to have it, none; to lose it, pain;  
Now grown a part of me: but what use in it?  
To make men worse by making my sin known?  
Or sin seem less, the sinner seeming great?  
Alas for Arthur's greatest knight, a man  
Not after Arthur's heart! I needs must break  
These bonds that so defame me: not without  
She wills it: would I, if she willed it? nay,  
Who knows? but if I would not, then may God,  
I pray him, send a sudden Angel down  
To seize me by the hair and bear me far,  
And fling me deep in that forgotten mere,  
Among the tumbled fragments of the hills.'

So groaned Sir Lancelot in remorseful pain,  
Not knowing he should die a holy man.

# The Holy Grail

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From noiseful arms, and acts of prowess done  
In tournament or tilt, Sir Percivale,  
Whom Arthur and his knighthood called The Pure,  
Had passed into the silent life of prayer,  
Praise, fast, and alms; and leaving for the cowl  
The helmet in an abbey far away  
From Camelot, there, and not long after, died.

And one, a fellow-monk among the rest,  
Ambrosius, loved him much beyond the rest,  
And honoured him, and wrought into his heart  
A way by love that wakened love within,  
To answer that which came:and as they sat  
Beneath a world-old yew-tree, darkening half  
The cloisters, on a gustful April morn  
That puffed the swaying branches into smoke  
Above them, ere the summer when he died  
The monk Ambrosius questioned Percivale:

'O brother, I have seen this yew-tree smoke,  
Spring after spring, for half a hundred years:  
For never have I known the world without,  
Nor ever strayed beyond the pale:but thee,  
When first thou camest—such a courtesy  
Spake through the limbs and in the voice—I knew  
For one of those who eat in Arthur's hall;  
For good ye are and bad, and like to coins,  
Some true, some light, but every one of you  
Stamped with the image of the King; and now  
Tell me, what drove thee from the Table Round,  
My brother? was it earthly passion crost?'

'Nay,' said the knight; 'for no such passion mine.  
But the sweet vision of the Holy Grail

Drove me from all vainglories, rivalries,  
And earthly heats that spring and sparkle out  
Among us in the jousts, while women watch  
Who wins, who falls; and waste the spiritual strength  
Within us, better offered up to Heaven.'

To whom the monk: 'The Holy Grail!—I trust  
We are green in Heaven's eyes; but here too much  
We moulder—as to things without I mean—  
Yet one of your own knights, a guest of ours,  
Told us of this in our refectory,  
But spake with such a sadness and so low  
We heard not half of what he said. What is it?  
The phantom of a cup that comes and goes?'

'Nay, monk! what phantom?' answered Percivale.  
'The cup, the cup itself, from which our Lord  
Drank at the last sad supper with his own.  
This, from the blessed land of Aromat—  
After the day of darkness, when the dead  
Went wandering o'er Moriah—the good saint  
Arimathæan Joseph, journeying brought  
To Glastonbury, where the winter thorn  
Blossoms at Christmas, mindful of our Lord.  
And there awhile it bode; and if a man  
Could touch or see it, he was healed at once,  
By faith, of all his ills. But then the times  
Grew to such evil that the holy cup  
Was caught away to Heaven, and disappeared.'

To whom the monk: 'From our old books I know  
That Joseph came of old to Glastonbury,  
And there the heathen Prince, Arviragus,  
Gave him an isle of marsh whereon to build;  
And there he built with wattles from the marsh  
A little lonely church in days of yore,  
For so they say, these books of ours, but seem  
Mute of this miracle, far as I have read.  
But who first saw the holy thing today?'

'A woman,' answered Percivale, 'a nun,  
And one no further off in blood from me  
Than sister; and if ever holy maid

With knees of adoration wore the stone,  
A holy maid; though never maiden glowed,  
But that was in her earlier maidenhood,  
With such a fervent flame of human love,  
Which being rudely blunted, glanced and shot  
Only to holy things; to prayer and praise  
She gave herself, to fast and alms. And yet,  
Nun as she was, the scandal of the Court,  
Sin against Arthur and the Table Round,  
And the strange sound of an adulterous race,  
Across the iron grating of her cell  
Beat, and she prayed and fasted all the more.

'And he to whom she told her sins, or what  
Her all but utter whiteness held for sin,  
A man wellnigh a hundred winters old,  
Spake often with her of the Holy Grail,  
A legend handed down through five or six,  
And each of these a hundred winters old,  
From our Lord's time. And when King Arthur made  
His Table Round, and all men's hearts became  
Clean for a season, surely he had thought  
That now the Holy Grail would come again;  
But sin broke out. Ah, Christ, that it would come,  
And heal the world of all their wickedness!  
"O Father!" asked the maiden, "might it come  
To me by prayer and fasting?" "Nay," said he,  
"I know not, for thy heart is pure as snow."  
And so she prayed and fasted, till the sun  
Shone, and the wind blew, through her, and I thought  
She might have risen and floated when I saw her.

'For on a day she sent to speak with me.  
And when she came to speak, behold her eyes  
Beyond my knowing of them, beautiful,  
Beyond all knowing of them, wonderful,  
Beautiful in the light of holiness.  
And "O my brother Percivale," she said,  
"Sweet brother, I have seen the Holy Grail:  
For, waked at dead of night, I heard a sound  
As of a silver horn from o'er the hills

Blown, and I thought, 'It is not Arthur's use  
To hunt by moonlight;' and the slender sound  
As from a distance beyond distance grew  
Coming upon me—O never harp nor horn,  
Nor aught we blow with breath, or touch with hand,  
Was like that music as it came; and then  
Streamed through my cell a cold and silver beam,  
And down the long beam stole the Holy Grail,  
Rose-red with beatings in it, as if alive,  
Till all the white walls of my cell were dyed  
With rosy colours leaping on the wall;  
And then the music faded, and the Grail  
Past, and the beam decayed, and from the walls  
The rosy quiverings died into the night.  
So now the Holy Thing is here again  
Among us, brother, fast thou too and pray,  
And tell thy brother knights to fast and pray,  
That so perchance the vision may be seen  
By thee and those, and all the world be healed."

'Then leaving the pale nun, I spake of this  
To all men; and myself fasted and prayed  
Always, and many among us many a week  
Fasted and prayed even to the uttermost,  
Expectant of the wonder that would be.

'And one there was among us, ever moved  
Among us in white armour, Galahad.  
"God make thee good as thou art beautiful,"  
Said Arthur, when he dubbed him knight; and none,  
In so young youth, was ever made a knight  
Till Galahad; and this Galahad, when he heard  
My sister's vision, filled me with amaze;  
His eyes became so like her own, they seemed  
Hers, and himself her brother more than I.

'Sister or brother none had he; but some  
Called him a son of Lancelot, and some said  
Begotten by enchantment—chatterers they,  
Like birds of passage piping up and down,  
That gape for flies—we know not whence they come;  
For when was Lancelot wanderingly lewd?

'But she, the wan sweet maiden, shore away  
Clean from her forehead all that wealth of hair  
Which made a silken mat-work for her feet;  
And out of this she plaited broad and long  
A strong sword-belt, and wove with silver thread  
And crimson in the belt a strange device,  
A crimson grail within a silver beam;  
And saw the bright boy-knight, and bound it on him,  
Saying, "My knight, my love, my knight of heaven,  
O thou, my love, whose love is one with mine,  
I, maiden, round thee, maiden, bind my belt.  
Go forth, for thou shalt see what I have seen,  
And break through all, till one will crown thee king  
Far in the spiritual city:" and as she spake  
She sent the deathless passion in her eyes  
Through him, and made him hers, and laid her mind  
On him, and he believed in her belief.

'Then came a year of miracle:O brother,  
In our great hall there stood a vacant chair,  
Fashioned by Merlin ere he past away,  
And carven with strange figures; and in and out  
The figures, like a serpent, ran a scroll  
Of letters in a tongue no man could read.  
And Merlin called it "The Siege perilous,"  
Perilous for good and ill; "for there," he said,  
"No man could sit but he should lose himself:"  
And once by misadventure Merlin sat  
In his own chair, and so was lost; but he,  
Galahad, when he heard of Merlin's doom,  
Cried, "If I lose myself, I save myself!"

'Then on a summer night it came to pass,  
While the great banquet lay along the hall,  
That Galahad would sit down in Merlin's chair.

'And all at once, as there we sat, we heard  
A cracking and a riving of the roofs,  
And rending, and a blast, and overhead  
Thunder, and in the thunder was a cry.  
And in the blast there smote along the hall  
A beam of light seven times more clear than day:

And down the long beam stole the Holy Grail  
All over covered with a luminous cloud.  
And none might see who bare it, and it past.  
But every knight beheld his fellow's face  
As in a glory, and all the knights arose,  
And staring each at other like dumb men  
Stood, till I found a voice and sware a vow.

'I sware a vow before them all, that I,  
Because I had not seen the Grail, would ride  
A twelvemonth and a day in quest of it,  
Until I found and saw it, as the nun  
My sister saw it; and Galahad sware the vow,  
And good Sir Bors, our Lancelot's cousin, sware,  
And Lancelot sware, and many among the knights,  
And Gawain sware, and louder than the rest.'

Then spake the monk Ambrosius, asking him,  
'What said the King? Did Arthur take the vow?'

'Nay, for my lord,' said Percivale, 'the King,  
Was not in hall: for early that same day,  
Scaped through a cavern from a bandit hold,  
An outraged maiden sprang into the hall  
Crying on help: for all her shining hair  
Was smeared with earth, and either milky arm  
Red-rent with hooks of bramble, and all she wore  
Torn as a sail that leaves the rope is torn  
In tempest: so the King arose and went  
To smoke the scandalous hive of those wild bees  
That made such honey in his realm. Howbeit  
Some little of this marvel he too saw,  
Returning o'er the plain that then began  
To darken under Camelot; whence the King  
Looked up, calling aloud, "Lo, there! the roofs  
Of our great hall are rolled in thunder-smoke!  
Pray Heaven, they be not smitten by the bolt."  
For dear to Arthur was that hall of ours,  
As having there so oft with all his knights  
Feasted, and as the stateliest under heaven.

'O brother, had you known our mighty hall,  
Which Merlin built for Arthur long ago!

For all the sacred mount of Camelot,  
And all the dim rich city, roof by roof,  
Tower after tower, spire beyond spire,  
By grove, and garden-lawn, and rushing brook,  
Climbs to the mighty hall that Merlin built.  
And four great zones of sculpture, set betwixt  
With many a mystic symbol, gird the hall:  
And in the lowest beasts are slaying men,  
And in the second men are slaying beasts,  
And on the third are warriors, perfect men,  
And on the fourth are men with growing wings,  
And over all one statue in the mould  
Of Arthur, made by Merlin, with a crown,  
And peaked wings pointed to the Northern Star.  
And eastward fronts the statue, and the crown  
And both the wings are made of gold, and flame  
At sunrise till the people in far fields,  
Wasted so often by the heathen hordes,  
Behold it, crying, "We have still a King."

'And, brother, had you known our hall within,  
Broader and higher than any in all the lands!  
Where twelve great windows blazon Arthur's wars,  
And all the light that falls upon the board  
Streams through the twelve great battles of our King.  
Nay, one there is, and at the eastern end,  
Wealthy with wandering lines of mount and mere,  
Where Arthur finds the brand Excalibur.  
And also one to the west, and counter to it,  
And blank:and who shall blazon it? when and how?—  
O there, perchance, when all our wars are done,  
The brand Excalibur will be cast away.

'So to this hall full quickly rode the King,  
In horror lest the work by Merlin wrought,  
Dreamlike, should on the sudden vanish, wrapt  
In unremorseful folds of rolling fire.  
And in he rode, and up I glanced, and saw  
The golden dragon sparkling over all:  
And many of those who burnt the hold, their arms  
Hacked, and their foreheads grimed with smoke, and seared,



Followed, and in among bright faces, ours,  
Full of the vision, prest:and then the King  
Spake to me, being nearest, "Percivale,"  
(Because the hall was all in tumult—some  
Vowing, and some protesting), "what is this?"

'O brother, when I told him what had chanced,  
My sister's vision, and the rest, his face  
Darkened, as I have seen it more than once,  
When some brave deed seemed to be done in vain,  
Darken; and "Woe is me, my knights," he cried,  
"Had I been here, ye had not sworn the vow."  
Bold was mine answer, "Had thyself been here,  
My King, thou wouldst have sworn." "Yea, yea," said he,  
"Art thou so bold and hast not seen the Grail?"

"Nay, lord, I heard the sound, I saw the light,  
But since I did not see the Holy Thing,  
I swear a vow to follow it till I saw."

"Then when he asked us, knight by knight, if any  
Had seen it, all their answers were as one:

"Nay, lord, and therefore have we sworn our vows."

"Lo now," said Arthur, "have ye seen a cloud?  
What go ye into the wilderness to see?"

"Then Galahad on the sudden, and in a voice  
Shrilling along the hall to Arthur, called,  
"But I, Sir Arthur, saw the Holy Grail,  
I saw the Holy Grail and heard a cry—  
'O Galahad, and O Galahad, follow me.'"

"Ah, Galahad, Galahad," said the King, "for such  
As thou art is the vision, not for these.  
Thy holy nun and thou have seen a sign—  
Holier is none, my Percivale, than she—  
A sign to maim this Order which I made.  
But ye, that follow but the leader's bell"  
(Brother, the King was hard upon his knights)  
"Taliessin is our fullest throat of song,  
And one hath sung and all the dumb will sing.  
Lancelot is Lancelot, and hath overborne  
Five knights at once, and every younger knight,  
Unproven, holds himself as Lancelot,

Till overborne by one, he learns—and ye,  
What are ye? Galahads?—no, nor Percivales"  
(For thus it pleased the King to range me close  
After Sir Galahad); "nay," said he, "but men  
With strength and will to right the wronged, of power  
To lay the sudden heads of violence flat,  
Knights that in twelve great battles splashed and dyed  
The strong White Horse in his own heathen blood—  
But one hath seen, and all the blind will see.  
Go, since your vows are sacred, being made:  
Yet—for ye know the cries of all my realm  
Pass through this hall—how often, O my knights,  
Your places being vacant at my side,  
This chance of noble deeds will come and go  
Unchallenged, while ye follow wandering fires  
Lost in the quagmire! Many of you, yea most,  
Return no more: ye think I show myself  
Too dark a prophet: come now, let us meet  
The morrow morn once more in one full field  
Of gracious pastime, that once more the King,  
Before ye leave him for this Quest, may count  
The yet-unbroken strength of all his knights,  
Rejoicing in that Order which he made."

'So when the sun broke next from under ground,  
All the great table of our Arthur closed  
And clashed in such a tourney and so full,  
So many lances broken—never yet  
Had Camelot seen the like, since Arthur came;  
And I myself and Galahad, for a strength  
Was in us from this vision, overthrew  
So many knights that all the people cried,  
And almost burst the barriers in their heat,  
Shouting, "Sir Galahad and Sir Percivale!"

'But when the next day brake from under ground—  
O brother, had you known our Camelot,  
Built by old kings, age after age, so old  
The King himself had fears that it would fall,  
So strange, and rich, and dim; for where the roofs  
Tottered toward each other in the sky,

Met foreheads all along the street of those  
Who watched us pass; and lower, and where the long  
Rich galleries, lady-laden, weighed the necks  
Of dragons clinging to the crazy walls,  
Thicker than drops from thunder, showers of flowers  
Fell as we past; and men and boys astride  
On wyvern, lion, dragon, griffin, swan,  
At all the corners, named us each by name,  
Calling, "God speed!" but in the ways below  
The knights and ladies wept, and rich and poor  
Wept, and the King himself could hardly speak  
For grief, and all in middle street the Queen,  
Who rode by Lancelot, wailed and shrieked aloud,  
"This madness has come on us for our sins."  
So to the Gate of the three Queens we came,  
Where Arthur's wars are rendered mystically,  
And thence departed every one his way.

'And I was lifted up in heart, and thought  
Of all my late-shown prowess in the lists,  
How my strong lance had beaten down the knights,  
So many and famous names; and never yet  
Had heaven appeared so blue, nor earth so green,  
For all my blood danced in me, and I knew  
That I should light upon the Holy Grail.

'Thereafter, the dark warning of our King,  
That most of us would follow wandering fires,  
Came like a driving gloom across my mind.  
Then every evil word I had spoken once,  
And every evil thought I had thought of old,  
And every evil deed I ever did,  
Awoke and cried, "This Quest is not for thee."  
And lifting up mine eyes, I found myself  
Alone, and in a land of sand and thorns,  
And I was thirsty even unto death;  
And I, too, cried, "This Quest is not for thee."

'And on I rode, and when I thought my thirst  
Would slay me, saw deep lawns, and then a brook,  
With one sharp rapid, where the crisping white  
Played ever back upon the sloping wave,

And took both ear and eye; and o'er the brook  
Were apple-trees, and apples by the brook  
Fallen, and on the lawns."I will rest here,"  
I said, "I am not worthy of the Quest;"  
But even while I drank the brook, and ate  
The goodly apples, all these things at once  
Fell into dust, and I was left alone,  
And thirsting, in a land of sand and thorns.

'And then behold a woman at a door  
Spinning; and fair the house whereby she sat,  
And kind the woman's eyes and innocent,  
And all her bearing gracious; and she rose  
Opening her arms to meet me, as who should say,  
"Rest here;" but when I touched her, lo! she, too,  
Fell into dust and nothing, and the house  
Became no better than a broken shed,  
And in it a dead babe; and also this  
Fell into dust, and I was left alone.

'And on I rode, and greater was my thirst.  
Then flashed a yellow gleam across the world,  
And where it smote the plowshare in the field,  
The plowman left his plowing, and fell down  
Before it; where it glittered on her pail,  
The milkmaid left her milking, and fell down  
Before it, and I knew not why, but thought  
"The sun is rising," though the sun had risen.  
Then was I ware of one that on me moved  
In golden armour with a crown of gold  
About a casque all jewels; and his horse  
In golden armour jewelled everywhere:  
And on the splendour came, flashing me blind;  
And seemed to me the Lord of all the world,  
Being so huge. But when I thought he meant  
To crush me, moving on me, lo! he, too,  
Opened his arms to embrace me as he came,  
And up I went and touched him, and he, too,  
Fell into dust, and I was left alone  
And wearying in a land of sand and thorns.

'And I rode on and found a mighty hill,

And on the top, a city walled:the spires  
Pricked with incredible pinnacles into heaven.  
And by the gateway stirred a crowd; and these  
Cried to me climbing, "Welcome, Percivale!  
Thou mightiest and thou purest among men!"  
And glad was I and clomb, but found at top  
No man, nor any voice.And thence I past  
Far through a ruinous city, and I saw  
That man had once dwelt there; but there I found  
Only one man of an exceeding age.  
"Where is that goodly company," said I,  
"That so cried out upon me?" and he had  
Scarce any voice to answer, and yet gasped,  
"Whence and what art thou?" and even as he spoke  
Fell into dust, and disappeared, and I  
Was left alone once more, and cried in grief,  
"Lo, if I find the Holy Grail itself  
And touch it, it will crumble into dust."

'And thence I dropt into a lowly vale,  
Low as the hill was high, and where the vale  
Was lowest, found a chapel, and thereby  
A holy hermit in a hermitage,  
To whom I told my phantoms, and he said:  
"O son, thou hast not true humility,  
The highest virtue, mother of them all;  
For when the Lord of all things made Himself  
Naked of glory for His mortal change,  
'Take thou my robe,' she said, 'for all is thine,'  
And all her form shone forth with sudden light  
So that the angels were amazed, and she  
Followed Him down, and like a flying star  
Led on the gray-haired wisdom of the east;  
But her thou hast not known:for what is this  
Thou thoughtest of thy prowess and thy sins?  
Thou hast not lost thyself to save thyself  
As Galahad."When the hermit made an end,  
In silver armour suddenly Galahad shone  
Before us, and against the chapel door  
Laid lance, and entered, and we knelt in prayer.

And there the hermit slaked my burning thirst,  
And at the sacring of the mass I saw  
The holy elements alone; but he,  
"Saw ye no more? I, Galahad, saw the Grail,  
The Holy Grail, descend upon the shrine:  
I saw the fiery face as of a child  
That smote itself into the bread, and went;  
And hither am I come; and never yet  
Hath what thy sister taught me first to see,  
This Holy Thing, failed from my side, nor come  
Covered, but moving with me night and day,  
Fainter by day, but always in the night  
Blood-red, and sliding down the blackened marsh  
Blood-red, and on the naked mountain top  
Blood-red, and in the sleeping mere below  
Blood-red. And in the strength of this I rode,  
Shattering all evil customs everywhere,  
And past through Pagan realms, and made them mine,  
And clashed with Pagan hordes, and bore them down,  
And broke through all, and in the strength of this  
Come victor. But my time is hard at hand,  
And hence I go; and one will crown me king  
Far in the spiritual city; and come thou, too,  
For thou shalt see the vision when I go."

"While thus he spake, his eye, dwelling on mine,  
Drew me, with power upon me, till I grew  
One with him, to believe as he believed.  
Then, when the day began to wane, we went.

"There rose a hill that none but man could climb,  
Scarred with a hundred wintry water-courses—  
Storm at the top, and when we gained it, storm  
Round us and death; for every moment glanced  
His silver arms and gloomed: so quick and thick  
The lightnings here and there to left and right  
Struck, till the dry old trunks about us, dead,  
Yea, rotten with a hundred years of death,  
Sprang into fire: and at the base we found  
On either hand, as far as eye could see,  
A great black swamp and of an evil smell,

Part black, part whitened with the bones of men,  
Not to be crost, save that some ancient king  
Had built a way, where, linked with many a bridge,  
A thousand piers ran into the great Sea.  
And Galahad fled along them bridge by bridge,  
And every bridge as quickly as he crost  
Sprang into fire and vanished, though I yearned  
To follow; and thrice above him all the heavens  
Opened and blazed with thunder such as seemed  
Shoutings of all the sons of God:and first  
At once I saw him far on the great Sea,  
In silver-shining armour starry-clear;  
And o'er his head the Holy Vessel hung  
Clothed in white samite or a luminous cloud.  
And with exceeding swiftness ran the boat,  
If boat it were—I saw not whence it came.  
And when the heavens opened and blazed again  
Roaring, I saw him like a silver star—  
And had he set the sail, or had the boat  
Become a living creature clad with wings?  
And o'er his head the Holy Vessel hung  
Redder than any rose, a joy to me,  
For now I knew the veil had been withdrawn.  
Then in a moment when they blazed again  
Opening, I saw the least of little stars  
Down on the waste, and straight beyond the star  
I saw the spiritual city and all her spires  
And gateways in a glory like one pearl—  
No larger, though the goal of all the saints—  
Strike from the sea; and from the star there shot  
A rose-red sparkle to the city, and there  
Dwelt, and I knew it was the Holy Grail,  
Which never eyes on earth again shall see.  
Then fell the floods of heaven drowning the deep.  
And how my feet recrost the deathful ridge  
No memory in me lives; but that I touched  
The chapel-doors at dawn I know; and thence  
Taking my war-horse from the holy man,  
Glad that no phantom vexed me more, returned

To whence I came, the gate of Arthur's wars.'

'O brother,' asked Ambrosius,—'for in sooth  
These ancient books—and they would win thee—teem,  
Only I find not there this Holy Grail,  
With miracles and marvels like to these,  
Not all unlike; which oftentime I read,  
Who read but on my breviary with ease,  
Till my head swims; and then go forth and pass  
Down to the little thorpe that lies so close,  
And almost plastered like a martin's nest  
To these old walls—and mingle with our folk;  
And knowing every honest face of theirs  
As well as ever shepherd knew his sheep,  
And every homely secret in their hearts,  
Delight myself with gossip and old wives,  
And ills and aches, and teething, lyings-in,  
And mirthful sayings, children of the place,  
That have no meaning half a league away:  
Or lulling random squabbles when they rise,  
Chafferings and chatterings at the market-cross,  
Rejoice, small man, in this small world of mine,  
Yea, even in their hens and in their eggs—  
O brother, saving this Sir Galahad,  
Came ye on none but phantoms in your quest,  
No man, no woman?'

Then Sir Percivale:

'All men, to one so bound by such a vow,  
And women were as phantoms. O, my brother,  
Why wilt thou shame me to confess to thee  
How far I faltered from my quest and vow?  
For after I had lain so many nights  
A bedmate of the snail and eft and snake,  
In grass and burdock, I was changed to wan  
And meagre, and the vision had not come;  
And then I chanced upon a goodly town  
With one great dwelling in the middle of it;  
Thither I made, and there was I disarmed  
By maidens each as fair as any flower:  
But when they led me into hall, behold,



The Princess of that castle was the one,  
Brother, and that one only, who had ever  
Made my heart leap; for when I moved of old  
A slender page about her father's hall,  
And she a slender maiden, all my heart  
Went after her with longing: yet we twain  
Had never kissed a kiss, or vowed a vow.  
And now I came upon her once again,  
And one had wedded her, and he was dead,  
And all his land and wealth and state were hers.  
And while I tarried, every day she set  
A banquet richer than the day before  
By me; for all her longing and her will  
Was toward me as of old; till one fair morn,  
I walking to and fro beside a stream  
That flashed across her orchard underneath  
Her castle-walls, she stole upon my walk,  
And calling me the greatest of all knights,  
Embraced me, and so kissed me the first time,  
And gave herself and all her wealth to me.  
Then I remembered Arthur's warning word,  
That most of us would follow wandering fires,  
And the Quest faded in my heart. Anon,  
The heads of all her people drew to me,  
With supplication both of knees and tongue:  
"We have heard of thee: thou art our greatest knight,  
Our Lady says it, and we well believe:  
Wed thou our Lady, and rule over us,  
And thou shalt be as Arthur in our land."  
O me, my brother! but one night my vow  
Burnt me within, so that I rose and fled,  
But wailed and wept, and hated mine own self,  
And even the Holy Quest, and all but her;  
Then after I was joined with Galahad  
Cared not for her, nor anything upon earth.'

Then said the monk, 'Poor men, when yule is cold,  
Must be content to sit by little fires.  
And this am I, so that ye care for me  
Ever so little; yea, and blest be Heaven

That brought thee here to this poor house of ours  
Where all the brethren are so hard, to warm  
My cold heart with a friend:but O the pity  
To find thine own first love once more—to hold,  
Hold her a wealthy bride within thine arms,  
Or all but hold, and then—cast her aside,  
Foregoing all her sweetness, like a weed.  
For we that want the warmth of double life,  
We that are plagued with dreams of something sweet  
Beyond all sweetness in a life so rich,—  
Ah, blessed Lord, I speak too earthlywise,  
Seeing I never strayed beyond the cell,  
But live like an old badger in his earth,  
With earth about him everywhere, despite  
All fast and penance.Saw ye none beside,  
None of your knights?'

'Yea so,' said Percivale:

'One night my pathway swerving east, I saw  
The pelican on the casque of our Sir Bors  
All in the middle of the rising moon:  
And toward him spurred, and hailed him, and he me,  
And each made joy of either; then he asked,  
"Where is he? hast thou seen him—Lancelot?—Once,"  
Said good Sir Bors, "he dashed across me—mad,  
And maddening what he rode:and when I cried,  
'Ridest thou then so hotly on a quest  
So holy,' Lancelot shouted, 'Stay me not!  
I have been the sluggard, and I ride apace,  
For now there is a lion in the way.'  
So vanished."

'Then Sir Bors had ridden on  
Softly, and sorrowing for our Lancelot,  
Because his former madness, once the talk  
And scandal of our table, had returned;  
For Lancelot's kith and kin so worship him  
That ill to him is ill to them; to Bors  
Beyond the rest:he well had been content  
Not to have seen, so Lancelot might have seen,  
The Holy Cup of healing; and, indeed,

Being so clouded with his grief and love,  
Small heart was his after the Holy Quest:  
If God would send the vision, well:if not,  
The Quest and he were in the hands of Heaven.

'And then, with small adventure met, Sir Bors  
Rode to the lonest tract of all the realm,  
And found a people there among their crags,  
Our race and blood, a remnant that were left  
Paynim amid their circles, and the stones  
They pitch up straight to heaven:and their wise men  
Were strong in that old magic which can trace  
The wandering of the stars, and scoffed at him  
And this high Quest as at a simple thing:  
Told him he followed—almost Arthur's words—  
A mocking fire:"what other fire than he,  
Whereby the blood beats, and the blossom blows,  
And the sea rolls, and all the world is warmed?"  
And when his answer chafed them, the rough crowd,  
Hearing he had a difference with their priests,  
Seized him, and bound and plunged him into a cell  
Of great piled stones; and lying bounden there  
In darkness through innumerable hours  
He heard the hollow-ringing heavens sweep  
Over him till by miracle—what else?—  
Heavy as it was, a great stone slipt and fell,  
Such as no wind could move:and through the gap  
Glimmered the streaming scud:then came a night  
Still as the day was loud; and through the gap  
The seven clear stars of Arthur's Table Round—  
For, brother, so one night, because they roll  
Through such a round in heaven, we named the stars,  
Rejoicing in ourselves and in our King—  
And these, like bright eyes of familiar friends,  
In on him shone:"And then to me, to me,"  
Said good Sir Bors, "beyond all hopes of mine,  
Who scarce had prayed or asked it for myself—  
Across the seven clear stars—O grace to me—  
In colour like the fingers of a hand  
Before a burning taper, the sweet Grail

Glided and past, and close upon it pealed  
A sharp quick thunder."Afterwards, a maid,  
Who kept our holy faith among her kin  
In secret, entering, loosed and let him go.'

To whom the monk:'And I remember now  
That pelican on the casque:Sir Bors it was  
Who spake so low and sadly at our board;  
And mighty reverent at our grace was he:  
A square-set man and honest; and his eyes,  
An out-door sign of all the warmth within,  
Smiled with his lips—a smile beneath a cloud,  
But heaven had meant it for a sunny one:  
Ay, ay, Sir Bors, who else?But when ye reached  
The city, found ye all your knights returned,  
Or was there sooth in Arthur's prophecy,  
Tell me, and what said each, and what the King?'

Then answered Percivale:'And that can I,  
Brother, and truly; since the living words  
Of so great men as Lancelot and our King  
Pass not from door to door and out again,  
But sit within the house.O, when we reached  
The city, our horses stumbling as they trode  
On heaps of ruin, hornless unicorns,  
Cracked basilisks, and splintered cockatrices,  
And shattered talbots, which had left the stones  
Raw, that they fell from, brought us to the hall.

'And there sat Arthur on the dais-throne,  
And those that had gone out upon the Quest,  
Wasted and worn, and but a tithe of them,  
And those that had not, stood before the King,  
Who, when he saw me, rose, and bad me hail,  
Saying, "A welfare in thine eye reproves  
Our fear of some disastrous chance for thee  
On hill, or plain, at sea, or flooding ford.  
So fierce a gale made havoc here of late  
Among the strange devices of our kings;  
Yea, shook this newer, stronger hall of ours,  
And from the statue Merlin moulded for us  
Half-wrenched a golden wing; but now—the Quest,

This vision—hast thou seen the Holy Cup,  
That Joseph brought of old to Glastonbury?"

'So when I told him all thysel self hast heard,  
Ambrosius, and my fresh but fixt resolve  
To pass away into the quiet life,  
He answered not, but, sharply turning, asked  
Of Gawain, "Gawain, was this Quest for thee?"

"Nay, lord," said Gawain, "not for such as I.  
Therefore I communed with a saintly man,  
Who made me sure the Quest was not for me;  
For I was much awearied of the Quest:  
But found a silk pavilion in a field,  
And merry maidens in it; and then this gale  
Tore my pavilion from the tenting-pin,  
And blew my merry maidens all about  
With all discomfort; yea, and but for this,  
My twelvemonth and a day were pleasant to me."

'He ceased; and Arthur turned to whom at first  
He saw not, for Sir Bors, on entering, pushed  
Athwart the throng to Lancelot, caught his hand,  
Held it, and there, half-hidden by him, stood,  
Until the King espied him, saying to him,  
"Hail, Bors! if ever loyal man and true  
Could see it, thou hast seen the Grail;" and Bors,  
"Ask me not, for I may not speak of it:  
I saw it;" and the tears were in his eyes.

"Then there remained but Lancelot, for the rest  
Spake but of sundry perils in the storm;  
Perhaps, like him of Cana in Holy Writ,  
Our Arthur kept his best until the last;  
"Thou, too, my Lancelot," asked the king, "my friend,  
Our mightiest, hath this Quest availed for thee?"

"Our mightiest!" answered Lancelot, with a groan;  
"O King!"—and when he paused, methought I spied  
A dying fire of madness in his eyes—  
"O King, my friend, if friend of thine I be,  
Happier are those that welter in their sin,  
Swine in the mud, that cannot see for slime,  
Slime of the ditch:but in me lived a sin

So strange, of such a kind, that all of pure,  
Noble, and knightly in me twined and clung  
Round that one sin, until the wholesome flower  
And poisonous grew together, each as each,  
Not to be plucked asunder; and when thy knights  
Sware, I swear with them only in the hope  
That could I touch or see the Holy Grail  
They might be plucked asunder. Then I spake  
To one most holy saint, who wept and said,  
That save they could be plucked asunder, all  
My quest were but in vain; to whom I vowed  
That I would work according as he willed.  
And forth I went, and while I yearned and strove  
To tear the twain asunder in my heart,  
My madness came upon me as of old,  
And whipt me into waste fields far away;  
There was I beaten down by little men,  
Mean knights, to whom the moving of my sword  
And shadow of my spear had been enow  
To scare them from me once; and then I came  
All in my folly to the naked shore,  
Wide flats, where nothing but coarse grasses grew;  
But such a blast, my King, began to blow,  
So loud a blast along the shore and sea,  
Ye could not hear the waters for the blast,  
Though heapt in mounds and ridges all the sea  
Drove like a cataract, and all the sand  
Swept like a river, and the clouded heavens  
Were shaken with the motion and the sound.  
And blackening in the sea-foam swayed a boat,  
Half-swallowed in it, anchored with a chain;  
And in my madness to myself I said,  
'I will embark and I will lose myself,  
And in the great sea wash away my sin.'  
I burst the chain, I sprang into the boat.  
Seven days I drove along the dreary deep,  
And with me drove the moon and all the stars;  
And the wind fell, and on the seventh night  
I heard the shingle grinding in the surge,

And felt the boat shock earth, and looking up,  
Behold, the enchanted towers of Carbonek,  
A castle like a rock upon a rock,  
With chasm-like portals open to the sea,  
And steps that met the breaker! there was none  
Stood near it but a lion on each side  
That kept the entry, and the moon was full.  
Then from the boat I leapt, and up the stairs.  
There drew my sword. With sudden-flaring manes  
Those two great beasts rose upright like a man,  
Each gript a shoulder, and I stood between;  
And, when I would have smitten them, heard a voice,  
'Doubt not, go forward; if thou doubt, the beasts  
Will tear thee piecemeal.' Then with violence  
The sword was dashed from out my hand, and fell.  
And up into the sounding hall I past;  
But nothing in the sounding hall I saw,  
No bench nor table, painting on the wall  
Or shield of knight; only the rounded moon  
Through the tall oriel on the rolling sea.  
But always in the quiet house I heard,  
Clear as a lark, high o'er me as a lark,  
A sweet voice singing in the topmost tower  
To the eastward: up I climbed a thousand steps  
With pain: as in a dream I seemed to climb  
For ever: at the last I reached a door,  
A light was in the crannies, and I heard,  
'Glory and joy and honour to our Lord  
And to the Holy Vessel of the Grail.'  
Then in my madness I essayed the door;  
It gave; and through a stormy glare, a heat  
As from a seventimes-heated furnace, I,  
Blasted and burnt, and blinded as I was,  
With such a fierceness that I swooned away—  
O, yet methought I saw the Holy Grail,  
All palled in crimson samite, and around  
Great angels, awful shapes, and wings and eyes.  
And but for all my madness and my sin,  
And then my swooning, I had sworn I saw

That which I saw; but what I saw was veiled  
And covered; and this Quest was not for me."

'So speaking, and here ceasing, Lancelot left  
The hall long silent, till Sir Gawain—nay,  
Brother, I need not tell thee foolish words,—  
A reckless and irreverent knight was he,  
Now boldened by the silence of his King,—  
Well, I will tell thee:"O King, my liege," he said,  
"Hath Gawain failed in any quest of thine?  
When have I stinted stroke in foughten field?  
But as for thine, my good friend Percivale,  
Thy holy nun and thou have driven men mad,  
Yea, made our mightiest madder than our least.  
But by mine eyes and by mine ears I swear,  
I will be deafer than the blue-eyed cat,  
And thrice as blind as any noonday owl,  
To holy virgins in their ecstasies,  
Henceforward."

"Deafer," said the blameless King,  
"Gawain, and blinder unto holy things  
Hope not to make thyself by idle vows,  
Being too blind to have desire to see.  
But if indeed there came a sign from heaven,  
Blessed are Bors, Lancelot and Percivale,  
For these have seen according to their sight.  
For every fiery prophet in old times,  
And all the sacred madness of the bard,  
When God made music through them, could but speak  
His music by the framework and the chord;  
And as ye saw it ye have spoken truth.

"Nay—but thou errest, Lancelot: never yet  
Could all of true and noble in knight and man  
Twine round one sin, whatever it might be,  
With such a closeness, but apart there grew,  
Save that he were the swine thou spakest of,  
Some root of knighthood and pure nobleness;  
Whereto see thou, that it may bear its flower.

"And spake I not too truly, O my knights?  
Was I too dark a prophet when I said



To those who went upon the Holy Quest,  
That most of them would follow wandering fires,  
Lost in the quagmire?—lost to me and gone,  
And left me gazing at a barren board,  
And a lean Order—scarce returned a tithe—  
And out of those to whom the vision came  
My greatest hardly will believe he saw;  
Another hath beheld it afar off,  
And leaving human wrongs to right themselves,  
Cares but to pass into the silent life.  
And one hath had the vision face to face,  
And now his chair desires him here in vain,  
However they may crown him elsewhere.

"And some among you held, that if the King  
Had seen the sight he would have sworn the vow:  
Not easily, seeing that the King must guard  
That which he rules, and is but as the hind  
To whom a space of land is given to plow.  
Who may not wander from the allotted field  
Before his work be done; but, being done,  
Let visions of the night or of the day  
Come, as they will; and many a time they come,  
Until this earth he walks on seems not earth,  
This light that strikes his eyeball is not light,  
This air that smites his forehead is not air  
But vision—yea, his very hand and foot—  
In moments when he feels he cannot die,  
And knows himself no vision to himself,  
Nor the high God a vision, nor that One  
Who rose again:ye have seen what ye have seen."

'So spake the King:I knew not all he meant.'

## Pelleas and Ettarre

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King Arthur made new knights to fill the gap  
Left by the Holy Quest; and as he sat  
In hall at old Caerleon, the high doors  
Were softly sundered, and through these a youth,  
Pelleas, and the sweet smell of the fields  
Past, and the sunshine came along with him.

'Make me thy knight, because I know, Sir King,  
All that belongs to knighthood, and I love.'  
Such was his cry: for having heard the King  
Had let proclaim a tournament—the prize  
A golden circlet and a knightly sword,  
Full fain had Pelleas for his lady won  
The golden circlet, for himself the sword:  
And there were those who knew him near the King,  
And promised for him: and Arthur made him knight.

And this new knight, Sir Pelleas of the isles—  
But lately come to his inheritance,  
And lord of many a barren isle was he—  
Riding at noon, a day or twain before,  
Across the forest called of Dean, to find  
Caerleon and the King, had felt the sun  
Beat like a strong knight on his helm, and reeled  
Almost to falling from his horse; but saw  
Near him a mound of even-sloping side,  
Whereon a hundred stately beeches grew,  
And here and there great hollies under them;  
But for a mile all round was open space,  
And fern and heath: and slowly Pelleas drew  
To that dim day, then binding his good horse  
To a tree, cast himself down; and as he lay  
At random looking over the brown earth

Through that green-glooming twilight of the grove,  
It seemed to Pelleas that the fern without  
Burnt as a living fire of emeralds,  
So that his eyes were dazzled looking at it.  
Then o'er it crost the dimness of a cloud  
Floating, and once the shadow of a bird  
Flying, and then a fawn; and his eyes closed.  
And since he loved all maidens, but no maid  
In special, half-awake he whispered, 'Where?  
O where? I love thee, though I know thee not.  
For fair thou art and pure as Guinevere,  
And I will make thee with my spear and sword  
As famous—O my Queen, my Guinevere,  
For I will be thine Arthur when we meet.'

Suddenly wakened with a sound of talk  
And laughter at the limit of the wood,  
And glancing through the hoary boles, he saw,  
Strange as to some old prophet might have seemed  
A vision hovering on a sea of fire,  
Damsels in divers colours like the cloud  
Of sunset and sunrise, and all of them  
On horses, and the horses richly trapt  
Breast-high in that bright line of bracken stood:  
And all the damsels talked confusedly,  
And one was pointing this way, and one that,  
Because the way was lost.

And Pelleas rose,  
And loosed his horse, and led him to the light.  
There she that seemed the chief among them said,  
'In happy time behold our pilot-star!  
Youth, we are damsels-errant, and we ride,  
Armed as ye see, to tilt against the knights  
There at Caerleon, but have lost our way:  
To right? to left? straight forward? back again?  
Which? tell us quickly.'

Pelleas gazing thought,  
'Is Guinevere herself so beautiful?'  
For large her violet eyes looked, and her bloom  
A rosy dawn kindled in stainless heavens,

And round her limbs, mature in womanhood;  
And slender was her hand and small her shape;  
And but for those large eyes, the haunts of scorn,  
She might have seemed a toy to trifle with,  
And pass and care no more. But while he gazed  
The beauty of her flesh abashed the boy,  
As though it were the beauty of her soul:  
For as the base man, judging of the good,  
Puts his own baseness in him by default  
Of will and nature, so did Pelleas lend  
All the young beauty of his own soul to hers,  
Believing her; and when she spake to him,  
Stammered, and could not make her a reply.  
For out of the waste islands had he come,  
Where saving his own sisters he had known  
Scarce any but the women of his isles,  
Rough wives, that laughed and screamed against the gulls,  
Makers of nets, and living from the sea.

Then with a slow smile turned the lady round  
And looked upon her people; and as when  
A stone is flung into some sleeping tarn,  
The circle widens till it lip the marge,  
Spread the slow smile through all her company.  
Three knights were thereamong; and they too smiled,  
Scorning him; for the lady was Ettarre,  
And she was a great lady in her land.

Again she said, 'O wild and of the woods,  
Knowest thou not the fashion of our speech?  
Or have the Heavens but given thee a fair face,  
Lacking a tongue?'

'O damsel,' answered he,  
'I woke from dreams; and coming out of gloom  
Was dazzled by the sudden light, and crave  
Pardon: but will ye to Caerleon? I  
Go likewise: shall I lead you to the King?'

'Lead then,' she said; and through the woods they went.  
And while they rode, the meaning in his eyes,  
His tenderness of manner, and chaste awe,  
His broken utterances and bashfulness,

Were all a burthen to her, and in her heart  
She muttered, 'I have lighted on a fool,  
Raw, yet so stale!' But since her mind was bent  
On hearing, after trumpet blown, her name  
And title, 'Queen of Beauty,' in the lists  
Cried—and beholding him so strong, she thought  
That peradventure he will fight for me,  
And win the circlet: therefore flattered him,  
Being so gracious, that he wellnigh deemed  
His wish by hers was echoed; and her knights  
And all her damsels too were gracious to him,  
For she was a great lady.

And when they reached  
Caerleon, ere they past to lodging, she,  
Taking his hand, 'O the strong hand,' she said,  
'See! look at mine! but wilt thou fight for me,  
And win me this fine circlet, Pelleas,  
That I may love thee?'

Then his helpless heart  
Leapt, and he cried, 'Ay! wilt thou if I win?'  
'Ay, that will I,' she answered, and she laughed,  
And straitly nipt the hand, and flung it from her;  
Then glanced askew at those three knights of hers,  
Till all her ladies laughed along with her.

'O happy world,' thought Pelleas, 'all, meseems,  
Are happy; I the happiest of them all.'  
Nor slept that night for pleasure in his blood,  
And green wood-ways, and eyes among the leaves;  
Then being on the morrow knighted, sware  
To love one only. And as he came away,  
The men who met him rounded on their heels  
And wondered after him, because his face  
Shone like the countenance of a priest of old  
Against the flame about a sacrifice  
Kindled by fire from heaven: so glad was he.

Then Arthur made vast banquets, and strange knights  
From the four winds came in: and each one sat,  
Though served with choice from air, land, stream, and sea,  
Oft in mid-banquet measuring with his eyes

His neighbour's make and might:and Pelleas looked  
Noble among the noble, for he dreamed  
His lady loved him, and he knew himself  
Loved of the King:and him his new-made knight  
Worshipt, whose lightest whisper moved him more  
Than all the ranged reasons of the world.

Then blushed and brake the morning of the jousts,  
And this was called 'The Tournament of Youth:'  
For Arthur, loving his young knight, withheld  
His older and his mightier from the lists,  
That Pelleas might obtain his lady's love,  
According to her promise, and remain  
Lord of the tourney.And Arthur had the jousts  
Down in the flat field by the shore of Usk  
Holden:the gilded parapets were crowned  
With faces, and the great tower filled with eyes  
Up to the summit, and the trumpets blew.  
There all day long Sir Pelleas kept the field  
With honour:so by that strong hand of his  
The sword and golden circlet were achieved.

Then rang the shout his lady loved:the heat  
Of pride and glory fired her face; her eye  
Sparkled; she caught the circlet from his lance,  
And there before the people crowned herself:  
So for the last time she was gracious to him.

Then at Caerleon for a space—her look  
Bright for all others, cloudier on her knight—  
Lingered Ettarre:and seeing Pelleas droop,  
Said Guinevere, 'We marvel at thee much,  
O damsel, wearing this unsunny face  
To him who won thee glory!'And she said,  
'Had ye not held your Lancelot in your bower,  
My Queen, he had not won.'Whereat the Queen,  
As one whose foot is bitten by an ant,  
Glanced down upon her, turned and went her way.

But after, when her damsels, and herself,  
And those three knights all set their faces home,  
Sir Pelleas followed.She that saw him cried,  
'Damsels—and yet I should be shamed to say it—

I cannot bide Sir Baby. Keep him back  
Among yourselves. Would rather that we had  
Some rough old knight who knew the worldly way,  
Albeit grizzlier than a bear, to ride  
And jest with: take him to you, keep him off,  
And pamper him with papmeat, if ye will,  
Old milky fables of the wolf and sheep,  
Such as the wholesome mothers tell their boys.  
Nay, should ye try him with a merry one  
To find his mettle, good: and if he fly us,  
Small matter! let him. 'This her damsels heard,  
And mindful of her small and cruel hand,  
They, closing round him through the journey home,  
Acted her hest, and always from her side  
Restrained him with all manner of device,  
So that he could not come to speech with her.  
And when she gained her castle, upsprang the bridge,  
Down rang the grate of iron through the groove,  
And he was left alone in open field.

'These be the ways of ladies,' Pelleas thought,  
'To those who love them, trials of our faith.  
Yea, let her prove me to the uttermost,  
For loyal to the uttermost am I.'

So made his moan; and darkness falling, sought  
A priory not far off, there lodged, but rose  
With morning every day, and, moist or dry,  
Full-armed upon his charger all day long  
Sat by the walls, and no one opened to him.

And this persistence turned her scorn to wrath.  
Then calling her three knights, she charged them, 'Out!  
And drive him from the walls.' And out they came  
But Pelleas overthrew them as they dashed  
Against him one by one; and these returned,  
But still he kept his watch beneath the wall.

Thereon her wrath became a hate; and once,  
A week beyond, while walking on the walls  
With her three knights, she pointed downward, 'Look,  
He haunts me—I cannot breathe—besieges me;  
Down! strike him! put my hate into your strokes,

And drive him from my walls.'And down they went,  
And Pelleas overthrew them one by one;  
And from the tower above him cried Ettarre,  
'Bind him, and bring him in.'

He heard her voice;  
Then let the strong hand, which had overthrown  
Her minion-knights, by those he overthrew  
Be bounden straight, and so they brought him in.

Then when he came before Ettarre, the sight  
Of her rich beauty made him at one glance  
More bondsman in his heart than in his bonds.  
Yet with good cheer he spake, 'Behold me, Lady,  
A prisoner, and the vassal of thy will;  
And if thou keep me in thy donjon here,  
Content am I so that I see thy face  
But once a day:for I have sworn my vows,  
And thou hast given thy promise, and I know  
That all these pains are trials of my faith,  
And that thyself, when thou hast seen me strained  
And sifted to the utmost, wilt at length  
Yield me thy love and know me for thy knight.'

Then she began to rail so bitterly,  
With all her damsels, he was stricken mute;  
But when she mocked his vows and the great King,  
Lighted on words:'For pity of thine own self,  
Peace, Lady, peace:is he not thine and mine?'  
'Thou fool,' she said, 'I never heard his voice  
But longed to break away.Unbind him now,  
And thrust him out of doors; for save he be  
Fool to the midmost marrow of his bones,  
He will return no more.'And those, her three,  
Laughed, and unbound, and thrust him from the gate.

And after this, a week beyond, again  
She called them, saying, 'There he watches yet,  
There like a dog before his master's door!  
Kicked, he returns:do ye not hate him, ye?  
Ye know yourselves:how can ye bide at peace,  
Affronted with his fulsome innocence?  
Are ye but creatures of the board and bed,



No men to strike? Fall on him all at once,  
And if ye slay him I reckon not: if ye fail,  
Give ye the slave mine order to be bound,  
Bind him as heretofore, and bring him in:  
It may be ye shall slay him in his bonds.'

She spake; and at her will they couched their spears,  
Three against one: and Gawain passing by,  
Bound upon solitary adventure, saw  
Low down beneath the shadow of those towers  
A villainy, three to one: and through his heart  
The fire of honour and all noble deeds  
Flashed, and he called, 'I strike upon thy side—  
The caitiffs!' 'Nay,' said Pelleas, 'but forbear;  
He needs no aid who doth his lady's will.'

So Gawain, looking at the villainy done,  
Forbore, but in his heat and eagerness  
Trembled and quivered, as the dog, withheld  
A moment from the vermin that he sees  
Before him, shivers, ere he springs and kills.

And Pelleas overthrew them, one to three;  
And they rose up, and bound, and brought him in.  
Then first her anger, leaving Pelleas, burned  
Full on her knights in many an evil name  
Of craven, weakling, and thrice-beaten hound:  
'Yet, take him, ye that scarce are fit to touch,  
Far less to bind, your victor, and thrust him out,  
And let who will release him from his bonds.  
And if he comes again'—there she brake short;  
And Pelleas answered, 'Lady, for indeed  
I loved you and I deemed you beautiful,  
I cannot brook to see your beauty marred  
Through evil spite: and if ye love me not,  
I cannot bear to dream you so forsworn:  
I had liefer ye were worthy of my love,  
Than to be loved again of you—farewell;  
And though ye kill my hope, not yet my love,  
Vex not yourself: ye will not see me more.'

While thus he spake, she gazed upon the man  
Of princely bearing, though in bonds, and thought,

'Why have I pushed him from me? this man loves,  
If love there be: yet him I loved not. Why?  
I deemed him fool? yea, so? or that in him  
A something—was it nobler than myself?  
Seemed my reproach? He is not of my kind.  
He could not love me, did he know me well.  
Nay, let him go—and quickly.' And her knights  
Laughed not, but thrust him bounden out of door.

Forth sprang Gawain, and loosed him from his bonds,  
And flung them o'er the walls; and afterward,  
Shaking his hands, as from a lazar's rag,  
'Faith of my body,' he said, 'and art thou not—  
Yea thou art he, whom late our Arthur made  
Knight of his table; yea and he that won  
The circlet? wherefore hast thou so defamed  
Thy brotherhood in me and all the rest,  
As let these caitiffs on thee work their will?'

And Pelleas answered, 'O, their wills are hers  
For whom I won the circlet; and mine, hers,  
Thus to be bounden, so to see her face,  
Marred though it be with spite and mockery now,  
Other than when I found her in the woods;  
And though she hath me bounden but in spite,  
And all to flout me, when they bring me in,  
Let me be bounden, I shall see her face;  
Else must I die through mine unhappiness.'

And Gawain answered kindly though in scorn,  
'Why, let my lady bind me if she will,  
And let my lady beat me if she will:  
But an she send her delegate to thrall  
These fighting hands of mine—Christ kill me then  
But I will slice him handless by the wrist,  
And let my lady sear the stump for him,  
Howl as he may. But hold me for your friend:  
Come, ye know nothing: here I pledge my troth,  
Yea, by the honour of the Table Round,  
I will be leal to thee and work thy work,  
And tame thy jailing princess to thine hand.  
Lend me thine horse and arms, and I will say

That I have slain thee. She will let me in  
To hear the manner of thy fight and fall;  
Then, when I come within her counsels, then  
From prime to vespers will I chant thy praise  
As prowest knight and truest lover, more  
Than any have sung thee living, till she long  
To have thee back in lusty life again,  
Not to be bound, save by white bonds and warm,  
Dearer than freedom. Wherefore now thy horse  
And armour: let me go: be comforted:  
Give me three days to melt her fancy, and hope  
The third night hence will bring thee news of gold.'

Then Pelleas lent his horse and all his arms,  
Saving the goodly sword, his prize, and took  
Gawain's, and said, 'Betray me not, but help—  
Art thou not he whom men call light-of-love?'

'Ay,' said Gawain, 'for women be so light.'  
Then bounded forward to the castle walls,  
And raised a bugle hanging from his neck,  
And winded it, and that so musically  
That all the old echoes hidden in the wall  
Rang out like hollow woods at hunting-tide.

Up ran a score of damsels to the tower;  
'Avaunt,' they cried, 'our lady loves thee not.'  
But Gawain lifting up his vizor said,  
'Gawain am I, Gawain of Arthur's court,  
And I have slain this Pelleas whom ye hate:  
Behold his horse and armour. Open gates,  
And I will make you merry.'

And down they ran,  
Her damsels, crying to their lady, 'Lo!  
Pelleas is dead—he told us—he that hath  
His horse and armour: will ye let him in?  
He slew him! Gawain, Gawain of the court,  
Sir Gawain—there he waits below the wall,  
Blowing his bugle as who should say him nay.'

And so, leave given, straight on through open door  
Rode Gawain, whom she greeted courteously.  
'Dead, is it so?' she asked. 'Ay, ay,' said he,

'And oft in dying cried upon your name.'  
'Pity on him,' she answered, 'a good knight,  
But never let me bide one hour at peace.'  
'Ay,' thought Gawain, 'and you be fair enow:  
But I to your dead man have given my troth,  
That whom ye loathe, him will I make you love.'

So those three days, aimless about the land,  
Lost in a doubt, Pelleas wandering  
Waited, until the third night brought a moon  
With promise of large light on woods and ways.

Hot was the night and silent; but a sound  
Of Gawain ever coming, and this lay—  
Which Pelleas had heard sung before the Queen,  
And seen her sadden listening—vext his heart,  
And marred his rest—'A worm within the rose.'

'A rose, but one, none other rose had I,  
A rose, one rose, and this was wondrous fair,  
One rose, a rose that gladdened earth and sky,  
One rose, my rose, that sweetened all mine air—  
I cared not for the thorns; the thorns were there.

'One rose, a rose to gather by and by,  
One rose, a rose, to gather and to wear,  
No rose but one—what other rose had I?  
One rose, my rose; a rose that will not die,—  
He dies who loves it,—if the worm be there.'

This tender rhyme, and evermore the doubt,  
'Why lingers Gawain with his golden news?'  
So shook him that he could not rest, but rode  
Ere midnight to her walls, and bound his horse  
Hard by the gates. Wide open were the gates,  
And no watch kept; and in through these he past,  
And heard but his own steps, and his own heart  
Beating, for nothing moved but his own self,  
And his own shadow. Then he crost the court,  
And spied not any light in hall or bower,  
But saw the postern portal also wide  
Yawning; and up a slope of garden, all  
Of roses white and red, and brambles mixt  
And overgrowing them, went on, and found,

Here too, all hushed below the mellow moon,  
Save that one rivulet from a tiny cave  
Came lightening downward, and so spilt itself  
Among the roses, and was lost again.

Then was he ware of three pavilions reared  
Above the bushes, gilden-peakt:in one,  
Red after revel, droned her lurdane knights  
Slumbering, and their three squires across their feet:  
In one, their malice on the placid lip  
Frozen by sweet sleep, four of her damsels lay:  
And in the third, the circlet of the jousts  
Bound on her brow, were Gawain and Ettarre.

Back, as a hand that pushes through the leaf  
To find a nest and feels a snake, he drew:  
Back, as a coward slinks from what he fears  
To cope with, or a traitor proven, or hound  
Beaten, did Pelleas in an utter shame  
Creep with his shadow through the court again,  
Fingering at his sword-handle until he stood  
There on the castle-bridge once more, and thought,  
'I will go back, and slay them where they lie.'

And so went back, and seeing them yet in sleep  
Said, 'Ye, that so dishallow the holy sleep,  
Your sleep is death,' and drew the sword, and thought,  
'What! slay a sleeping knight? the King hath bound  
And sworn me to this brotherhood;' again,  
'Alas that ever a knight should be so false.'  
Then turned, and so returned, and groaning laid  
The naked sword athwart their naked throats,  
There left it, and them sleeping; and she lay,  
The circlet of her tourney round her brows,  
And the sword of the tourney across her throat.

And forth he past, and mounting on his horse  
Stared at her towers that, larger than themselves  
In their own darkness, thronged into the moon.  
Then crushed the saddle with his thighs, and clenched  
His hands, and maddened with himself and moaned:

'Would they have risen against me in their blood  
At the last day?I might have answered them

Even before high God. O towers so strong,  
Huge, solid, would that even while I gaze  
The crack of earthquake shivering to your base  
Split you, and Hell burst up your harlot roofs  
Bellowing, and charred you through and through within,  
Black as the harlot's heart—hollow as a skull!  
Let the fierce east scream through your eyelet-holes,  
And whirl the dust of harlots round and round  
In dung and nettles! hiss, snake—I saw him there—  
Let the fox bark, let the wolf yell. Who yells  
Here in the still sweet summer night, but I—  
I, the poor Pelleas whom she called her fool?  
Fool, beast—he, she, or I? myself most fool;  
Beast too, as lacking human wit—disgraced,  
Dishonoured all for trial of true love—  
Love?—we be all alike: only the King  
Hath made us fools and liars. O noble vows!  
O great and sane and simple race of brutes  
That own no lust because they have no law!  
For why should I have loved her to my shame?  
I loathe her, as I loved her to my shame.  
I never loved her, I but lusted for her—  
Away—'

He dashed the rowel into his horse,  
And bounded forth and vanished through the night.

Then she, that felt the cold touch on her throat,  
Awaking knew the sword, and turned herself  
To Gawain: 'Liar, for thou hast not slain  
This Pelleas! here he stood, and might have slain  
Me and thyself.' And he that tells the tale  
Says that her ever-veering fancy turned  
To Pelleas, as the one true knight on earth,  
And only lover; and through her love her life  
Wasted and pined, desiring him in vain.

But he by wild and way, for half the night,  
And over hard and soft, striking the sod  
From out the soft, the spark from off the hard,  
Rode till the star above the wakening sun,  
Beside that tower where Percivale was cowed,

Glanced from the rosy forehead of the dawn.  
For so the words were flashed into his heart  
He knew not whence or wherefore: 'O sweet star,  
Pure on the virgin forehead of the dawn!  
And there he would have wept, but felt his eyes  
Harder and drier than a fountain bed  
In summer: thither came the village girls  
And lingered talking, and they come no more  
Till the sweet heavens have filled it from the heights  
Again with living waters in the change  
Of seasons: hard his eyes; harder his heart  
Seemed; but so weary were his limbs, that he,  
Gasping, 'Of Arthur's hall am I, but here,  
Here let me rest and die,' cast himself down,  
And gulped his griefs in inmost sleep; so lay,  
Till shaken by a dream, that Gawain fired  
The hall of Merlin, and the morning star  
Reeled in the smoke, brake into flame, and fell.

He woke, and being ware of some one nigh,  
Sent hands upon him, as to tear him, crying,  
'False! and I held thee pure as Guinevere.'

But Percivale stood near him and replied,  
'Am I but false as Guinevere is pure?  
Or art thou mazed with dreams? or being one  
Of our free-spoken Table hast not heard  
That Lancelot'—there he checked himself and paused.

Then fared it with Sir Pelleas as with one  
Who gets a wound in battle, and the sword  
That made it plunges through the wound again,  
And pricks it deeper: and he shrank and wailed,  
'Is the Queen false?' and Percivale was mute.  
'Have any of our Round Table held their vows?'  
And Percivale made answer not a word.  
'Is the King true?' 'The King!' said Percivale.  
'Why then let men couple at once with wolves.  
What! art thou mad?'

But Pelleas, leaping up,  
Ran through the doors and vaulted on his horse  
And fled: small pity upon his horse had he,

Or on himself, or any, and when he met  
A cripple, one that held a hand for alms—  
Hunched as he was, and like an old dwarf-elm  
That turns its back upon the salt blast, the boy  
Paused not, but overrode him, shouting, 'False,  
And false with Gawain!' and so left him bruised  
And battered, and fled on, and hill and wood  
Went ever streaming by him till the gloom,  
That follows on the turning of the world,  
Darkened the common path:he twitched the reins,  
And made his beast that better knew it, swerve  
Now off it and now on; but when he saw  
High up in heaven the hall that Merlin built,  
Blackening against the dead-green stripes of even,  
'Black nest of rats,' he groaned, 'ye build too high.'

Not long thereafter from the city gates  
Issued Sir Lancelot riding airily,  
Warm with a gracious parting from the Queen,  
Peace at his heart, and gazing at a star  
And marvelling what it was:on whom the boy,  
Across the silent seeded meadow-grass  
Borne, clashed:and Lancelot, saying, 'What name hast thou  
That ridest here so blindly and so hard?'  
'No name, no name,' he shouted, 'a scourge am I  
To lash the treasons of the Table Round.'  
'Yea, but thy name?"I have many names,' he cried:  
'I am wrath and shame and hate and evil fame,  
And like a poisonous wind I pass to blast  
And blaze the crime of Lancelot and the Queen.'  
'First over me,' said Lancelot, 'shalt thou pass.'  
'Fight therefore,' yelled the youth, and either knight  
Drew back a space, and when they closed, at once  
The weary steed of Pelleas floundering flung  
His rider, who called out from the dark field,  
'Thou art as false as Hell:slay me:I have no sword.'  
Then Lancelot, 'Yea, between thy lips—and sharp;  
But here I will disedge it by thy death.'  
'Slay then,' he shrieked, 'my will is to be slain,'  
And Lancelot, with his heel upon the fallen,



Rolling his eyes, a moment stood, then spake:  
'Rise, weakling; I am Lancelot; say thy say.'

And Lancelot slowly rode his warhorse back  
To Camelot, and Sir Pelleas in brief while  
Caught his unbroken limbs from the dark field,  
And followed to the city. It chanced that both  
Brake into hall together, worn and pale.  
There with her knights and dames was Guinevere.  
Full wonderingly she gazed on Lancelot  
So soon returned, and then on Pelleas, him  
Who had not greeted her, but cast himself  
Down on a bench, hard-breathing. 'Have ye fought?'  
She asked of Lancelot. 'Ay, my Queen,' he said.  
'And hast thou overthrown him?' 'Ay, my Queen.'  
Then she, turning to Pelleas, 'O young knight,  
Hath the great heart of knighthood in thee failed  
So far thou canst not bide, unfrowardly,  
A fall from him?' Then, for he answered not,  
'Or hast thou other griefs? If I, the Queen,  
May help them, loose thy tongue, and let me know.'  
But Pelleas lifted up an eye so fierce  
She quailed; and he, hissing 'I have no sword,'  
Sprang from the door into the dark. The Queen  
Looked hard upon her lover, he on her;  
And each foresaw the dolorous day to be:  
And all talk died, as in a grove all song  
Beneath the shadow of some bird of prey;  
Then a long silence came upon the hall,  
And Modred thought, 'The time is hard at hand.'

# The Last Tournament

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Dagonet, the fool, whom Gawain in his mood  
Had made mock-knight of Arthur's Table Round,  
At Camelot, high above the yellowing woods,  
Danced like a withered leaf before the hall.  
And toward him from the hall, with harp in hand,  
And from the crown thereof a carcanet  
Of ruby swaying to and fro, the prize  
Of Tristram in the jousts of yesterday,  
Came Tristram, saying, 'Why skip ye so, Sir Fool?'

For Arthur and Sir Lancelot riding once  
Far down beneath a winding wall of rock  
Heard a child wail. A stump of oak half-dead,  
From roots like some black coil of carven snakes,  
Clutched at the crag, and started through mid air  
Bearing an eagle's nest: and through the tree  
Rushed ever a rainy wind, and through the wind  
Pierced ever a child's cry: and crag and tree  
Scaling, Sir Lancelot from the perilous nest,  
This ruby necklace thrice around her neck,  
And all unscarred from beak or talon, brought  
A maiden babe; which Arthur pitying took,  
Then gave it to his Queen to rear: the Queen  
But coldly acquiescing, in her white arms  
Received, and after loved it tenderly,  
And named it Nestling; so forgot herself  
A moment, and her cares; till that young life  
Being smitten in mid heaven with mortal cold  
Past from her; and in time the carcanet  
Vext her with plaintive memories of the child:  
So she, delivering it to Arthur, said,  
'Take thou the jewels of this dead innocence,

And make them, an thou wilt, a tourney-prize.'

To whom the King, 'Peace to thine eagle-borne  
Dead nestling, and this honour after death,  
Following thy will! but, O my Queen, I muse  
Why ye not wear on arm, or neck, or zone  
Those diamonds that I rescued from the tarn,  
And Lancelot won, methought, for thee to wear.'

'Would rather you had let them fall,' she cried,  
'Plunge and be lost—ill-fated as they were,  
A bitterness to me!—ye look amazed,  
Not knowing they were lost as soon as given—  
Slid from my hands, when I was leaning out  
Above the river—that unhappy child  
Past in her barge:but rosier luck will go  
With these rich jewels, seeing that they came  
Not from the skeleton of a brother-slayer,  
But the sweet body of a maiden babe.  
Perchance—who knows?—the purest of thy knights  
May win them for the purest of my maids.'

She ended, and the cry of a great jousts  
With trumpet-blowings ran on all the ways  
From Camelot in among the faded fields  
To furthest towers; and everywhere the knights  
Armed for a day of glory before the King.

But on the hither side of that loud morn  
Into the hall staggered, his visage ribbed  
From ear to ear with dogwhip-weals, his nose  
Bridge-broken, one eye out, and one hand off,  
And one with shattered fingers dangling lame,  
A churl, to whom indignantly the King,

'My churl, for whom Christ died, what evil beast  
Hath drawn his claws athwart thy face? or fiend?  
Man was it who marred heaven's image in thee thus?'

Then, sputtering through the hedge of splintered teeth,  
Yet strangers to the tongue, and with blunt stump  
Pitch-blackened sawing the air, said the maimed churl,

'He took them and he drave them to his tower—  
Some hold he was a table-knight of thine—  
A hundred goodly ones—the Red Knight, he—

Lord, I was tending swine, and the Red Knight  
Brake in upon me and drave them to his tower;  
And when I called upon thy name as one  
That doest right by gentle and by churl,  
Maimed me and mauled, and would outright have slain,  
Save that he sware me to a message, saying,  
"Tell thou the King and all his liars, that I  
Have founded my Round Table in the North,  
And whatsoever his own knights have sworn  
My knights have sworn the counter to it—and say  
My tower is full of harlots, like his court,  
But mine are worthier, seeing they profess  
To be none other than themselves—and say  
My knights are all adulterers like his own,  
But mine are truer, seeing they profess  
To be none other; and say his hour is come,  
The heathen are upon him, his long lance  
Broken, and his Excalibur a straw."

Then Arthur turned to Kay the seneschal,  
'Take thou my churl, and tend him curiously  
Like a king's heir, till all his hurts be whole.  
The heathen—but that ever-climbing wave,  
Hurl'd back again so often in empty foam,  
Hath lain for years at rest—and renegades,  
Thieves, bandits, leavings of confusion, whom  
The wholesome realm is purged of otherwhere,  
Friends, through your manhood and your fealty,—now  
Make their last head like Satan in the North.  
My younger knights, new-made, in whom your flower  
Waits to be solid fruit of golden deeds,  
Move with me toward their quelling, which achieved,  
The loneliest ways are safe from shore to shore.  
But thou, Sir Lancelot, sitting in my place  
Enchained tomorrow, arbitrate the field;  
For wherefore shouldst thou care to mingle with it,  
Only to yield my Queen her own again?  
Speak, Lancelot, thou art silent: is it well?'

Thereto Sir Lancelot answered, 'It is well:  
Yet better if the King abide, and leave

The leading of his younger knights to me.  
Else, for the King has willed it, it is well.'

Then Arthur rose and Lancelot followed him,  
And while they stood without the doors, the King  
Turned to him saying, 'Is it then so well?  
Or mine the blame that oft I seem as he  
Of whom was written, "A sound is in his ears"?  
The foot that loiters, bidden go,—the glance  
That only seems half-loyal to command,—  
A manner somewhat fallen from reverence—  
Or have I dreamed the bearing of our knights  
Tells of a manhood ever less and lower?  
Or whence the fear lest this my realm, upreared,  
By noble deeds at one with noble vows,  
From flat confusion and brute violences,  
Reel back into the beast, and be no more?'

He spoke, and taking all his younger knights,  
Down the slope city rode, and sharply turned  
North by the gate. In her high bower the Queen,  
Working a tapestry, lifted up her head,  
Watched her lord pass, and knew not that she sighed.  
Then ran across her memory the strange rhyme  
Of bygone Merlin, 'Where is he who knows?  
From the great deep to the great deep he goes.'

But when the morning of a tournament,  
By these in earnest those in mockery called  
The Tournament of the Dead Innocence,  
Broke with a wet wind blowing, Lancelot,  
Round whose sick head all night, like birds of prey,  
The words of Arthur flying shrieked, arose,  
And down a streetway hung with folds of pure  
White samite, and by fountains running wine,  
Where children sat in white with cups of gold,  
Moved to the lists, and there, with slow sad steps  
Ascending, filled his double-dragon chair.

He glanced and saw the stately galleries,  
Dame, damsel, each through worship of their Queen  
White-robed in honour of the stainless child,  
And some with scattered jewels, like a bank

Of maiden snow mingled with sparks of fire.  
He looked but once, and veiled his eyes again.

The sudden trumpet sounded as in a dream  
To ears but half-awaked, then one low roll  
Of Autumn thunder, and the jousts began:  
And ever the wind blew, and yellowing leaf  
And gloom and gleam, and shower and shorn plume  
Went down it. Sighing weariedly, as one  
Who sits and gazes on a faded fire,  
When all the goodlier guests are past away,  
Sat their great umpire, looking o'er the lists.  
He saw the laws that ruled the tournament  
Broken, but spake not; once, a knight cast down  
Before his throne of arbitration cursed  
The dead babe and the follies of the King;  
And once the laces of a helmet cracked,  
And showed him, like a vermin in its hole,  
Modred, a narrow face: anon he heard  
The voice that billowed round the barriers roar  
An ocean-sounding welcome to one knight,  
But newly-entered, taller than the rest,  
And armoured all in forest green, whereon  
There tript a hundred tiny silver deer,  
And wearing but a holly-spray for crest,  
With ever-scattering berries, and on shield  
A spear, a harp, a bugle—Tristram—late  
From overseas in Brittany returned,  
And marriage with a princess of that realm,  
Isolt the White—Sir Tristram of the Woods—  
Whom Lancelot knew, had held sometime with pain  
His own against him, and now yearned to shake  
The burthen off his heart in one full shock  
With Tristram even to death: his strong hands gript  
And dented the gilt dragons right and left,  
Until he groaned for wrath—so many of those,  
That ware their ladies' colours on the casque,  
Drew from before Sir Tristram to the bounds,  
And there with gibes and flickering mockeries  
Stood, while he muttered, 'Craven crests! O shame!

What faith have these in whom they swear to love?  
The glory of our Round Table is no more.'

So Tristram won, and Lancelot gave, the gems,  
Not speaking other word than 'Hast thou won?  
Art thou the purest, brother? See, the hand  
Wherewith thou takest this, is red!' to whom  
Tristram, half plagued by Lancelot's languorous mood,  
Made answer, 'Ay, but wherefore toss me this  
Like a dry bone cast to some hungry hound?  
Lest be thy fair Queen's fantasy. Strength of heart  
And might of limb, but mainly use and skill,  
Are winners in this pastime of our King.  
My hand—belike the lance hath dript upon it—  
No blood of mine, I trow; but O chief knight,  
Right arm of Arthur in the battlefield,  
Great brother, thou nor I have made the world;  
Be happy in thy fair Queen as I in mine.'

And Tristram round the gallery made his horse  
Caracole; then bowed his homage, bluntly saying,  
'Fair damsels, each to him who worships each  
Sole Queen of Beauty and of love, behold  
This day my Queen of Beauty is not here.'  
And most of these were mute, some angered, one  
Murmuring, 'All courtesy is dead,' and one,  
'The glory of our Round Table is no more.'

Then fell thick rain, plume droopt and mantle clung,  
And pettish cries awoke, and the wan day  
Went glooming down in wet and weariness:  
But under her black brows a swarthy one  
Laughed shrilly, crying, 'Praise the patient saints,  
Our one white day of Innocence hath past,  
Though somewhat draggled at the skirt. So be it.  
The snowdrop only, flowering through the year,  
Would make the world as blank as Winter-tide.  
Come—let us gladden their sad eyes, our Queen's  
And Lancelot's, at this night's solemnity  
With all the kindlier colours of the field.'

So dame and damsel glittered at the feast  
Variously gay: for he that tells the tale

Likened them, saying, as when an hour of cold  
Falls on the mountain in midsummer snows,  
And all the purple slopes of mountain flowers  
Pass under white, till the warm hour returns  
With veer of wind, and all are flowers again;  
So dame and damsel cast the simple white,  
And glowing in all colours, the live grass,  
Rose-campion, bluebell, kingcup, poppy, glanced  
About the revels, and with mirth so loud  
Beyond all use, that, half-amazed, the Queen,  
And wroth at Tristram and the lawless jousts,  
Brake up their sports, then slowly to her bower  
Parted, and in her bosom pain was lord.

And little Dagonet on the morrow morn,  
High over all the yellowing Autumn-tide,  
Danced like a withered leaf before the hall.  
Then Tristram saying, 'Why skip ye so, Sir Fool?'  
Wheeled round on either heel, Dagonet replied,  
'Belike for lack of wiser company;  
Or being fool, and seeing too much wit  
Makes the world rotten, why, belike I skip  
To know myself the wisest knight of all.'  
'Ay, fool,' said Tristram, 'but 'tis eating dry  
To dance without a catch, a roundelay  
To dance to.' Then he twangled on his harp,  
And while he twangled little Dagonet stood  
Quiet as any water-sodden log  
Stayed in the wandering warble of a brook;  
But when the twangling ended, skipt again;  
And being asked, 'Why skipt ye not, Sir Fool?'  
Made answer, 'I had liefer twenty years  
Skip to the broken music of my brains  
Than any broken music thou canst make.'  
Then Tristram, waiting for the quip to come,  
'Good now, what music have I broken, fool?'  
And little Dagonet, skipping, 'Arthur, the King's;  
For when thou playest that air with Queen Isolt,  
Thou makest broken music with thy bride,  
Her daintier namesake down in Brittany—



And so thou breakest Arthur's music too.'  
'Save for that broken music in thy brains,  
Sir Fool,' said Tristram, 'I would break thy head.  
Fool, I came too late, the heathen wars were o'er,  
The life had flown, we sware but by the shell—  
I am but a fool to reason with a fool—  
Come, thou art crabbed and sour:but lean me down,  
Sir Dagonet, one of thy long asses' ears,  
And harken if my music be not true.

"Free love—free field—we love but while we may:  
The woods are hushed, their music is no more:  
The leaf is dead, the yearning past away:  
New leaf, new life—the days of frost are o'er:  
New life, new love, to suit the newer day:  
New loves are sweet as those that went before:  
Free love—free field—we love but while we may."

'Ye might have moved slow-measure to my tune,  
Not stood stockstill.I made it in the woods,  
And heard it ring as true as tested gold.'

But Dagonet with one foot poised in his hand,  
'Friend, did ye mark that fountain yesterday  
Made to run wine?—but this had run itself  
All out like a long life to a sour end—  
And them that round it sat with golden cups  
To hand the wine to whosoever came—  
The twelve small damosels white as Innocence,  
In honour of poor Innocence the babe,  
Who left the gems which Innocence the Queen  
Lent to the King, and Innocence the King  
Gave for a prize—and one of those white slips  
Handed her cup and piped, the pretty one,  
"Drink, drink, Sir Fool," and thereupon I drank,  
Spat—pish—the cup was gold, the draught was mud.'

And Tristram, 'Was it muddier than thy gibes?  
Is all the laughter gone dead out of thee?—  
Not marking how the knighthood mock thee, fool—  
"Fear God:honour the King—his one true knight—  
Sole follower of the vows"—for here be they  
Who knew thee swine enow before I came,

Smuttier than blasted grain:but when the King  
Had made thee fool, thy vanity so shot up  
It frightened all free fool from out thy heart;  
Which left thee less than fool, and less than swine,  
A naked aught—yet swine I hold thee still,  
For I have flung thee pearls and find thee swine.'

And little Dagonet mincing with his feet,  
'Knight, an ye fling those rubies round my neck  
In lieu of hers, I'll hold thou hast some touch  
Of music, since I care not for thy pearls.  
Swine?I have wallowed, I have washed—the world  
Is flesh and shadow—I have had my day.  
The dirty nurse, Experience, in her kind  
Hath fouled me—an I wallowed, then I washed—  
I have had my day and my philosophies—  
And thank the Lord I am King Arthur's fool.  
Swine, say ye? swine, goats, asses, rams and geese  
Trooped round a Paynim harper once, who thrummed  
On such a wire as musically as thou  
Some such fine song—but never a king's fool.'

And Tristram, 'Then were swine, goats, asses, geese  
The wiser fools, seeing thy Paynim bard  
Had such a mastery of his mystery  
That he could harp his wife up out of hell.'

Then Dagonet, turning on the ball of his foot,  
'And whither harp'st thou thine? down! and thyself  
Down! and two more:a helpful harper thou,  
That harpest downward!Dost thou know the star  
We call the harp of Arthur up in heaven?'

And Tristram, 'Ay, Sir Fool, for when our King  
Was victor wellnigh day by day, the knights,  
Glorying in each new glory, set his name  
High on all hills, and in the signs of heaven.'

And Dagonet answered, 'Ay, and when the land  
Was freed, and the Queen false, ye set yourself  
To babble about him, all to show your wit—  
And whether he were King by courtesy,  
Or King by right—and so went harping down  
The black king's highway, got so far, and grew

So witty that ye played at ducks and drakes  
With Arthur's vows on the great lake of fire.  
Tuwhoo! do ye see it? do ye see the star?'

'Nay, fool,' said Tristram, 'not in open day.'  
And Dagonet, 'Nay, nor will:I see it and hear.  
It makes a silent music up in heaven,  
And I, and Arthur and the angels hear,  
And then we skip."Lo, fool,' he said, 'ye talk  
Fool's treason:is the King thy brother fool?'  
Then little Dagonet clapt his hands and shrilled,  
'Ay, ay, my brother fool, the king of fools!  
Conceits himself as God that he can make  
Figs out of thistles, silk from bristles, milk  
From burning spurge, honey from hornet-combs,  
And men from beasts—Long live the king of fools!'

And down the city Dagonet danced away;  
But through the slowly-mellowing avenues  
And solitary passes of the wood  
Rode Tristram toward Lyonesse and the west.  
Before him fled the face of Queen Isolt  
With ruby-circled neck, but evermore  
Past, as a rustle or twitter in the wood  
Made dull his inner, keen his outer eye  
For all that walked, or crept, or perched, or flew.  
Anon the face, as, when a gust hath blown,  
Unruffling waters re-collect the shape  
Of one that in them sees himself, returned;  
But at the slot or fewmets of a deer,  
Or even a fallen feather, vanished again.

So on for all that day from lawn to lawn  
Through many a league-long bower he rode.At length  
A lodge of intertwined beechen-boughs  
Furze-crammed, and bracken-rooft, the which himself  
Built for a summer day with Queen Isolt  
Against a shower, dark in the golden grove  
Appearing, sent his fancy back to where  
She lived a moon in that low lodge with him:  
Till Mark her lord had past, the Cornish King,  
With six or seven, when Tristram was away,

And snatched her thence; yet dreading worse than shame  
Her warrior Tristram, spake not any word,  
But bode his hour, devising wretchedness.

And now that desert lodge to Tristram lookt  
So sweet, that halting, in he past, and sank  
Down on a drift of foliage random-blown;  
But could not rest for musing how to smoothe  
And sleek his marriage over to the Queen.  
Perchance in lone Tintagil far from all  
The tonguesters of the court she had not heard.  
But then what folly had sent him overseas  
After she left him lonely here? a name?  
Was it the name of one in Brittany,  
Isolt, the daughter of the King?'Isolt  
Of the white hands' they called her:the sweet name  
Allured him first, and then the maid herself,  
Who served him well with those white hands of hers,  
And loved him well, until himself had thought  
He loved her also, wedded easily,  
But left her all as easily, and returned.  
The black-blue Irish hair and Irish eyes  
Had drawn him home—what marvel? then he laid  
His brows upon the drifted leaf and dreamed.

He seemed to pace the strand of Brittany  
Between Isolt of Britain and his bride,  
And showed them both the ruby-chain, and both  
Began to struggle for it, till his Queen  
Graspt it so hard, that all her hand was red.  
Then cried the Breton, 'Look, her hand is red!  
These be no rubies, this is frozen blood,  
And melts within her hand—her hand is hot  
With ill desires, but this I gave thee, look,  
Is all as cool and white as any flower.'  
Followed a rush of eagle's wings, and then  
A whimpering of the spirit of the child,  
Because the twain had spoiled her carcanet.

He dreamed; but Arthur with a hundred spears  
Rode far, till o'er the illimitable reed,  
And many a glancing plash and sallowy isle,

The wide-winged sunset of the misty marsh  
Glared on a huge machicolated tower  
That stood with open doors, whereout was rolled  
A roar of riot, as from men secure  
Amid their marshes, ruffians at their ease  
Among their harlot-brides, an evil song.  
'Lo there,' said one of Arthur's youth, for there,  
High on a grim dead tree before the tower,  
A goodly brother of the Table Round  
Swung by the neck:and on the boughs a shield  
Showing a shower of blood in a field noir,  
And therebeside a horn, inflamed the knights  
At that dishonour done the gilded spur,  
Till each would clash the shield, and blow the horn.  
But Arthur waved them back.Along he rode.  
Then at the dry harsh roar of the great horn,  
That sent the face of all the marsh aloft  
An ever upward-rushing storm and cloud  
Of shriek and plume, the Red Knight heard, and all,  
Even to tipmost lance and topmost helm,  
In blood-red armour sallying, howled to the King,  
    'The teeth of Hell flay bare and gnash thee flat!—  
Lo! art thou not that eunuch-hearted King  
Who fain had clipt free manhood from the world—  
The woman-worshipper?Yea, God's curse, and I!  
Slain was the brother of my paramour  
By a knight of thine, and I that heard her whine  
And snivel, being eunuch-hearted too,  
Sware by the scorpion-worm that twists in hell,  
And stings itself to everlasting death,  
To hang whatever knight of thine I fought  
And tumbled.Art thou King? —Look to thy life!  
    He ended:Arthur knew the voice; the face  
Wellnigh was helmet-hidden, and the name  
Went wandering somewhere darkling in his mind.  
And Arthur deigned not use of word or sword,  
But let the drunkard, as he stretched from horse  
To strike him, overbalancing his bulk,  
Down from the causeway heavily to the swamp

Fall, as the crest of some slow-arching wave,  
Heard in dead night along that table-shore,  
Drops flat, and after the great waters break  
Whitening for half a league, and thin themselves,  
Far over sands marbled with moon and cloud,  
From less and less to nothing; thus he fell  
Head-heavy; then the knights, who watched him, roared  
And shouted and leapt down upon the fallen;  
There trampled out his face from being known,  
And sank his head in mire, and slimed themselves:  
Nor heard the King for their own cries, but sprang  
Through open doors, and swording right and left  
Men, women, on their sodden faces, hurled  
The tables over and the wines, and slew  
Till all the rafters rang with woman-yells,  
And all the pavement streamed with massacre:  
Then, echoing yell with yell, they fired the tower,  
Which half that autumn night, like the live North,  
Red-pulsing up through Alioth and Alcor,  
Made all above it, and a hundred meres  
About it, as the water Moab saw  
Came round by the East, and out beyond them flushed  
The long low dune, and lazy-plunging sea.

So all the ways were safe from shore to shore,  
But in the heart of Arthur pain was lord.

Then, out of Tristram waking, the red dream  
Fled with a shout, and that low lodge returned,  
Mid-forest, and the wind among the boughs.  
He whistled his good warhorse left to graze  
Among the forest greens, vaulted upon him,  
And rode beneath an ever-showering leaf,  
Till one lone woman, weeping near a cross,  
Stayed him. 'Why weep ye?' 'Lord,' she said, 'my man  
Hath left me or is dead;' whereon he thought—  
'What, if she hate me now? I would not this.  
What, if she love me still? I would not that.  
I know not what I would'—but said to her,  
'Yet weep not thou, lest, if thy mate return,  
He find thy favour changed and love thee not'—

Then pressing day by day through Lyonesse  
Last in a roky hollow, belling, heard  
The hounds of Mark, and felt the goodly hounds  
Yelp at his heart, but turning, past and gained  
Tintagil, half in sea, and high on land,  
A crown of towers.

Down in a casement sat,  
A low sea-sunset glorying round her hair  
And glossy-throated grace, Isolt the Queen.  
And when she heard the feet of Tristram grind  
The spiring stone that scaled about her tower,  
Flushed, started, met him at the doors, and there  
Belted his body with her white embrace,  
Crying aloud, 'Not Mark—not Mark, my soul!  
The footstep fluttered me at first: not he:  
Catlike through his own castle steals my Mark,  
But warrior-wise thou stridest through his halls  
Who hates thee, as I him—even to the death.  
My soul, I felt my hatred for my Mark  
Quicken within me, and knew that thou wert nigh.'  
To whom Sir Tristram smiling, 'I am here.  
Let be thy Mark, seeing he is not thine.'

And drawing somewhat backward she replied,  
'Can he be wronged who is not even his own,  
But save for dread of thee had beaten me,  
Scratched, bitten, blinded, marred me somehow—Mark?  
What rights are his that dare not strike for them?  
Not lift a hand—not, though he found me thus!  
But harken! have ye met him? hence he went  
Today for three days' hunting—as he said—  
And so returns belike within an hour.  
Mark's way, my soul!—but eat not thou with Mark,  
Because he hates thee even more than fears;  
Nor drink: and when thou passest any wood  
Close vizard, lest an arrow from the bush  
Should leave me all alone with Mark and hell.  
My God, the measure of my hate for Mark  
Is as the measure of my love for thee.'

So, plucked one way by hate and one by love,

Drained of her force, again she sat, and spake  
To Tristram, as he knelt before her, saying,  
'O hunter, and O blower of the horn,  
Harper, and thou hast been a rover too,  
For, ere I mated with my shambling king,  
Ye twain had fallen out about the bride  
Of one—his name is out of me—the prize,  
If prize she were—(what marvel—she could see)—  
Thine, friend; and ever since my craven seeks  
To wreck thee villainously:but, O Sir Knight,  
What dame or damsel have ye kneeled to last?'

And Tristram, 'Last to my Queen Paramount,  
Here now to my Queen Paramount of love  
And loveliness—ay, lovelier than when first  
Her light feet fell on our rough Lyonesse,  
Sailing from Ireland.'

Softly laughed Isolt;  
'Flatter me not, for hath not our great Queen  
My dole of beauty trebled?' and he said,  
'Her beauty is her beauty, and thine thine,  
And thine is more to me—soft, gracious, kind—  
Save when thy Mark is kindled on thy lips  
Most gracious; but she, haughty, even to him,  
Lancelot; for I have seen him wan enow  
To make one doubt if ever the great Queen  
Have yielded him her love.'

To whom Isolt,  
'Ah then, false hunter and false harper, thou  
Who brakest through the scruple of my bond,  
Calling me thy white hind, and saying to me  
That Guinevere had sinned against the highest,  
And I—misyoked with such a want of man—  
That I could hardly sin against the lowest.'

He answered, 'O my soul, be comforted!  
If this be sweet, to sin in leading-strings,  
If here be comfort, and if ours be sin,  
Crowned warrant had we for the crowning sin  
That made us happy:but how ye greet me—fear  
And fault and doubt—no word of that fond tale—



Thy deep heart-yearnings, thy sweet memories  
Of Tristram in that year he was away.'

And, saddening on the sudden, spake Isolt,  
'I had forgotten all in my strong joy  
To see thee—yearnings?—ay! for, hour by hour,  
Here in the never-ended afternoon,  
O sweeter than all memories of thee,  
Deeper than any yearnings after thee  
Seemed those far-rolling, westward-smiling seas,  
Watched from this tower. Isolt of Britain dashed  
Before Isolt of Brittany on the strand,  
Would that have chilled her bride-kiss? Wedded her?  
Fought in her father's battles? wounded there?  
The King was all fulfilled with gratefulness,  
And she, my namesake of the hands, that healed  
Thy hurt and heart with unguent and caress—  
Well—can I wish her any huger wrong  
Than having known thee? her too hast thou left  
To pine and waste in those sweet memories.  
O were I not my Mark's, by whom all men  
Are noble, I should hate thee more than love.'

And Tristram, fondling her light hands, replied,  
'Grace, Queen, for being loved: she loved me well.  
Did I love her? the name at least I loved.  
Isolt?—I fought his battles, for Isolt!  
The night was dark; the true star set. Isolt!  
The name was ruler of the dark—Isolt?  
Care not for her! patient, and prayerful, meek,  
Pale-blooded, she will yield herself to God.'

And Isolt answered, 'Yea, and why not I?  
Mine is the larger need, who am not meek,  
Pale-blooded, prayerful. Let me tell thee now.  
Here one black, mute midsummer night I sat,  
Lonely, but musing on thee, wondering where,  
Murmuring a light song I had heard thee sing,  
And once or twice I spake thy name aloud.  
Then flashed a levin-brand; and near me stood,  
In fuming sulphur blue and green, a fiend—  
Mark's way to steal behind one in the dark—

For there was Mark: "He has wedded her," he said,  
Not said, but hissed it: then this crown of towers  
So shook to such a roar of all the sky,  
That here in utter dark I swooned away,  
And woke again in utter dark, and cried,  
"I will flee hence and give myself to God"—  
And thou wert lying in thy new leman's arms.'

Then Tristram, ever dallying with her hand,  
'May God be with thee, sweet, when old and gray,  
And past desire!' a saying that angered her.  
"May God be with thee, sweet, when thou art old,  
And sweet no more to me!" I need Him now.  
For when had Lancelot uttered aught so gross  
Even to the swineherd's malkin in the mast?  
The greater man, the greater courtesy.  
Far other was the Tristram, Arthur's knight!  
But thou, through ever harrying thy wild beasts—  
Save that to touch a harp, tilt with a lance  
Becomes thee well—art grown wild beast thyself.  
How darest thou, if lover, push me even  
In fancy from thy side, and set me far  
In the gray distance, half a life away,  
Her to be loved no more? Unsay it, unswear!  
Flatter me rather, seeing me so weak,  
Broken with Mark and hate and solitude,  
Thy marriage and mine own, that I should suck  
Lies like sweet wines: lie to me: I believe.  
Will ye not lie? not swear, as there ye kneel,  
And solemnly as when ye sware to him,  
The man of men, our King—My God, the power  
Was once in vows when men believed the King!  
They lied not then, who sware, and through their vows  
The King prevailing made his realm:—I say,  
Swear to me thou wilt love me even when old,  
Gray-haired, and past desire, and in despair.'

Then Tristram, pacing moodily up and down,  
'Vows! did you keep the vow you made to Mark  
More than I mine? Lied, say ye? Nay, but learnt,  
The vow that binds too strictly snaps itself—

My knighthood taught me this—ay, being snapt—  
We run more counter to the soul thereof  
Than had we never sworn. I swear no more.  
I swore to the great King, and am forsworn.  
For once—even to the height—I honoured him.  
"Man, is he man at all?" methought, when first  
I rode from our rough Lyonesse, and beheld  
That victor of the Pagan throned in hall—  
His hair, a sun that rayed from off a brow  
Like hillsnow high in heaven, the steel-blue eyes,  
The golden beard that clothed his lips with light—  
Moreover, that weird legend of his birth,  
With Merlin's mystic babble about his end  
Amazed me; then, his foot was on a stool  
Shaped as a dragon; he seemed to me no man,  
But Michael trampling Satan; so I swore,  
Being amazed: but this went by— The vows!  
O ay—the wholesome madness of an hour—  
They served their use, their time; for every knight  
Believed himself a greater than himself,  
And every follower eyed him as a God;  
Till he, being lifted up beyond himself,  
Did mightier deeds than otherwise he had done,  
And so the realm was made; but then their vows—  
First mainly through that sully of our Queen—  
Began to gall the knighthood, asking whence  
Had Arthur right to bind them to himself?  
Dropt down from heaven? washed up from out the deep?  
They failed to trace him through the flesh and blood  
Of our old kings: whence then? a doubtful lord  
To bind them by inviolable vows,  
Which flesh and blood perforce would violate:  
For feel this arm of mine—the tide within  
Red with free chase and heather-scented air,  
Pulsing full man; can Arthur make me pure  
As any maiden child? lock up my tongue  
From uttering freely what I freely hear?  
Bind me to one? The wide world laughs at it.  
And worldling of the world am I, and know

The ptarmigan that whitens ere his hour  
Woos his own end; we are not angels here  
Nor shall be: vows—I am woodman of the woods,  
And hear the garnet-headed yaffingale  
Mock them: my soul, we love but while we may;  
And therefore is my love so large for thee,  
Seeing it is not bounded save by love.'

Here ending, he moved toward her, and she said,  
'Good: an I turned away my love for thee  
To some one thrice as courteous as thyself—  
For courtesy wins woman all as well  
As valour may, but he that closes both  
Is perfect, he is Lancelot—taller indeed,  
Rosier and comelier, thou—but say I loved  
This knightliest of all knights, and cast thee back  
Thine own small saw, "We love but while we may,"  
Well then, what answer?'

He that while she spake,  
Mindful of what he brought to adorn her with,  
The jewels, had let one finger lightly touch  
The warm white apple of her throat, replied,  
'Press this a little closer, sweet, until—  
Come, I am hungered and half-angered—meat,  
Wine, wine—and I will love thee to the death,  
And out beyond into the dream to come.'

So then, when both were brought to full accord,  
She rose, and set before him all he willed;  
And after these had comforted the blood  
With meats and wines, and satiated their hearts—  
Now talking of their woodland paradise,  
The deer, the dews, the fern, the founts, the lawns;  
Now mocking at the much ungainliness,  
And craven shifts, and long crane legs of Mark—  
Then Tristram laughing caught the harp, and sang:

'Ay, ay, O ay—the winds that bend the brier!  
A star in heaven, a star within the mere!  
Ay, ay, O ay—a star was my desire,  
And one was far apart, and one was near:  
Ay, ay, O ay—the winds that bow the grass!

And one was water and one star was fire,  
And one will ever shine and one will pass.  
Ay, ay, O ay—the winds that move the mere.'

Then in the light's last glimmer Tristram showed  
And swung the ruby carcanet. She cried,  
'The collar of some Order, which our King  
Hath newly founded, all for thee, my soul,  
For thee, to yield thee grace beyond thy peers.'

'Not so, my Queen,' he said, 'but the red fruit  
Grown on a magic oak-tree in mid-heaven,  
And won by Tristram as a tourney-prize,  
And hither brought by Tristram for his last  
Love-offering and peace-offering unto thee.'

He spoke, he turned, then, flinging round her neck,  
Claspt it, and cried, 'Thine Order, O my Queen!'  
But, while he bowed to kiss the jewelled throat,  
Out of the dark, just as the lips had touched,  
Behind him rose a shadow and a shriek—  
'Mark's way,' said Mark, and clove him through the brain.

That night came Arthur home, and while he climbed,  
All in a death-dumb autumn-dripping gloom,  
The stairway to the hall, and looked and saw  
The great Queen's bower was dark,—about his feet  
A voice clung sobbing till he questioned it,  
'What art thou?' and the voice about his feet  
Sent up an answer, sobbing, 'I am thy fool,  
And I shall never make thee smile again.'

# Guinevere

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Queen Guinevere had fled the court, and sat  
There in the holy house at Almesbury  
Weeping, none with her save a little maid,  
A novice:one low light betwixt them burned  
Blurred by the creeping mist, for all abroad,  
Beneath a moon unseen albeit at full,  
The white mist, like a face-cloth to the face,  
Clung to the dead earth, and the land was still.

For hither had she fled, her cause of flight  
Sir Modred; he that like a subtle beast  
Lay couchant with his eyes upon the throne,  
Ready to spring, waiting a chance:for this  
He chilled the popular praises of the King  
With silent smiles of slow disparagement;  
And tampered with the Lords of the White Horse,  
Heathen, the brood by Hengist left; and sought  
To make disruption in the Table Round  
Of Arthur, and to splinter it into feuds  
Serving his traitorous end; and all his aims  
Were sharpened by strong hate for Lancelot.

For thus it chanced one morn when all the court,  
Green-suited, but with plumes that mocked the may,  
Had been, their wont, a-maying and returned,  
That Modred still in green, all ear and eye,  
Climbed to the high top of the garden-wall  
To spy some secret scandal if he might,  
And saw the Queen who sat betwixt her best  
Enid, and lissome Vivien, of her court  
The wiliest and the worst; and more than this  
He saw not, for Sir Lancelot passing by  
Spied where he couched, and as the gardener's hand

Picks from the colewort a green caterpillar,  
So from the high wall and the flowering grove  
Of grasses Lancelot plucked him by the heel,  
And cast him as a worm upon the way;  
But when he knew the Prince though marred with dust,  
He, reverencing king's blood in a bad man,  
Made such excuses as he might, and these  
Full knightly without scorn; for in those days  
No knight of Arthur's noblest dealt in scorn;  
But, if a man were halt or hunched, in him  
By those whom God had made full-limbed and tall,  
Scorn was allowed as part of his defect,  
And he was answered softly by the King  
And all his Table. So Sir Lancelot help  
To raise the Prince, who rising twice or thrice  
Full sharply smote his knees, and smiled, and went:  
But, ever after, the small violence done  
Rankled in him and ruffled all his heart,  
As the sharp wind that ruffles all day long  
A little bitter pool about a stone  
On the bare coast.

But when Sir Lancelot told  
This matter to the Queen, at first she laughed  
Lightly, to think of Modred's dusty fall,  
Then shuddered, as the village wife who cries  
'I shudder, some one steps across my grave;'  
Then laughed again, but faintlier, for indeed  
She half-foresaw that he, the subtle beast,  
Would track her guilt until he found, and hers  
Would be for evermore a name of scorn.  
Henceforward rarely could she front in hall,  
Or elsewhere, Modred's narrow foxy face,  
Heart-hiding smile, and gray persistent eye:  
Henceforward too, the Powers that tend the soul,  
To help it from the death that cannot die,  
And save it even in extremes, began  
To vex and plague her. Many a time for hours,  
Beside the placid breathings of the King,  
In the dead night, grim faces came and went

Before her, or a vague spiritual fear—  
Like to some doubtful noise of creaking doors,  
Heard by the watcher in a haunted house,  
That keeps the rust of murder on the walls—  
Held her awake: or if she slept, she dreamed  
An awful dream; for then she seemed to stand  
On some vast plain before a setting sun,  
And from the sun there swiftly made at her  
A ghastly something, and its shadow flew  
Before it, till it touched her, and she turned—  
When lo! her own, that broadening from her feet,  
And blackening, swallowed all the land, and in it  
Far cities burnt, and with a cry she woke.  
And all this trouble did not pass but grew;  
Till even the clear face of the guileless King,  
And trustful courtesies of household life,  
Became her bane; and at the last she said,  
'O Lancelot, get thee hence to thine own land,  
For if thou tarry we shall meet again,  
And if we meet again, some evil chance  
Will make the smouldering scandal break and blaze  
Before the people, and our lord the King.'  
And Lancelot ever promised, but remained,  
And still they met and met. Again she said,  
'O Lancelot, if thou love me get thee hence.'  
And then they were agreed upon a night  
(When the good King should not be there) to meet  
And part for ever. Vivien, lurking, heard.  
She told Sir Modred. Passion-pale they met  
And greeted. Hands in hands, and eye to eye,  
Low on the border of her couch they sat  
Stammering and staring. It was their last hour,  
A madness of farewells. And Modred brought  
His creatures to the basement of the tower  
For testimony; and crying with full voice  
'Traitor, come out, ye are trapt at last,' aroused  
Lancelot, who rushing outward lionlike  
Leapt on him, and hurled him headlong, and he fell  
Stunned, and his creatures took and bare him off,



And all was still:then she, 'The end is come,  
And I am shamed for ever;' and he said,  
'Mine be the shame; mine was the sin:but rise,  
And fly to my strong castle overseas:  
There will I hide thee, till my life shall end,  
There hold thee with my life against the world.'  
She answered, 'Lancelot, wilt thou hold me so?  
Nay, friend, for we have taken our farewells.  
Would God that thou couldst hide me from myself!  
Mine is the shame, for I was wife, and thou  
Unwedded:yet rise now, and let us fly,  
For I will draw me into sanctuary,  
And bide my doom.'So Lancelot got her horse,  
Set her thereon, and mounted on his own,  
And then they rode to the divided way,  
There kissed, and parted weeping:for he past,  
Love-loyal to the least wish of the Queen,  
Back to his land; but she to Almesbury  
Fled all night long by glimmering waste and weald,  
And heard the Spirits of the waste and weald  
Moan as she fled, or thought she heard them moan:  
And in herself she moaned 'Too late, too late!'  
Till in the cold wind that foreruns the morn,  
A blot in heaven, the Raven, flying high,  
Croaked, and she thought, 'He spies a field of death;  
For now the Heathen of the Northern Sea,  
Lured by the crimes and frailties of the court,  
Begin to slay the folk, and spoil the land.'

And when she came to Almesbury she spake  
There to the nuns, and said, 'Mine enemies  
Pursue me, but, O peaceful Sisterhood,  
Receive, and yield me sanctuary, nor ask  
Her name to whom ye yield it, till her time  
To tell you:' and her beauty, grace and power,  
Wrought as a charm upon them, and they spared  
To ask it.

So the stately Queen abode  
For many a week, unknown, among the nuns;  
Nor with them mixed, nor told her name, nor sought,

Wrapt in her grief, for housel or for shrift,  
But communed only with the little maid,  
Who pleased her with a babbling heedlessness  
Which often lured her from herself; but now,  
This night, a rumour wildly blown about  
Came, that Sir Modred had usurped the realm,  
And leagued him with the heathen, while the King  
Was waging war on Lancelot: then she thought,  
'With what a hate the people and the King  
Must hate me,' and bowed down upon her hands  
Silent, until the little maid, who brooked  
No silence, brake it, uttering, 'Late! so late!  
What hour, I wonder, now?' and when she drew  
No answer, by and by began to hum  
An air the nuns had taught her; 'Late, so late!  
Which when she heard, the Queen looked up, and said,  
'O maiden, if indeed ye list to sing,  
Sing, and unbind my heart that I may weep.'  
Whereat full willingly sang the little maid.

'Late, late, so late! and dark the night and chill!  
Late, late, so late! but we can enter still.  
Too late, too late! ye cannot enter now.

'No light had we: for that we do repent;  
And learning this, the bridegroom will relent.  
Too late, too late! ye cannot enter now.

'No light: so late! and dark and chill the night!  
O let us in, that we may find the light!  
Too late, too late: ye cannot enter now.

'Have we not heard the bridegroom is so sweet?  
O let us in, though late, to kiss his feet!  
No, no, too late! ye cannot enter now.'

So sang the novice, while full passionately,  
Her head upon her hands, remembering  
Her thought when first she came, wept the sad Queen.  
Then said the little novice prattling to her,  
'O pray you, noble lady, weep no more;  
But let my words, the words of one so small,  
Who knowing nothing knows but to obey,  
And if I do not there is penance given—

Comfort your sorrows; for they do not flow  
From evil done; right sure am I of that,  
Who see your tender grace and stateliness.  
But weigh your sorrows with our lord the King's,  
And weighing find them less; for gone is he  
To wage grim war against Sir Lancelot there,  
Round that strong castle where he holds the Queen;  
And Modred whom he left in charge of all,  
The traitor—Ah sweet lady, the King's grief  
For his own self, and his own Queen, and realm,  
Must needs be thrice as great as any of ours.  
For me, I thank the saints, I am not great.  
For if there ever come a grief to me  
I cry my cry in silence, and have done.  
None knows it, and my tears have brought me good:  
But even were the griefs of little ones  
As great as those of great ones, yet this grief  
Is added to the griefs the great must bear,  
That howsoever much they may desire  
Silence, they cannot weep behind a cloud:  
As even here they talk at Almesbury  
About the good King and his wicked Queen,  
And were I such a King with such a Queen,  
Well might I wish to veil her wickedness,  
But were I such a King, it could not be.'

Then to her own sad heart muttered the Queen,  
'Will the child kill me with her innocent talk?'  
But openly she answered, 'Must not I,  
If this false traitor have displaced his lord,  
Grieve with the common grief of all the realm?'

'Yea,' said the maid, 'this is all woman's grief,  
That she is woman, whose disloyal life  
Hath wrought confusion in the Table Round  
Which good King Arthur founded, years ago,  
With signs and miracles and wonders, there  
At Camelot, ere the coming of the Queen.'

Then thought the Queen within herself again,  
'Will the child kill me with her foolish prate?'  
But openly she spake and said to her,

'O little maid, shut in by nunnery walls,  
What canst thou know of Kings and Tables Round,  
Or what of signs and wonders, but the signs  
And simple miracles of thy nunnery?'

To whom the little novice garrulously,  
'Yea, but I know: the land was full of signs  
And wonders ere the coming of the Queen.  
So said my father, and himself was knight  
Of the great Table—at the founding of it;  
And rode thereto from Lyonesse, and he said  
That as he rode, an hour or maybe twain  
After the sunset, down the coast, he heard  
Strange music, and he paused, and turning—there,  
All down the lonely coast of Lyonesse,  
Each with a beacon-star upon his head,  
And with a wild sea-light about his feet,  
He saw them—headland after headland flame  
Far on into the rich heart of the west:  
And in the light the white mermaiden swam,  
And strong man-breasted things stood from the sea,  
And sent a deep sea-voice through all the land,  
To which the little elves of chasm and cleft  
Made answer, sounding like a distant horn.  
So said my father—yea, and furthermore,  
Next morning, while he past the dim-lit woods,  
Himself beheld three spirits mad with joy  
Come dashing down on a tall wayside flower,  
That shook beneath them, as the thistle shakes  
When three gray linnets wrangle for the seed:  
And still at evenings on before his horse  
The flickering fairy-circle wheeled and broke  
Flying, and linked again, and wheeled and broke  
Flying, for all the land was full of life.  
And when at last he came to Camelot,  
A wreath of airy dancers hand-in-hand  
Swung round the lighted lantern of the hall;  
And in the hall itself was such a feast  
As never man had dreamed; for every knight  
Had whatsoever meat he longed for served

By hands unseen; and even as he said  
Down in the cellars merry bloated things  
Shouldered the spigot, straddling on the butts  
While the wine ran:so glad were spirits and men  
Before the coming of the sinful Queen.'

Then spake the Queen and somewhat bitterly,  
'Were they so glad? ill prophets were they all,  
Spirits and men:could none of them foresee,  
Not even thy wise father with his signs  
And wonders, what has fallen upon the realm?'

To whom the novice garrulously again,  
'Yea, one, a bard; of whom my father said,  
Full many a noble war-song had he sung,  
Even in the presence of an enemy's fleet,  
Between the steep cliff and the coming wave;  
And many a mystic lay of life and death  
Had chanted on the smoky mountain-tops,  
When round him bent the spirits of the hills  
With all their dewy hair blown back like flame:  
So said my father—and that night the bard  
Sang Arthur's glorious wars, and sang the King  
As wellnigh more than man, and railed at those  
Who called him the false son of Gorlois:  
For there was no man knew from whence he came;  
But after tempest, when the long wave broke  
All down the thundering shores of Bude and Bos,  
There came a day as still as heaven, and then  
They found a naked child upon the sands  
Of dark Tintagil by the Cornish sea;  
And that was Arthur; and they fostered him  
Till he by miracle was approven King:  
And that his grave should be a mystery  
From all men, like his birth; and could he find  
A woman in her womanhood as great  
As he was in his manhood, then, he sang,  
The twain together well might change the world.  
But even in the middle of his song  
He faltered, and his hand fell from the harp,  
And pale he turned, and reeled, and would have fallen,

But that they stayed him up; nor would he tell  
His vision; but what doubt that he foresaw  
This evil work of Lancelot and the Queen?'

Then thought the Queen, 'Lo! they have set her on,  
Our simple-seeming Abbess and her nuns,  
To play upon me,' and bowed her head nor spake.  
Whereat the novice crying, with clasped hands,  
Shame on her own garrulity garrulously,  
Said the good nuns would check her gadding tongue  
Full often, 'and, sweet lady, if I seem  
To vex an ear too sad to listen to me,  
Unmannerly, with prattling and the tales  
Which my good father told me, check me too  
Nor let me shame my father's memory, one  
Of noblest manners, though himself would say  
Sir Lancelot had the noblest; and he died,  
Killed in a tilt, come next, five summers back,  
And left me; but of others who remain,  
And of the two first-famed for courtesy—  
And pray you check me if I ask amiss—  
But pray you, which had noblest, while you moved  
Among them, Lancelot or our lord the King?'

Then the pale Queen looked up and answered her,  
'Sir Lancelot, as became a noble knight,  
Was gracious to all ladies, and the same  
In open battle or the tilting-field  
Forbore his own advantage, and the King  
In open battle or the tilting-field  
Forbore his own advantage, and these two  
Were the most nobly-mannered men of all;  
For manners are not idle, but the fruit  
Of loyal nature, and of noble mind.'

'Yea,' said the maid, 'be manners such fair fruit?'  
Then Lancelot's needs must be a thousand-fold  
Less noble, being, as all rumour runs,  
The most disloyal friend in all the world.'

To which a mournful answer made the Queen:  
'O closed about by narrowing nunnery-walls,  
What knowest thou of the world, and all its lights

And shadows, all the wealth and all the woe?  
If ever Lancelot, that most noble knight,  
Were for one hour less noble than himself,  
Pray for him that he scape the doom of fire,  
And weep for her that drew him to his doom.'

'Yea,' said the little novice, 'I pray for both;  
But I should all as soon believe that his,  
Sir Lancelot's, were as noble as the King's,  
As I could think, sweet lady, yours would be  
Such as they are, were you the sinful Queen.'

So she, like many another babbler, hurt  
Whom she would soothe, and harmed where she would heal;  
For here a sudden flush of wrathful heat  
Fired all the pale face of the Queen, who cried,  
'Such as thou art be never maiden more  
For ever! thou their tool, set on to plague  
And play upon, and harry me, petty spy  
And traitress.' When that storm of anger brake  
From Guinevere, aghast the maiden rose,  
White as her veil, and stood before the Queen  
As tremulously as foam upon the beach  
Stands in a wind, ready to break and fly,  
And when the Queen had added 'Get thee hence,'  
Fled frightened. Then that other left alone  
Sighed, and began to gather heart again,  
Saying in herself, 'The simple, fearful child  
Meant nothing, but my own too-fearful guilt,  
Simpler than any child, betrays itself.  
But help me, heaven, for surely I repent.  
For what is true repentance but in thought—  
Not even in inmost thought to think again  
The sins that made the past so pleasant to us:  
And I have sworn never to see him more,  
To see him more.'

And even in saying this,  
Her memory from old habit of the mind  
Went slipping back upon the golden days  
In which she saw him first, when Lancelot came,  
Reputed the best knight and goodliest man,

Ambassador, to lead her to his lord  
Arthur, and led her forth, and far ahead  
Of his and her retinue moving, they,  
Rapt in sweet talk or lively, all on love  
And sport and tilts and pleasure, (for the time  
Was maytime, and as yet no sin was dreamed,)  
Rode under groves that looked a paradise  
Of blossom, over sheets of hyacinth  
That seemed the heavens upbreaking through the earth,  
And on from hill to hill, and every day  
Beheld at noon in some delicious dale  
The silk pavilions of King Arthur raised  
For brief repast or afternoon repose  
By couriers gone before; and on again,  
Till yet once more ere set of sun they saw  
The Dragon of the great Pendragonship,  
That crowned the state pavilion of the King,  
Blaze by the rushing brook or silent well.

But when the Queen immersed in such a trance,  
And moving through the past unconsciously,  
Came to that point where first she saw the King  
Ride toward her from the city, sighed to find  
Her journey done, glanced at him, thought him cold,  
High, self-contained, and passionless, not like him,  
'Not like my Lancelot'—while she brooded thus  
And grew half-guilty in her thoughts again,  
There rode an armed warrior to the doors.  
A murmuring whisper through the nunnery ran,  
Then on a sudden a cry, 'The King.' She sat  
Stiff-stricken, listening; but when armed feet  
Through the long gallery from the outer doors  
Rang coming, prone from off her seat she fell,  
And grovelled with her face against the floor:  
There with her milkwhite arms and shadowy hair  
She made her face a darkness from the King:  
And in the darkness heard his armed feet  
Pause by her; then came silence, then a voice,  
Monotonous and hollow like a Ghost's  
Denouncing judgment, but though changed, the King's:



'Liest thou here so low, the child of one  
I honoured, happy, dead before thy shame?  
Well is it that no child is born of thee.  
The children born of thee are sword and fire,  
Red ruin, and the breaking up of laws,  
The craft of kindred and the Godless hosts  
Of heathen swarming o'er the Northern Sea;  
Whom I, while yet Sir Lancelot, my right arm,  
The mightiest of my knights, abode with me,  
Have everywhere about this land of Christ  
In twelve great battles ruining overthrown.  
And knowest thou now from whence I come—from him  
From waging bitter war with him:and he,  
That did not shun to smite me in worse way,  
Had yet that grace of courtesy in him left,  
He spared to lift his hand against the King  
Who made him knight:but many a knight was slain;  
And many more, and all his kith and kin  
Clave to him, and abode in his own land.  
And many more when Modred raised revolt,  
Forgetful of their troth and fealty, clave  
To Modred, and a remnant stays with me.  
And of this remnant will I leave a part,  
True men who love me still, for whom I live,  
To guard thee in the wild hour coming on,  
Lest but a hair of this low head be harmed.  
Fear not:thou shalt be guarded till my death.  
Howbeit I know, if ancient prophecies  
Have erred not, that I march to meet my doom.  
Thou hast not made my life so sweet to me,  
That I the King should greatly care to live;  
For thou hast spoilt the purpose of my life.  
Bear with me for the last time while I show,  
Even for thy sake, the sin which thou hast sinned.  
For when the Roman left us, and their law  
Relaxed its hold upon us, and the ways  
Were filled with rapine, here and there a deed  
Of prowess done redressed a random wrong.  
But I was first of all the kings who drew

The knighthood-errant of this realm and all  
The realms together under me, their Head,  
In that fair Order of my Table Round,  
A glorious company, the flower of men,  
To serve as model for the mighty world,  
And be the fair beginning of a time.  
I made them lay their hands in mine and swear  
To reverence the King, as if he were  
Their conscience, and their conscience as their King,  
To break the heathen and uphold the Christ,  
To ride abroad redressing human wrongs,  
To speak no slander, no, nor listen to it,  
To honour his own word as if his God's,  
To lead sweet lives in purest chastity,  
To love one maiden only, cleave to her,  
And worship her by years of noble deeds,  
Until they won her; for indeed I knew  
Of no more subtle master under heaven  
Than is the maiden passion for a maid,  
Not only to keep down the base in man,  
But teach high thought, and amiable words  
And courtliness, and the desire of fame,  
And love of truth, and all that makes a man.  
And all this throve before I wedded thee,  
Believing, "lo mine helpmate, one to feel  
My purpose and rejoicing in my joy."  
Then came thy shameful sin with Lancelot;  
Then came the sin of Tristram and Isolt;  
Then others, following these my mightiest knights,  
And drawing foul ensample from fair names,  
Sinned also, till the loathsome opposite  
Of all my heart had destined did obtain,  
And all through thee! so that this life of mine  
I guard as God's high gift from scathe and wrong,  
Not greatly care to lose; but rather think  
How sad it were for Arthur, should he live,  
To sit once more within his lonely hall,  
And miss the wonted number of my knights,  
And miss to hear high talk of noble deeds

As in the golden days before thy sin.  
For which of us, who might be left, could speak  
Of the pure heart, nor seem to glance at thee?  
And in thy bowers of Camelot or of Usk  
Thy shadow still would glide from room to room,  
And I should evermore be vexed with thee  
In hanging robe or vacant ornament,  
Or ghostly footfall echoing on the stair.  
For think not, though thou wouldst not love thy lord,  
Thy lord hast wholly lost his love for thee.  
I am not made of so slight elements.  
Yet must I leave thee, woman, to thy shame.  
I hold that man the worst of public foes  
Who either for his own or children's sake,  
To save his blood from scandal, lets the wife  
Whom he knows false, abide and rule the house:  
For being through his cowardice allowed  
Her station, taken everywhere for pure,  
She like a new disease, unknown to men,  
Creeps, no precaution used, among the crowd,  
Makes wicked lightnings of her eyes, and saps  
The fealty of our friends, and stirs the pulse  
With devil's leaps, and poisons half the young.  
Worst of the worst were that man he that reigns!  
Better the King's waste hearth and aching heart  
Than thou reseated in thy place of light,  
The mockery of my people, and their bane.'

He paused, and in the pause she crept an inch  
Nearer, and laid her hands about his feet.  
Far off a solitary trumpet blew.

Then waiting by the doors the warhorse neighed  
At a friend's voice, and he spake again:

'Yet think not that I come to urge thy crimes,  
I did not come to curse thee, Guinevere,  
I, whose vast pity almost makes me die  
To see thee, laying there thy golden head,  
My pride in happier summers, at my feet.  
The wrath which forced my thoughts on that fierce law,  
The doom of treason and the flaming death,

(When first I learnt thee hidden here) is past.  
The pang—which while I weighed thy heart with one  
Too wholly true to dream untruth in thee,  
Made my tears burn—is also past—in part.  
And all is past, the sin is sinned, and I,  
Lo! I forgive thee, as Eternal God  
Forgives: do thou for thine own soul the rest.  
But how to take last leave of all I loved?  
O golden hair, with which I used to play  
Not knowing! O imperial-moulded form,  
And beauty such as never woman wore,  
Until it became a kingdom's curse with thee—  
I cannot touch thy lips, they are not mine,  
But Lancelot's: nay, they never were the King's.  
I cannot take thy hand: that too is flesh,  
And in the flesh thou hast sinned; and mine own flesh,  
Here looking down on thine polluted, cries  
"I loathe thee:" yet not less, O Guinevere,  
For I was ever virgin save for thee,  
My love through flesh hath wrought into my life  
So far, that my doom is, I love thee still.  
Let no man dream but that I love thee still.  
Perchance, and so thou purify thy soul,  
And so thou lean on our fair father Christ,  
Hereafter in that world where all are pure  
We two may meet before high God, and thou  
Wilt spring to me, and claim me thine, and know  
I am thine husband—not a smaller soul,  
Nor Lancelot, nor another. Leave me that,  
I charge thee, my last hope. Now must I hence.  
Through the thick night I hear the trumpet blow:  
They summon me their King to lead mine hosts  
Far down to that great battle in the west,  
Where I must strike against the man they call  
My sister's son—no kin of mine, who leagues  
With Lords of the White Horse, heathen, and knights,  
Traitors—and strike him dead, and meet myself  
Death, or I know not what mysterious doom.  
And thou remaining here wilt learn the event;

But hither shall I never come again,  
Never lie by thy side; see thee no more—  
Farewell!

And while she grovelled at his feet,  
She felt the King's breath wander o'er her neck,  
And in the darkness o'er her fallen head,  
Perceived the waving of his hands that blest.

Then, listening till those armed steps were gone,  
Rose the pale Queen, and in her anguish found  
The casement: 'peradventure,' so she thought,  
'If I might see his face, and not be seen.'  
And lo, he sat on horseback at the door!  
And near him the sad nuns with each a light  
Stood, and he gave them charge about the Queen,  
To guard and foster her for evermore.  
And while he spake to these his helm was lowered,  
To which for crest the golden dragon clung  
Of Britain; so she did not see the face,  
Which then was as an angel's, but she saw,  
Wet with the mists and smitten by the lights,  
The Dragon of the great Pendragonship  
Blaze, making all the night a steam of fire.  
And even then he turned; and more and more  
The moony vapour rolling round the King,  
Who seemed the phantom of a Giant in it,  
Enwound him fold by fold, and made him gray  
And grayer, till himself became as mist  
Before her, moving ghostlike to his doom.

Then she stretched out her arms and cried aloud  
'Oh Arthur!' there her voice brake suddenly,  
Then—as a stream that spouting from a cliff  
Fails in mid air, but gathering at the base  
Re-makes itself, and flashes down the vale—  
Went on in passionate utterance:

'Gone—my lord!  
Gone through my sin to slay and to be slain!  
And he forgave me, and I could not speak.  
Farewell? I should have answered his farewell.  
His mercy choked me. Gone, my lord the King,

My own true lord! how dare I call him mine?  
The shadow of another cleaves to me,  
And makes me one pollution: he, the King,  
Called me polluted: shall I kill myself?  
What help in that? I cannot kill my sin,  
If soul be soul; nor can I kill my shame;  
No, nor by living can I live it down.  
The days will grow to weeks, the weeks to months  
The months will add themselves and make the years,  
The years will roll into the centuries,  
And mine will ever be a name of scorn.  
I must not dwell on that defeat of fame.  
Let the world be; that is but of the world.  
What else? what hope? I think there was a hope,  
Except he mocked me when he spake of hope;  
His hope he called it; but he never mocks,  
For mockery is the fume of little hearts.  
And blessed be the King, who hath forgiven  
My wickedness to him, and left me hope  
That in mine own heart I can live down sin  
And be his mate hereafter in the heavens  
Before high God. Ah great and gentle lord,  
Who wast, as is the conscience of a saint  
Among his warring senses, to thy knights—  
To whom my false voluptuous pride, that took  
Full easily all impressions from below,  
Would not look up, or half-despised the height  
To which I would not or I could not climb—  
I thought I could not breathe in that fine air  
That pure severity of perfect light—  
I yearned for warmth and colour which I found  
In Lancelot—now I see thee what thou art,  
Thou art the highest and most human too,  
Not Lancelot, nor another. Is there none  
Will tell the King I love him though so late?  
Now—ere he goes to the great Battle? none:  
Myself must tell him in that purer life,  
But now it were too daring. Ah my God,  
What might I not have made of thy fair world,

Had I but loved thy highest creature here?  
It was my duty to have loved the highest:  
It surely was my profit had I known:  
It would have been my pleasure had I seen.  
We needs must love the highest when we see it,  
Not Lancelot, nor another.'

Here her hand

Grasped, made her vail her eyes: she looked and saw  
The novice, weeping, suppliant, and said to her,  
'Yea, little maid, for am I not forgiven?'

Then glancing up beheld the holy nuns  
All round her, weeping; and her heart was loosed  
Within her, and she wept with these and said,

'Ye know me then, that wicked one, who broke  
The vast design and purpose of the King.

O shut me round with narrowing nunnery-walls,  
Meek maidens, from the voices crying "shame."

I must not scorn myself: he loves me still.

Let no one dream but that he loves me still.

So let me, if you do not shudder at me,

Nor shun to call me sister, dwell with you;

Wear black and white, and be a nun like you,

Fast with your fasts, not feasting with your feasts;

Grieve with your griefs, not grieving at your joys,

But not rejoicing; mingle with your rites;

Pray and be prayed for; lie before your shrines;

Do each low office of your holy house;

Walk your dim cloister, and distribute dole

To poor sick people, richer in His eyes

Who ransomed us, and haler too than I;

And treat their loathsome hurts and heal mine own;

And so wear out in almsdeed and in prayer

The sombre close of that voluptuous day,

Which wrought the ruin of my lord the King.'

She said: they took her to themselves; and she  
Still hoping, fearing 'is it yet too late?'

Dwelt with them, till in time their Abbess died.

Then she, for her good deeds and her pure life,

And for the power of ministration in her,

And likewise for the high rank she had borne,  
Was chosen Abbess, there, an Abbess, lived  
For three brief years, and there, an Abbess, past  
To where beyond these voices there is peace.



## The Passing of Arthur

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That story which the bold Sir Bedivere,  
First made and latest left of all the knights,  
Told, when the man was no more than a voice  
In the white winter of his age, to those  
With whom he dwelt, new faces, other minds.

For on their march to westward, Bedivere,  
Who slowly paced among the slumbering host,  
Heard in his tent the moanings of the King:

'I found Him in the shining of the stars,  
I marked Him in the flowering of His fields,  
But in His ways with men I find Him not.  
I waged His wars, and now I pass and die.  
O me! for why is all around us here  
As if some lesser god had made the world,  
But had not force to shape it as he would,  
Till the High God behold it from beyond,  
And enter it, and make it beautiful?  
Or else as if the world were wholly fair,  
But that these eyes of men are dense and dim,  
And have not power to see it as it is:  
Perchance, because we see not to the close;—  
For I, being simple, thought to work His will,  
And have but stricken with the sword in vain;  
And all whereon I leaned in wife and friend  
Is traitor to my peace, and all my realm  
Reels back into the beast, and is no more.  
My God, thou hast forgotten me in my death;  
Nay—God my Christ—I pass but shall not die.'

Then, ere that last weird battle in the west,  
There came on Arthur sleeping, Gawain killed  
In Lancelot's war, the ghost of Gawain blown

Along a wandering wind, and past his ear  
Went shrilling, 'Hollow, hollow all delight!  
Hail, King! tomorrow thou shalt pass away.  
Farewell! there is an isle of rest for thee.  
And I am blown along a wandering wind,  
And hollow, hollow, hollow all delight.'  
And fainter onward, like wild birds that change  
Their season in the night and wail their way  
From cloud to cloud, down the long wind the dream  
Shrilled; but in going mingled with dim cries  
Far in the moonlit haze among the hills,  
As of some lonely city sacked by night,  
When all is lost, and wife and child with wail  
Pass to new lords; and Arthur woke and called,  
'Who spake? A dream. O light upon the wind,  
Thine, Gawain, was the voice—are these dim cries  
Thine? or doth all that haunts the waste and wild  
Mourn, knowing it will go along with me?'

This heard the bold Sir Bedivere and spake:  
'O me, my King, let pass whatever will,  
Elves, and the harmless glamour of the field;  
But in their stead thy name and glory cling  
To all high places like a golden cloud  
For ever: but as yet thou shalt not pass.  
Light was Gawain in life, and light in death  
Is Gawain, for the ghost is as the man;  
And care not thou for dreams from him, but rise—  
I hear the steps of Modred in the west,  
And with him many of thy people, and knights  
Once thine, whom thou hast loved, but grosser grown  
Than heathen, spitting at their vows and thee.  
Right well in heart they know thee for the King.  
Arise, go forth and conquer as of old.'

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere:  
'Far other is this battle in the west  
Whereto we move, than when we strove in youth,  
And brake the petty kings, and fought with Rome,  
Or thrust the heathen from the Roman wall,  
And shook him through the north. Ill doom is mine

To war against my people and my knights.  
The king who fights his people fights himself.  
And they my knights, who loved me once, the stroke  
That strikes them dead is as my death to me.  
Yet let us hence, and find or feel a way  
Through this blind haze, which ever since I saw  
One lying in the dust at Almesbury,  
Hath folded in the passes of the world.'

Then rose the King and moved his host by night,  
And ever pushed Sir Modred, league by league,  
Back to the sunset bound of Lyonesse—  
A land of old upheaven from the abyss  
By fire, to sink into the abyss again;  
Where fragments of forgotten peoples dwelt,  
And the long mountains ended in a coast  
Of ever-shifting sand, and far away  
The phantom circle of a moaning sea.  
There the pursuer could pursue no more,  
And he that fled no further fly the King;  
And there, that day when the great light of heaven  
Burned at his lowest in the rolling year,  
On the waste sand by the waste sea they closed.  
Nor ever yet had Arthur fought a fight  
Like this last, dim, weird battle of the west.  
A deathwhite mist slept over sand and sea:  
Whereof the chill, to him who breathed it, drew  
Down with his blood, till all his heart was cold  
With formless fear; and even on Arthur fell  
Confusion, since he saw not whom he fought.  
For friend and foe were shadows in the mist,  
And friend slew friend not knowing whom he slew;  
And some had visions out of golden youth,  
And some beheld the faces of old ghosts  
Look in upon the battle; and in the mist  
Was many a noble deed, many a base,  
And chance and craft and strength in single fights,  
And ever and anon with host to host  
Shocks, and the splintering spear, the hard mail hewn,  
Shield-breakings, and the clash of brands, the crash

Of battleaxes on shattered helms, and shrieks  
After the Christ, of those who falling down  
Looked up for heaven, and only saw the mist;  
And shouts of heathen and the traitor knights,  
Oaths, insults, filth, and monstrous blasphemies,  
Sweat, writhings, anguish, labouring of the lungs  
In that close mist, and cryings for the light,  
Moans of the dying, and voices of the dead.

Last, as by some one deathbed after wail  
Of suffering, silence follows, or through death  
Or deathlike swoon, thus over all that shore,  
Save for some whisper of the seething seas,  
A dead hush fell; but when the dolorous day  
Grew drearier toward twilight falling, came  
A bitter wind, clear from the North, and blew  
The mist aside, and with that wind the tide  
Rose, and the pale King glanced across the field  
Of battle:but no man was moving there;  
Nor any cry of Christian heard thereon,  
Nor yet of heathen; only the wan wave  
Brake in among dead faces, to and fro  
Swaying the helpless hands, and up and down  
Tumbling the hollow helmets of the fallen,  
And shivered brands that once had fought with Rome,  
And rolling far along the gloomy shores  
The voice of days of old and days to be.

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere,  
And whiter than the mist that all day long  
Had held the field of battle was the King:

'Hearest thou this great voice that shakes the world,  
And wastes the narrow realm whereon we move,  
And beats upon the faces of the dead,  
My dead, as though they had not died for me?—  
O Bedivere, for on my heart hath fallen  
Confusion, till I know not what I am,  
Nor whence I am, nor whether I be King.  
Behold, I seem but King among the dead.'

Then spake the bold Sir Bedivere:'My King,  
King everywhere! and so the dead have kings,

There also will I worship thee as King.  
Yet still thy life is whole, and still I live  
Who love thee; but who hates thee, he that brought  
The heathen back among us, yonder stands,  
Modred, unharmed, the traitor of thine house.'

Then spake the King: 'My house hath been my doom.  
But call not thou this traitor of my house  
Who hath but dwelt beneath one roof with me.  
My house are rather they who swear my vows,  
Yea, even while they brake them, owned me King.  
And well for thee, saying in my dark hour,  
When all the purport of my throne hath failed,  
That quick or dead thou holdest me for King.  
King am I, whatsoever be their cry;  
And one last act of kinghood shalt thou see  
Yet, ere I pass.' And uttering this the King  
Made at the man: then Modred smote his liege  
Hard on that helm which many a heathen sword  
Had beaten thin; while Arthur at one blow,  
Striking the last stroke with Excalibur,  
Slew him, and all but slain himself, he fell.

So all day long the noise of battle rolled  
Among the mountains by the winter sea;  
Until King Arthur's Table, man by man,  
Had fallen in Lyonnesse about their lord,  
King Arthur. Then, because his wound was deep,  
The bold Sir Bedivere uplifted him,  
And bore him to a chapel nigh the field,  
A broken chancel with a broken cross,  
That stood on a dark strait of barren land:  
On one side lay the Ocean, and on one  
Lay a great water, and the moon was full.

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere:  
'The sequel of today unsolders all  
The goodliest fellowship of famous knights  
Whereof this world holds record. Such a sleep  
They sleep—the men I loved. I think that we  
Shall never more, at any future time,  
Delight our souls with talk of knightly deeds,

Walking about the gardens and the halls  
Of Camelot, as in the days that were.  
I perish by this people which I made,—  
Though Merlin sware that I should come again  
To rule once more; but, let what will be, be,  
I am so deeply smitten through the helm  
That without help I cannot last till morn.  
Thou therefore take my brand Excalibur,  
Which was my pride:for thou rememberest how  
In those old days, one summer noon, an arm  
Rose up from out the bosom of the lake,  
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,  
Holding the sword—and how I rowed across  
And took it, and have worn it, like a king;  
And, wheresoever I am sung or told  
In aftertime, this also shall be known:  
But now delay not:take Excalibur,  
And fling him far into the middle mere:  
Watch what thou seest, and lightly bring me word.'

To him replied the bold Sir Bedivere:  
'It is not meet, Sir King, to leave thee thus,  
Aidless, alone, and smitten through the helm—  
A little thing may harm a wounded man;  
Yet I thy hest will all perform at full,  
Watch what I see, and lightly bring thee word.'

So saying, from the ruined shrine he stept,  
And in the moon athwart the place of tombs,  
Where lay the mighty bones of ancient men,  
Old knights, and over them the sea-wind sang  
Shrill, chill, with flakes of foam.He, stepping down  
By zigzag paths, and juts of pointed rock,  
Came on the shining levels of the lake.

There drew he forth the brand Excalibur,  
And o'er him, drawing it, the winter moon,  
Brightening the skirts of a long cloud, ran forth  
And sparkled keen with frost against the hilt:  
For all the haft twinkled with diamond sparks,  
Myriads of topaz-lights, and jacinth-work  
Of subtlest jewellery.He gazed so long

That both his eyes were dazzled as he stood,  
This way and that dividing the swift mind,  
In act to throw:but at the last it seemed  
Better to leave Excalibur concealed  
There in the many-knotted waterflags,  
That whistled stiff and dry about the marge.  
So strode he back slow to the wounded King.

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere:  
'Hast thou performed my mission which I gave?  
What is it thou hast seen? or what hast heard?'

And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere:  
'I heard the ripple washing in the reeds,  
And the wild water lapping on the crag.'

To whom replied King Arthur, faint and pale:  
'Thou hast betrayed thy nature and thy name,  
Not rendering true answer, as beseemed  
Thy fealty, nor like a noble knight:  
For surer sign had followed, either hand,  
Or voice, or else a motion of the mere.  
This is a shameful thing for men to lie.  
Yet now, I charge thee, quickly go again,  
As thou art lief and dear, and do the thing  
I bade thee, watch, and lightly bring me word.'

Then went Sir Bedivere the second time  
Across the ridge, and paced beside the mere,  
Counting the dewy pebbles, fixed in thought;  
But when he saw the wonder of the hilt,  
How curiously and strangely chased, he smote  
His palms together, and he cried aloud:

'And if indeed I cast the brand away,  
Surely a precious thing, one worthy note,  
Should thus be lost for ever from the earth,  
Which might have pleased the eyes of many men.  
What good should follow this, if this were done?  
What harm, undone?Deep harm to disobey,  
Seeing obedience is the bond of rule.  
Were it well to obey then, if a king demand  
An act unprofitable, against himself?  
The King is sick, and knows not what he does.

What record, or what relic of my lord  
Should be to aftertime, but empty breath  
And rumours of a doubt? But were this kept,  
Stored in some treasure-house of mighty kings,  
Some one might show it at a joust of arms,  
Saying, "King Arthur's sword, Excalibur,  
Wrought by the lonely maiden of the Lake.  
Nine years she wrought it, sitting in the deeps  
Upon the hidden bases of the hills."  
So might some old man speak in the aftertime  
To all the people, winning reverence.  
But now much honour and much fame were lost.'

So spake he, clouded with his own conceit,  
And hid Excalibur the second time,  
And so strode back slow to the wounded King.

Then spoke King Arthur, breathing heavily:  
'What is it thou hast seen? or what hast heard?'

And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere:  
'I heard the water lapping on the crag,  
And the long ripple washing in the reeds.'

To whom replied King Arthur, much in wrath:  
'Ah, miserable and unkind, untrue,  
Unknightly, traitor-hearted! Woe is me!  
Authority forgets a dying king,  
Laid widowed of the power in his eye  
That bowed the will. I see thee what thou art,  
For thou, the latest-left of all my knights,  
In whom should meet the offices of all,  
Thou wouldst betray me for the precious hilt;  
Either from lust of gold, or like a girl  
Valuing the giddy pleasure of the eyes.  
Yet, for a man may fail in duty twice,  
And the third time may prosper, get thee hence:  
But, if thou spare to fling Excalibur,  
I will arise and slay thee with my hands.'

Then quickly rose Sir Bedivere, and ran,  
And, leaping down the ridges lightly, plunged  
Among the bulrush beds, and clutched the sword,  
And strongly wheeled and threw it. The great brand



Made lightnings in the splendour of the moon,  
And flashing round and round, and whirled in an arch,  
Shot like a streamer of the northern morn,  
Seen where the moving isles of winter shock  
By night, with noises of the Northern Sea.  
So flashed and fell the brand Excalibur:  
But ere he dipt the surface, rose an arm  
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,  
And caught him by the hilt, and brandished him  
Three times, and drew him under in the mere.  
And lightly went the other to the King.

Then spoke King Arthur, drawing thicker breath:  
'Now see I by thine eyes that this is done.  
Speak out: what is it thou hast heard, or seen?'

And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere:  
'Sir King, I closed mine eyelids, lest the gems  
Should blind my purpose, for I never saw,  
Nor shall see, here or elsewhere, till I die,  
Not though I live three lives of mortal men,  
So great a miracle as yonder hilt.  
Then with both hands I flung him, wheeling him;  
But when I looked again, behold an arm,  
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,  
That caught him by the hilt, and brandished him  
Three times, and drew him under in the mere.'

And answer made King Arthur, breathing hard:  
'My end draws nigh; 'tis time that I were gone.  
Make broad thy shoulders to receive my weight,  
And bear me to the margin; yet I fear  
My wound hath taken cold, and I shall die.'

So saying, from the pavement he half rose,  
Slowly, with pain, reclining on his arm,  
And looking wistfully with wide blue eyes  
As in a picture. Him Sir Bedivere  
Remorsefully regarded through his tears,  
And would have spoken, but he found not words;  
Then took with care, and kneeling on one knee,  
O'er both his shoulders drew the languid hands,  
And rising bore him through the place of tombs.

But, as he walked, King Arthur panted hard,  
Like one that feels a nightmare on his bed  
When all the house is mute. So sighed the King,  
Muttering and murmuring at his ear, 'Quick, quick!  
I fear it is too late, and I shall die.'

But the other swiftly strode from ridge to ridge,  
Clothed with his breath, and looking, as he walked,  
Larger than human on the frozen hills.  
He heard the deep behind him, and a cry  
Before. His own thought drove him like a goad.  
Dry clashed his harness in the icy caves  
And barren chasms, and all to left and right  
The bare black cliff clanged round him, as he based  
His feet on juts of slippery crag that rang  
Sharp-smitten with the dint of armed heels—  
And on a sudden, lo! the level lake,  
And the long glories of the winter moon.

Then saw they how there hove a dusky barge,  
Dark as a funeral scarf from stem to stern,  
Beneath them; and descending they were ware  
That all the decks were dense with stately forms,  
Black-stoled, black-hooded, like a dream—by these  
Three Queens with crowns of gold: and from them rose  
A cry that shivered to the tingling stars,  
And, as it were one voice, an agony  
Of lamentation, like a wind that shrills  
All night in a waste land, where no one comes,  
Or hath come, since the making of the world.

Then murmured Arthur, 'Place me in the barge.'  
So to the barge they came. There those three Queens  
Put forth their hands, and took the King, and wept.  
But she, that rose the tallest of them all  
And fairest, laid his head upon her lap,  
And loosed the shattered casque, and chafed his hands,  
And called him by his name, complaining loud,  
And dropping bitter tears against a brow  
Striped with dark blood: for all his face was white  
And colourless, and like the withered moon  
Smote by the fresh beam of the springing east;

And all his greaves and cuisses dashed with drops  
Of onset; and the light and lustrous curls—  
That made his forehead like a rising sun  
High from the dais-throne—were parched with dust;  
Or, clotted into points and hanging loose,  
Mixed with the knightly growth that fringed his lips.  
So like a shattered column lay the King;  
Not like that Arthur who, with lance in rest,  
From spur to plume a star of tournament,  
Shot through the lists at Camelot, and charged  
Before the eyes of ladies and of kings.

Then loudly cried the bold Sir Bedivere:  
'Ah! my Lord Arthur, whither shall I go?  
Where shall I hide my forehead and my eyes?  
For now I see the true old times are dead,  
When every morning brought a noble chance,  
And every chance brought out a noble knight.  
Such times have been not since the light that led  
The holy Elders with the gift of myrrh.  
But now the whole Round Table is dissolved  
Which was an image of the mighty world,  
And I, the last, go forth companionless,  
And the days darken round me, and the years,  
Among new men, strange faces, other minds.'

And slowly answered Arthur from the barge:  
'The old order changeth, yielding place to new,  
And God fulfils himself in many ways,  
Lest one good custom should corrupt the world.  
Comfort thyself: what comfort is in me?  
I have lived my life, and that which I have done  
May He within himself make pure! but thou,  
If thou shouldst never see my face again,  
Pray for my soul. More things are wrought by prayer  
Than this world dreams of. Wherefore, let thy voice  
Rise like a fountain for me night and day.  
For what are men better than sheep or goats  
That nourish a blind life within the brain,  
If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer  
Both for themselves and those who call them friend?

For so the whole round earth is every way  
Bound by gold chains about the feet of God.  
But now farewell. I am going a long way  
With these thou seest—if indeed I go  
(For all my mind is clouded with a doubt)—  
To the island-valley of Avilion;  
Where falls not hail, or rain, or any snow,  
Nor ever wind blows loudly; but it lies  
Deep-meadowed, happy, fair with orchard lawns  
And bowery hollows crowned with summer sea,  
Where I will heal me of my grievous wound.'

So said he, and the barge with oar and sail  
Moved from the brink, like some full-breasted swan  
That, fluting a wild carol ere her death,  
Ruffles her pure cold plume, and takes the flood  
With swarthy webs. Long stood Sir Bedivere  
Revolving many memories, till the hull  
Looked one black dot against the verge of dawn,  
And on the mere the wailing died away.

But when that moan had past for evermore,  
The stillness of the dead world's winter dawn  
Amazed him, and he groaned, 'The King is gone.'  
And therewithal came on him the weird rhyme,  
'From the great deep to the great deep he goes.'

Whereat he slowly turned and slowly clomb  
The last hard footstep of that iron crag;  
Thence marked the black hull moving yet, and cried,  
'He passes to be King among the dead,  
And after healing of his grievous wound  
He comes again; but—if he come no more—  
O me, be yon dark Queens in yon black boat,  
Who shrieked and wailed, the three whereat we gazed  
On that high day, when, clothed with living light,  
They stood before his throne in silence, friends  
Of Arthur, who should help him at his need?'

Then from the dawn it seemed there came, but faint  
As from beyond the limit of the world,  
Like the last echo born of a great cry,  
Sounds, as if some fair city were one voice

Around a king returning from his wars.

Thereat once more he moved about, and clomb  
Even to the highest he could climb, and saw,  
Straining his eyes beneath an arch of hand,  
Or thought he saw, the speck that bare the King,  
Down that long water opening on the deep  
Somewhere far off, pass on and on, and go  
From less to less and vanish into light.  
And the new sun rose bringing the new year.

## To the Queen

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O loyal to the royal in thyself,  
And loyal to thy land, as this to thee—  
Bear witness, that rememberable day,  
When, pale as yet, and fever-worn, the Prince  
Who scarce had plucked his flickering life again  
From halfway down the shadow of the grave,  
Past with thee through thy people and their love,  
And London rolled one tide of joy through all  
Her trebled millions, and loud leagues of man  
And welcome! witness, too, the silent cry,  
The prayer of many a race and creed, and clime—  
Thunderless lightnings striking under sea  
From sunset and sunrise of all thy realm,  
And that true North, whereof we lately heard  
A strain to shame us 'keep you to yourselves;  
So loyal is too costly! friends—your love  
Is but a burthen: loose the bond, and go.'  
Is this the tone of empire? here the faith  
That made us rulers? this, indeed, her voice  
And meaning, whom the roar of Hougoumont  
Left mightiest of all peoples under heaven?  
What shock has fooled her since, that she should speak  
So feebly? wealthier—wealthier—hour by hour!  
The voice of Britain, or a sinking land,  
Some third-rate isle half-lost among her seas?  
There rang her voice, when the full city pealed  
Thee and thy Prince! The loyal to their crown  
Are loyal to their own far sons, who love  
Our ocean-empire with her boundless homes  
For ever-broadening England, and her throne  
In our vast Orient, and one isle, one isle,

That knows not her own greatness:if she knows  
And dreads it we are fallen. —But thou, my Queen,  
Not for itself, but through thy living love  
For one to whom I made it o'er his grave  
Sacred, accept this old imperfect tale,  
New-old, and shadowing Sense at war with Soul,  
Ideal manhood closed in real man,  
Rather than that gray king, whose name, a ghost,  
Streams like a cloud, man-shaped, from mountain peak,  
And cleaves to cairn and cromlech still; or him  
Of Geoffrey's book, or him of Malleor's, one  
Touched by the adulterous finger of a time  
That hovered between war and wantonness,  
And crownings and dethronements:take withal  
Thy poet's blessing, and his trust that Heaven  
Will blow the tempest in the distance back  
From thine and ours:for some are scared, who mark,  
Or wisely or unwisely, signs of storm,  
Waverings of every vane with every wind,  
And wordy trucklings to the transient hour,  
And fierce or careless looseners of the faith,  
And Softness breeding scorn of simple life,  
Or Cowardice, the child of lust for gold,  
Or Labour, with a groan and not a voice,  
Or Art with poisonous honey stolen from France,  
And that which knows, but careful for itself,  
And that which knows not, ruling that which knows  
To its own harm:the goal of this great world  
Lies beyond sight:yet—if our slowly-grown  
And crowned Republic's crowning common-sense,  
That saved her many times, not fail—their fears  
Are morning shadows huger than the shapes  
That cast them, not those gloomier which forego  
The darkness of that battle in the West,  
Where all of high and holy dies away.

# **KING ARTHUR AND HIS KNIGHTS**

**by Maude L. Radford**



# Table of Contents

[How Arthur Became King](#)  
[The Good Sword Excalibur](#)  
[The Great Feast and What Followed](#)  
[Arthur's Court and the Order of the Round Table](#)  
[King Arthur and the Princess Guinevere](#)  
[The Coming of Gareth](#)  
[The Story of Sir Gareth and Lynette](#)  
[Sir Ivaine](#)  
[Sir Balin](#)  
[Sir Geraint and Enid](#)  
[Arthur and Sir Accalon](#)  
[How Arthur Fought with a Giant](#)  
[How Arthur Fought with Rome](#)  
[The Knight with the Badly Made Coat](#)  
[Sir Lancelot and Sir Brune](#)  
[The Adventure of King Pellennore](#)  
[Sir Lancelot and His Friends](#)  
[How Sir Lancelot Saved the Queen](#)  
[Sir Lancelot and Elaine](#)  
[The Search for the Holy Grail](#)  
[The Death of Arthur](#)

## HOW ARTHUR BECAME KING

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Once upon a time, a thousand years before Columbus discovered America, and when Rome was still the greatest city in the world, there lived a brave and beautiful youth whose name was Arthur. His home was in England, near London; and he lived with the good knight Sir Hector, whom he always called father.

They dwelt in a great square castle of gray stone, with a round tower at each corner. It was built about a courtyard, and was surrounded by a moat, across which was a drawbridge that could be raised or lowered. When it was raised the castle was practically a little island and very hard for enemies to attack.

On one side of the moat was a large wood, and here Arthur spent a great deal of his time. He liked to lie under the trees and gaze up at the blue of the sky. All about him old oaks stood like giant guardians watching sturdily over the soil where they had grown for centuries. Arthur could look between the trunks and see rabbits and squirrels whisking about. Sometimes a herd of brown deer with shy dark eyes would pass, holding their graceful heads high in the air; sometimes a flock of pheasants with brilliant plumage rose from the bushes. Again there was no sound except the tapping of a bright-crested woodpecker, and no motion but the fluttering of leaves and the trembling of violets half buried in green moss.

At times, when it was dim and silent in the wood, Arthur would hear bursts of merry laughter, the tinkling of bells, and the jingling of spurs. Then he would know that knights and ladies were riding down the road which ran beside the trees. Soon the knights would appear on horses, brown, black, and white, with gaily ornamented saddles, and bridles from which hung silver bells. Often the saddles were made of ivory or ebony, set with rubies or emeralds. The knights wore helmets laced with slender gold chains, and coats of mail made of tiny links of steel, so fine and light that all together hardly weighed more than a coat of cloth. Usually the legs of the knights were sheathed in steel armor; and their spurs were steel, or even gold. The ladies sat on horses with long trappings of silk, purple, white, or scarlet, with ornamented saddles and swinging bells. The robes of the ladies were very beautiful, being made of velvet or silk trimmed

with ermine. Arthur liked to watch them, flashing by; crimson, and gold, and blue, and rose-colored. Better still, he liked to see the pretty happy faces of the ladies, and hear their gay voices. In those troublous times, however, the roads were so insecure that such companies did not often pass.

Sometimes the knights and ladies came to visit Sir Hector. Then Arthur would hurry from the forest to the castle. Sir Hector would stand on the lowered drawbridge to greet his guests, and would lead them, with many expressions of pleasure, into the courtyard. Then he would take a huge hammer hanging from a post, and beat with it on a table which stood in a corner of the courtyard. Immediately from all parts of the castle the squires and servants would come running to take the horses of the knights and ladies. Sir Hector's wife and daughters would then appear, and with their own hands remove the armor of the knights. They would offer them golden basins of water, and towels for washing, and after that put velvet mantles upon their shoulders. Then the guests would be brought to the supper table.

But Arthur did not spend all his time dreaming in the woods or gazing at knights and ladies. For many hours of the day he practiced feats of arms in the courtyard. It was the custom in England to train boys of noble birth to be knights. As soon as they were old enough they were taught to ride. Later on, they lived much among the ladies and maidens, learning gentle manners. Under the care of the knights, they learned to hunt, to carry a lance properly, and to use the sword; and having gained this skill, they were made squires if they had shown themselves to be of good character.

Then, day by day, the squires practiced at the quintain. This was an upright post, on the top of which turned a crosspiece, having on one end a broad board, and on the other a bag of sand. The object was to ride up at full gallop, strike the board with a long lance, and get away without being hit by the sand bag.

Besides this, the squires had services to do for the knights, in order that they might learn to be useful in as many ways as possible, and to be always humble. For instance, they took care of the armor of the knights, carried letters and messages for them, accompanied them at joustings and tournaments, being ready with extra weapons or assistance; and in the castle they helped to serve the guests at table. After months of such service, they went through a beautiful ceremony and were made knights. In the country round about, Arthur, of all the squires, was the most famous for his skill in the use of the lance and the sword, for his keenness in the hunt, and for his courtesy to all people.

Now, at this time there was no ruler in England. The powerful Uther of Wales, who had governed England, was dead, and all the strong lords of the country were struggling to be king in his place. This gave rise to a great deal of

quarreling and bloodshed.

There was in the land a wise magician named Merlin. He was so old that his beard was as white as snow, but his eyes were as clear as a little child's. He was very sorry to see all the fighting that was going on, because he feared that it would do serious harm to the kingdom.

In those days the great and good men who ruled in the church had power almost equal to that of the monarch. The kings and the great lords listened to their advice, and gave them much land, and money for themselves and for the poor. So Merlin went to the Archbishop of Canterbury, the churchman who in all England was the most beloved, and said:

"Sir, it is my advice that you send to all the great lords of the realm and bid them come to London by Christmas to choose a king."

The archbishop did as Merlin advised, and at Christmas all the great lords came to London. The largest church in the city stood not far from the north bank of the Thames. A churchyard surrounded it, filled with yew trees, the trunks of which were knotted with age. The powerful lords rode up in their clanking armor to the gate, where they dismounted, and giving their horses into the care of their squires, reverently entered the church.

There were so many of them that they quite filled the nave and side-aisles of the building. The good archbishop, from where he stood in the chancel, looked down on them all. Just behind him was the altar covered with a cloth of crimson and gold, and surmounted by a golden crucifix and ten burning candles. In front of him, kneeling under the gray arches which spanned the church, were the greatest men in the kingdom. He looked at their stern bronzed faces, their heavy beards, their broad shoulders, and their glittering armor, and prayed God to make the best man in the land king.

Then began the service. At the close of the first prayer some of the knights looked out of the window, and there in the churchyard they saw a great square stone. In the middle of it was an anvil of steel a foot high, and fixed therein was a beautiful sword. On the sword was some writing set in with gold which said:

"Whosoever pulls this sword out of this stone and anvil is the real king of all England."

The knights who read this told the archbishop, but he said:

"I command you all to keep within the church and still pray to God. No man is to touch the sword until all the prayers are said."

After the service was over, the lords went into the churchyard. They each pulled at the sword, but none could stir it.

"The king is not here," said the archbishop, "but God will make him known. Meantime, let ten good knights keep watch over this sword."

The knights were soon chosen, and then the archbishop said that on a fixed day every man in the kingdom should try to pull the sword out of the anvil. He ordered that on New Year's day all the people should be brought together for a great tournament to be held on the south bank of the Thames, near London bridge. After a few days spent in jousting among the knights, each man should make the trial to find out whether or not he was to be king.

The brave youth Arthur did not know of the contest that was to be made for the sword. Sir Hector told him that he was to go to a tournament, but he did not tell him the reason for holding the tournament. So Arthur rode to London with Sir Hector; and Sir Kay, who was Sir Hector's oldest son, was with them.

Sir Hector and Sir Kay rode soberly in front. They were tall, stalwart men and rode black horses, their dark figures making shadows on the light snow that had fallen. Arthur, riding behind them, felt exhilarated by the crisp winter air which caused the blood to dance in his veins. Sometimes he stood up in his saddle and flicked with his sword the dead leaves on the oaks. Again he made his horse crush the thin crust of ice that had formed in tiny pools on the road. He was so happy in the thought of the tournament he was to see, that he could have sung for joy.

The road was not very wide, for few carts passed upon it, but it had been well worn by riders. Sometimes it wound through a bit of thick woods; again it rose up over a gently rolling hill. From the hilltops the riders could see London far in the distance. It looked at first like a gray haze; then, as the three came nearer, the buildings, large and small, grew plain to the sight. The castles and huts, barns and sheds, smithies, shops and mills, stood out in the keen sunlight. A high wall surrounded them, while on one side flowed the river Thames.

After they had entered the city, and had passed the churchyard, and had almost reached London bridge, Sir Kay discovered that he had left his sword at home.

"Will you go back for it?" he asked Arthur.

"That I will," said Arthur, glad of the chance to ride longer in the delightful air.

But when he reached their dwelling, he could not get in. The drawbridge was raised, and he could not make the warden hear his calling. Then Arthur was disturbed and said to himself:

"I will hasten to the churchyard we passed, and take the beautiful sword which I saw in the stone. It does not seem to belong to anyone, and my brother Kay must have a weapon."

So he rode on till he reached the churchyard, dismounted, and tied his horse to a sapling. The ten knights who guarded the sword had gone away to see the

combats in the tournament. Arthur ran up and pulled lightly but eagerly at the sword. It came at once from the anvil. He hurried to Sir Kay, who was waiting for him on London bridge. Sir Kay knew that the weapon was the one that had been fixed fast in the stone, but he said nothing to Arthur, and the two soon overtook Sir Hector, who had ridden slowly to the field where the tournament was taking place. Sir Kay immediately told his father what had happened.

The good knight at once spoke with great respect to Arthur.

"Sir," he said, "you must be the king of this land."

"What mean you, sir?" asked Arthur.

Sir Hector told the wondering youth the reason why he was destined to be king. Then he said:

"Can you put this sword back in its place and pull it out again?"

"Easily," replied Arthur.

The three returned to the great stone, and Arthur put back the sword. Sir Hector tried to take it out, but failed.

"Now, you try," he said to Sir Kay.

But Sir Kay, in spite of great efforts, also failed. Then Arthur, at Sir Hector's bidding, tried, and at once pulled forth the sword. At that Sir Hector and Sir Kay knelt before Arthur.

"Alas," said Arthur, raising them from the ground, "my own dear father and my brother, why do you kneel to me?"

"Nay, my lord Arthur," said Sir Hector, "I am not your father. You are of higher blood than I am. Long ago, when you were a little baby, Merlin brought you to me to take care of, telling me that you were to be the king."

"Then whose son am I?" cried Arthur.

"There are two stories: the one that Merlin tells, and the one that old Bleyes, the master of Merlin, tells. Merlin brought you to me, saying that you were the son of King Uther and Yguerne his wife. But because the king was dead and the lords powerful and jealous, he told me to guard you in secrecy lest your life be taken. I did not know whether the story was true or false then, but you were a helpless child, and Merlin was a wise sage, and so I took you and brought you up as my own."

Arthur was so astonished that he did not ask to hear the tale that Bleyes told. He stood gazing at Sir Hector, who said:

"And now, my gracious lord, will you be good to me and mine when you are king?"

"I will, indeed," replied Arthur, "for I am more beholden to you than to any one else in the world, and also to my good lady and foster mother, your wife, who has reared me as if I were her own child. If it be God's will that I shall

sometime become king, ask of me then what you will."

"Sir," said Sir Hector, "I ask that you make my son Sir Kay, your foster brother, the steward of all your lands."

"That shall be done," said Arthur, "and more. He shall have that office as long as I live."

Then the three went to the Archbishop of Canterbury and related to him the story of Merlin and all that had occurred. At his request they told no one else.

At the command of the archbishop on Twelfth day, which is the sixth of January, all the great lords assembled in the churchyard. Each tried to draw forth the sword, and each failed. Then the untitled people came and tried. Everyone failed until at last Arthur stepped forward. He hardly more than touched the sword when it came away in his hand.

At this many of the great lords were angry.

"He is but a boy," they said, "and not of high blood."

They refused to believe the story of his birth told by Merlin and Sir Hector. And because of all the quarreling, it was decided to have another trial at Candlemas, which fell in the month of February. Again Arthur was victorious. Then the great lords decreed that there should be another trial at Easter, and again Arthur succeeded. Next they decided to have a final trial at the feast of the Pentecost, which fell in May.

Meanwhile, Merlin advised the archbishop to see that Arthur had a bodyguard. So the archbishop selected several knights whom the former king, Uther, had trusted. These were Sir Ulfius and Sir Brastias and Sir Bedivere; Sir Geraint and Sir Hector and Sir Kay were also chosen. These brave men formed a bodyguard for Arthur until the feast of the Pentecost.

At this time Arthur again drew out the sword from the anvil. Then the common people, who had so far let the lords have their will, cried out:

"We will have Arthur for our king, and we will have no more delay, for we see that it is God's will that he shall be our ruler."

Then all the people knelt down, high and low, rich and poor, and begged Arthur's pardon for the delay he had undergone. Arthur forgave them, and taking his sword, reverently placed it on the great altar beside which the archbishop stood. This was a sign that he meant to dedicate himself and his sword to God.

Afterward the crowning was held, and all the brave men and fair ladies in the land were present. The lords wore beautiful robes of velvet and ermine, with gold and jewels on their breast-plates. The ladies' robes were of purple and white and scarlet and gold and blue, and they wore many pearls and rubies and diamonds, so that all the place where they were assembled was glowing with light and color.

But Arthur, who wore a plain white robe, did not think of the beauty and richness. He was very grave, knowing that he was about to take a solemn oath. He bowed his head, while the archbishop set upon it the golden crown, which gleamed with jewels. Then he stood up before his people, and vowed that he would be a good king and always do justice. All the people uncovered their heads and vowed to serve and obey him; and when he smiled kindly on them as he rode slowly through the throng, they threw up their caps and shouted joyfully: "Long live King Arthur! Long live the King!"

King Arthur chose worthy men for his officers, making Sir Kay steward as he had promised; Sir Ulfius he made chamberlain, and Sir Brastias warden. Arthur gave offices also to Sir Hector and Sir Bedivere and Sir Geraint.

After his crowning the king set about righting all the wrongs that had been done since the death of King Uther. He gave back the lands and money that had been taken from widows and orphans, and would permit no unkindness to any of his subjects. Thus, at the very beginning of his reign, his people began to call him



# THE GOOD SWORD EXCALIBUR

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Soon after the crowning of King Arthur, he was journeying through the land with Merlin, the wise old magician, when they met a knight who challenged Arthur to a combat. The two fought, and at last the knight wounded Arthur severely. In the end the king was victorious, but he had lost so much blood that he could go no farther. Merlin took him to a good hermit who healed his wound in three days. Then the king departed with Merlin, and as they were slowly riding along he said:

"I am still weak from the blood I have lost, and my sword is broken."

"Do not fear," said Merlin. "You shall lose no more blood and you shall have a good sword. Ride on trustfully with me."

They rode in silence until they came to a lake, large and quiet, and as beautiful in color as a pearl. While Arthur was looking at its beauty, he became suddenly aware of three tall women, with fair, sweet faces, standing on the bank.

"Who are they?" the king asked.

"Three queens who shall help you at your worst need," answered Merlin. "Now look out upon the lake again."

Arthur turned his eyes upon the lake and saw that in the distance a slight mist had arisen. Through it the figure of a lady glided over the surface of the water. Her robe appeared to be made of waves which streamed away in flowing curves from her body. Her head and shoulders seemed wrapped in foam tinted with the colors of the rainbow, and her arms glittered with sparkles which came from bubbles of water. She was so wonderful that Arthur looked at her for some time before he asked softly:

"Who is she?"

"She is the Lady of the Lake," said Merlin. "She lives in a rock in the middle of the lake. See, she is coming toward us. Look at what is beyond her in the water."

Arthur looked and saw rising above the surface of the water an arm clothed in pure white. This arm held a huge cross-hilted sword, so brilliant that Arthur's eyes were dazzled.

When the Lady of the Lake approached nearer, he said:

"Damsel, what sword is that? I wish it were mine, for I have none."

The lady smiled, saying:

"Step into yonder boat, row to the sword, and take it, together with the scabbard."

So Arthur entered a little boat that was tied to the shore, and rowed out to the sword. As he took it and the scabbard, all gleaming with jewels, the hand and arm vanished into the water. And when Arthur looked about, the three queens and the Lady of the Lake were also gone.

As Arthur, still gazing at the sword, rowed to shore, Merlin said to him:

"My lord Arthur, which pleases you more, sword or scabbard?"

"In truth, the sword," replied the king.

"Let me assure you," said Merlin, smiling gravely, "that the scabbard is worth ten of the sword. While you have it with you you shall never lose blood, no, no matter how sorely you are wounded. So see that you guard it well."

The king, who was looking at the sword, sighed.

"There is writing on the sword," he said.

"True, my lord, written in the oldest tongue in the world."

"*Take me* on one side," said Arthur, "and *Cast me away* on the other. I am glad to take the sword, but it saddens me to think of casting it away."

Merlin's face grew sad, too. He was so wise that he knew what was going to happen in the future, and he was well aware that when the time came to cast the sword away, much evil would have befallen the good King Arthur. But he knew that the time was yet very far off; so he said:

"You have taken the sword. Now use it to make justice and right prevail in all the land. Do not think of casting it away until you must."

Arthur grew joyful again as he felt the strength of the good sword in his hand, and the two rode cheerfully forward through the country.

## THE GREAT FEAST & WHAT FOLLOWED

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Although Arthur had been crowned king, he was by no means sure that all the nobles of the land would accept him as ruler. In accordance with the custom of the time, he gave a feast in order to find out who were his friends and who his enemies. All who came to the feast would, he supposed, consent to be his followers.

He chose the largest hall in London, and had the walls hung with rich cloths. Upon the floor, strewn with rushes, were placed trestles, and across these, boards were laid. Upon them fine white linen was spread, and golden saltcellars, wine-bowls, and water-jugs set about.

When the guests assembled there were so many that Arthur was delighted, for he thought they were all his friends. He sat at the head of one table, and Sir Hector sat at the head of the other. Arthur wore a gold crown on his head, but it was no brighter than his hair, and the blue turquoises with which it was set were no bluer than his eyes. From his shoulders to the ground hung a magnificent red robe with gold dragons embroidered upon it.

The cooks and squires came in from the kitchen carrying food, their ruddy faces beaming from the heat of the fires. First of all, sixty boars' heads were borne in on silver platters. Then followed, on golden dishes, peacocks and plovers which had been so skillfully cooked that their bright colors were preserved. After the guests had eaten all they cared for of this food, tiny roasted pigs were brought in, and set on all fours upon the tables. By this time, all the gold and silver goblets which had been filled with wine needed refilling. Then the squires carried in beautiful white swans on silver platters, and roasted cranes and curlews on plates that glowed like the sun. After that came rabbits stewed in sweet sauce, and hams and curries. The last course consisted of tarts and preserves, dates and figs and pomegranates.

The supper began about five o'clock, and the guests ate and drank into the night. Although it was past Easter time, the weather was a little cold, and so upon the stone flagging between the two long tables the king ordered fires to be lighted. The bright flames darted up, flashing on the gold threads woven in the hangings of the walls, and on the steel armor of the lords, and gleaming on the

jewels set in the gold and silver goblets which the squires were carrying about. At one side sat a band of musicians singing of the glories of King Arthur, and of the folk-tales of his ancestors and people, accompanying themselves on their harps.

After the guests had risen from the tables and gone to their camps, Arthur sent messengers to them with rich gifts of horses and furs and gold. But most of the lords received the messengers scornfully.

"Take back these gifts to the beardless boy who has come of low blood," they said; "we do not want them. We have come here to give him gifts of hard blows with our hard swords."

The messengers were astonished to hear these things spoken of their good king. Nevertheless, they told Arthur all that had been said to them. He sent no answer back, but he called together all the lords whom he was sure were loyal to him, and asked their advice. They said to him:

"We cannot give you advice, but we can fight."

"You speak well, my lords," answered Arthur, "and I thank you for your courage. Will you take the advice of Merlin? You know that he has done much for me, and he is very wise."

The lords and barons answered that they would do whatever Merlin advised. When Merlin came to the council hall he said:

"I warn you that your enemies are very strong. They have added to their numbers so that now you have against you eleven mighty kings."

At this the lords looked dismayed.

"Unless our lord Arthur has more men than he can find in his own realm," said Merlin, "he will be overcome and slain. Therefore I give you this counsel. There are two brothers across the sea; both are monarchs and both very strong. One is King Ban of Benwick, and the other is King Bors of Gaul. Now these two have an enemy, also a powerful ruler. Therefore, send to the brothers, King Bors and King Ban who are now both in Benwick, and say to them that if they will help Arthur in his war against the eleven kings, Arthur will help them against their common enemy."

"That is very good counsel," said the king and the lords.

So they chose Sir Ulfius and Sir Brastias as messengers, and these two hurried away, hopeful of success. When they reached the town in Benwick where King Bors and King Ban were, knights came forth to receive them and to hear their message. As soon as it was learned from whom they had come they were led into the presence of the brothers. Both were very large men. King Bors was dark, and was dressed in black armor. King Ban was dark, too; the colors that he wore on his shield were green and gold. He was the father of Sir

Lancelot, the knight who afterwards became the most powerful of the followers of Arthur.

The two kings received Sir Ulfius and Sir Brastias with much favor.

"Tell King Arthur," they said, "that we will come to him as quickly as we can."

Then they gave splendid gifts to Sir Ulfius and Sir Brastias, who hurried back to Arthur with the message.

In a short time King Bors and King Ban arrived with ten thousand of their soldiers, and as Arthur had ten thousand, they felt certain of victory. They went into Wales, a country which Arthur's followers knew well, and waited confidently for the enemy.

The eleven kings collected a great host of sixty thousand men, fifty thousand on horseback and ten thousand on foot. They marched towards the place where Arthur was, and set up their camp near a wood about a mile distant. When Merlin knew this, he said to Arthur and the two kings:

"This is my advice: Set upon your enemies at midnight when they are unprepared, and then you will have the advantage."

So Arthur and the two royal brothers and the twenty thousand soldiers crept up to where the eleven kings and their men lay. They took a road circling round the wood. Moving with great caution, they drew nearer and nearer until they could see first the camp fires in a circle around the white tents; and then, against the flashing flames, the dark figures of the men who were keeping guard. Sometimes they were afraid that the noise they made would alarm their enemies, but on account of a heavy windstorm, they were unheard. When his men were quite near, Arthur gave the word of command. The whole army uttered a great shout, and ran forward in companies upon their enemies. In a few minutes they had knocked down most of the tents, and killed many soldiers.

It was a dreadful thing to be attacked in the dark without warning. But the eleven kings were brave men, even though they were so unjust to Arthur in trying to take his kingdom from him, and made a good fight. Perhaps they would have made a better one if they had known how few the men were under Arthur.

Before day dawned, Merlin told Arthur to draw back his troops. This he did, leaving about ten thousand of the enemy dead behind him. He, however, had not lost very many men.

At daybreak Arthur and his followers saw that the lay of the land could be used to their advantage. Between them and the enemy was a narrow road, bounded on one side by a lake, and on the other side by a dense wood. One part of this wood, however, was thin enough to allow men to hide in it.

"Now," said Merlin, "let King Bors and King Ban take their soldiers and hide

in the wood for a long time. Then, my lord Arthur, stand up before the enemy with your men."

"Why shall we do this?" asked Arthur.

"Because," said the wise old man, "when the eleven kings see how few in number your troops are, they will let you proceed down the passage. They will think that if you march close to them they can overcome you. But you can fill up this narrow road with more and more men from the wood. Then the enemy cannot surround you."

"That seems very good," said Arthur.

"And at last," continued Merlin, "when the eleven kings are weary, let King Bors and King Ban come forth. Then surely the courage of our enemies will fail."

The plan was carried out. Arthur's men marched down the passage. The green wood was on one side, and on the other was the lake, the water of which was so clear that it reflected the bodies of the soldiers with their shields and helmets. The sun shone on their armor. The little birds in the woods sang as they passed. But the men were thinking of nothing but the expected battle.

When they had come close to the enemy, they saw the eleven kings all in a row, mounted on big handsome horses. Their fifty thousand men were behind them. Suddenly these rode forward and the battle began.

It was a fierce fight. In a very short time the field was covered with overthrown men and horses. Broken shields and helmets lay on the ground, and many of the knights who had been fighting on horseback were unhorsed, and were fighting on foot. Arthur galloped here and there among his enemies, conquering with his trusty sword all with whom he fought. The woods and the water rang with his sword strokes. The noise drowned the sweet songs of the birds, but still they sang, and flew about gaily, all unaware of the grim death-struggle going on beneath them.

Finally the time arrived for bringing forward King Bors and his men. The great dark king went thundering down upon his enemies. When the King of Orkney saw him coming, he cried:

"Oh, we are in great danger! I see King Bors, one of the best and bravest kings in the world, and he is helping our enemy."

Then the other kings were astonished, for they did not know that Arthur had sent outside his country for help.

"But we will fight on," they said, "no matter how powerful he is."

While they were still fighting, but with great loss of courage, they heard the loud sounds made by the hoofs of other tramping horses, and King Ban rode down on them, followed by his men. His black brows were frowning, and his

green and gold colors glittered in the sun.

"Alas, alas!" cried the King of Orkney, "now in truth are we lost, for here is another king, no less great than his brother Bors. But we must neither flee nor yield."

The eleven kings, being agreed to this, continued the battle, though so many of their men were killed that the King of Orkney wept. When he saw some of his men running away, he wept still more, for he thought it was better to die than to be a coward.

Though they did not intend to run away, the eleven kings thought it would be wise to retreat to a little copse near by. It was late and they were tired and wished to rest before fighting again. King Bors and King Ban could not help admiring these rulers.

"In truth," said King Ban, "they are the bravest men I ever saw. I would they were your friends."

"Indeed, so would I," replied Arthur; "but I have no hope of that, for they are determined to destroy me, and so we must fight on."

At this moment Merlin rode up on his great black horse.

"Have you not done enough?" he cried to Arthur. "Of their sixty thousand men there are left but fifteen thousand. It is time to stop, I say. If you fight on, they will win the day. The tide will turn against you."

Arthur hesitated and Merlin said:

"The eleven kings have a great trouble coming of which they are ignorant. The Saracens have landed in their countries to the number of over forty thousand. So your enemies will have so much fighting to do that they will not attack you again for three years."

Then Arthur was glad, for it had grieved him deeply to fight so long and to lose his good soldiers.

"We will fight no more," he said.

"That is well," replied Merlin. "Now give presents to your soldiers, for to-day they have proved themselves equal to the best fighters in the world."

"True, indeed!" exclaimed King Bors and King Ban.

So Arthur gave gifts to his own men; and a great deal of gold to the brother kings, both for themselves and for their soldiers. And the two kings went home rejoicing.

# ARTHUR'S COURT & THE ORDER OF THE ROUND TABLE

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After Arthur had proved his prowess in his contest with the eleven kings, he decided to establish his Court and the Order of the Round Table. The place he chose was the city of Camelot in Wales, which had a good situation, being built upon a hill. He called the wise Merlin and ordered him to make a great palace on the summit of the hill. Through his powers of enchantment, Merlin was able to do this very quickly, and within a week the king and his personal attendants were settled in the palace.

The main part consisted of a great Assembly Hall built of white marble, the roof of which seemed to be upheld by pillars of green and red porphyry, and was surmounted by magnificent towers. The outside walls of the hall were covered with beautiful rows of sculpture. The lowest row represented wild beasts slaying men. The second row represented men slaying wild beasts. The third represented warriors who were peaceful, good men. The fourth showed men with growing wings. Over all was a winged statue with the face of Arthur. Merlin meant to show by means of the first row that formerly evil in men was greater than good; by the second that men began to conquer the evil in themselves, which in time caused them to become really good, noble, and peace-loving men, as in the third row. And finally, through the refining influence of Good King Arthur and his wise helpers, men would grow to be almost as perfect as the angels.

The main doorway was in the shape of an arch, upheld by pillars of dark yellow marble. The hall was lighted by fourteen great windows, through which the light streamed in soft colors upon the marble floors. Between these windows, and along the cornices, were beautiful decorations. There were carvings in white marble of birds and beasts and twining vines. There was mosaic work of black and yellow and pink marble and of lapis lazuli, as blue as a lake when the clear sun shines full upon its surface. Under the windows were many stone shields, beneath each of which was the name of a knight. Some shields were blazoned with gold, some were carved, and some were blank. The walls were hung with beautiful tapestries which had been woven by the ladies of the land for Arthur's new palace. On each had been pictured some episode from the life of King



Arthur; the drawing of the magic sword from the anvil, the finding of the good sword Excalibur, his deeds of justice and acts of kindness, and his many battles and wars.

The two wings of the palace contained the dining hall and kitchen and the living apartments of all the members of the court who made their home with the king. The dining hall was only a little less beautiful than Arthur's great Assembly Hall. The walls were hung with cloths of scarlet and gold. The deep fireplace was supported by four bronze pillars. In the middle of the room were long tables made of oak boards set on ivory trestles. At a banquet the walls were hung with garlands of flowers or festoons of branches.

The great kitchen had stone walls and stone flagging. The fireplace was so large that there was room for a whole ox to be roasted, and above hung cranes from which half a dozen kettles could be suspended, and pots of such a size that pigs could be boiled whole in them. All about the walls were cupboards. Some were full of plates of wood, iron, steel, silver, and gold, and flagons, cups, bowls, and saltcellars of gold and silver. Others were used for the storing of cold meats and fruits. There were several tables on which the cooked food was cut, and benches upon which the cooks rested when they were tired of serving the hungry eaters.

Well might they have grown tired.

Supper, the most important meal of the day, lasted from three until six, and often longer. But the cooks, and the little scullion boys who washed the pots and pans, and the attendants who carried in the food to the dining hall, all wore contentment and happiness on their faces as they hurried about with their long blouses tucked out of harm's way; for to serve King Arthur and his guests was considered a real privilege.

The sleeping rooms were furnished with chests, and chairs, and beds spread with fine linen and with ermine-lined covers. Hangings of various colors were upon the walls. On the floors were strewn rushes, and among them was thrown mint which gave forth an agreeable odor.

After Arthur, his officers, and his servants had been in the palace a few days, the king formally established his Court. He invited all the knights who cared to do so to come with their families and retinues and live with him. Some preferred to remain in their own castles, but others gladly went to live with the king. Soon all were comfortably settled.

The king's officers were very important members of Arthur's court. First of these came the Archbishop of Canterbury, who held the highest place in the king's regard. It was his duty to conduct the church services for Arthur and his followers, and to christen, marry, and bury the people of Camelot. Next, Sir

Ulfius as chamberlain superintended the care of the king's rooms. Sir Brastias, who was warden, superintended the servants. Sir Kay, who was steward, had charge of all the food and the kitchen. Sir Hector, as treasurer, took care of the king's gold and rendered the accounts. Sir Geraint managed all the tournaments and outdoor sports of the knights and squires. There were other officers to help these, and all did their work faithfully and lovingly.

The knights whom Arthur chose to be members of his Round Table were mostly selected from these officers. As members of this order there were one hundred and fifty of the knights who had shown themselves especially brave in battle and who were devoted followers of the king. Next to being king, the greatest honor which could fall to a warrior was to be made a member of the Round Table, for all who belonged to the order were dedicated to the service of God and mankind. There is no glory greater than such a dedication.

In his great hall Arthur had placed a huge table, made round in shape so that there should be neither head nor foot, a higher place nor a lower place. Arthur wished all who sat there to be equals. These chosen knights were to give him council in times of peace and of war.

It was a solemn hour when the knights took their places. The Archbishop of Canterbury blessed them and their seats. Then each one came to Arthur, who stood at the top of the Assembly Hall, and did him homage. Next they took their vows. They promised to be brave and good, never false, or mean, or cruel. If anyone with whom they fought begged for mercy, they would show him mercy. And they vowed never to fight for a wrong cause or for money. Each year at the feast of the Pentecost they were to repeat these vows.

Other members of Arthur's Court were old, brave knights who could no longer fight, but who liked to be near the king and his warriors, and gave the wisdom of age and experience to his councils; young, ambitious, and promising knights who had had but little real experience in battle; and faithful squires who had had no real experience at all. Boys from six to fourteen years were pages. There were others who transformed Arthur's Court to a place of grace and beauty,—the mothers, wives, sisters, and daughters of the warriors.

Although they did not help in the councils of war, these ladies were of great assistance in training the knights to be tender and courteous. They taught the little pages good manners and unselfishness. They assisted the knights in removing their armor when they came in tired from riding or fighting. They sat with Arthur and the knights in the evening in the dining-hall, singing or playing upon harps, or listening to the tales that were told. When the knights were away the ladies stayed in their own chambers, hearing wise readings from the Archbishop of Canterbury, or other learned men, listening to Merlin's words of

wisdom, and embroidering the beautiful hangings and cushions which were to adorn the palace.

It was a month before Arthur's Court was established, and during that time the city of Camelot was a scene of continual merriment. The people of the place were glad that the king had come, for that meant much gain for them. Those of them who did not live in the palace had their houses or shops on the streets which wound about the foot of the hill. Many of the shops belonged to armorers, who had armor of all sorts for any one who would buy. They were glad in their turn to buy the swords of famous knights which had been used in great battles, for such weapons they could always sell again at a good price. These shopkeepers and the servants and the squires and the warriors all united to make the city of Camelot a beautiful one, for the sake of their king. The streets were kept strewn with rushes and flowers. Rich awnings and silken draperies were hung from the houses.

All day long processions passed, made up of the followers of all those lords who gave allegiance to the king. They carried the banners of their masters, crimson, white, or scarlet, gold, silver, or azure, making the streets glow with color. The marching squires wore ornamented blouses, drawn in at the waist, long silk stockings, and shoes of embroidered leather. The bowmen were dressed in green kirtles, rather shorter than those of the squires, and wore dark woolen hose; they carried their bows and arrows slung across their shoulders. The servants were dressed in much the same way, except that their blouses were longer and of various colors. Many knights rode in the processions, their long plumes waving in the wind, their armor shining, and their falcons perched upon their wrists.

All day long, too, bands of musicians played on flutes and timbrels and tabors and harps; bands of young men and women sang songs in praise of the king; story-tellers went about relating old tales of famous heroes. The young men showed their strength by tumbling and wrestling, and their grace by dancing; the young women also danced.

The wise Merlin often passed along the streets, walking silently among the merry throngs of people. Sometimes the little Dagonet danced at his side, Dagonet the king's jester, a tiny man who made merriment for the Court with his witty sayings. He always wore a tight-fitting red blouse and a peaked cap ornamented with bells, and he carried a mock scepter in the shape of a carved ivory stick.

Whenever Arthur appeared before his people, church-bells were joyously rung and trumpets were sounded. The king, as he rode, distributed presents to the poor people:—capcs, coats, and mantles of serge, and bushels of pence. In a

dining-hall at the palace, feasts were held on those days for them, and they were also open for all the people who might come.

When the weather was beautiful, tables were placed on the sward outside the palace, and those who cared to, ate under the shade of the trees, listening to the music of the blackbirds, whose singing was almost as loud as that of the chorus of damsels who sang in the palace. Every hour the servants carried in and out great quarters of venison, roasted pheasants and herons, and young hawks, ducks, and geese, all on silver platters. Curries and stews and tarts were innumerable. In the midst of the sward a silver fountain had been set from which flowed sweet wine. Even the great feasts of the year, which were held at Christmas, upon the day of the Passover, at Pentecost, upon Ascension day, and upon St. John's day, were not as wonderful as these feasts, when the king held holiday with his people.

On these days of merriment, when the people were not eating or drinking or marching in processions, they were at the tournament field, watching the combats. Here the best of Arthur's knights, mounted on strong horses and wearing heavy armor, were ranged on two sides of the field. Behind each row was a pavilion filled with ladies. Four heralds stood ready to blow the trumpets which gave the signal for the combats. Each herald wore crimson silk stockings and crimson velvet kirtles, tight at the waist, and reaching half-way to the knee.

When it was time to begin the heralds blew the trumpets, the ladies bent over eagerly, and the knights spurred their horses forward, riding with their lances in rest. In a moment clouds of dust arose, circling up as high as the plumes on the knights' helmets, and their lances crashed against each other's shields. Many of the lances broke. Sometimes the shock of contact overthrew a knight. But no one was hurt, for the good King Arthur had ordered that the combats should be friendly.

When the jousting had lasted for several hours, those knights who had shown themselves the stronger, received prizes from the ladies. The prizes were suits of armor ornamented with gold, and swords with jeweled hilts. The knight who, of all, was the strongest, chose the lady whom he considered most beautiful, and crowned her "The Queen of Love and Beauty."

During the month of feasting, Arthur made knights of some of the squires. A young squire was first obliged to show his skill in tilting at the quintain. Then his father presented him with falcons and sparrowhawks for hunting, and arms and robes. He also gave robes and arms to his son's companions, and, to their mothers and sisters, furs and embroidered robes, and belts of gold. Finally he gave money to the singers and players, and servants, and to the poor people of Camelot.

At about sunset the young squire went into the church, where the Archbishop of Canterbury held a solemn service. The youth took the armor which he had chosen, and placed it on the floor in front of the altar. He was then left alone, and all night long he prayed fervently to God to give him strength to be a noble and true knight. In the morning the king came to the church, attended by his nobles and by the archbishop. The squire laid his sword on the altar, thus signifying his devotion to Christ and his determination to lead a holy life. King Arthur bound the sword and spurs on the young man, and, taking Excalibur, he smote him lightly on the shoulder with it, saying, "Be thou a true and faithful knight."

Then the squire took a solemn oath to protect all who were in distress, to do right, to be a pure knight, and to have faith in God. After that the Archbishop of Canterbury preached a solemn sermon.

When the month of feasting and holiday was ended, the members of the Court returned to their usual habits of life. The Knights of the Round Table went forth to right wrongs and to enforce the law. All who were in distress came to the king for help. And to the whole country Arthur's Court was famous as a place where unkindness was never done, and where truth, justice, and love reigned.

# KING ARTHUR & THE PRINCESS GUINEVERE

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After Arthur had been established in his Court for some time, his neighbor, Leodogran, the king of Cameliard, asked him for help in a battle. To this Arthur cheerfully consented, and gathered his warrior men about him.

It chanced, as he and his men were marching past the castle of Leodogran to meet the enemy, the king's daughter, Guinevere, who was the most beautiful lady in all that land, stood on the castle wall to watch her father's allies pass. Now she did not know, of all the knights who rode by, which was Arthur. Many wore gold and jewels on their armor, while the king's armor was plain.

But Arthur saw her bending over the wall. She was slender and graceful; her black hair fell in two long heavy braids over each shoulder; her eyes were large and black. And Arthur felt a warm love spring from his heart for her, and said to himself:

"If I win this battle for Leodogran, I shall ask him to give me the princess Guinevere for wife."

His love for Guinevere made him fight even more bravely than usual, and he soon won the battle. After he had returned to Camelot, he told his knights that he wished to marry the princess. They were very glad, because they, too, had seen her and thought her the most beautiful lady they had ever beheld.

Then Arthur said:

"I will send my three good knights, Sir Ulfius and Sir Brastias and Sir Bedivere, to King Leodogran to ask for Guinevere."

The three knights set forth gayly, feeling certain that King Leodogran would be glad to marry his daughter to their great Arthur. When, however, they came to the castle of Leodogran with their request, the king hesitated. He bade them wait for a little while in the room adjoining his large hall. Then he said to himself:

"Arthur has helped me, indeed. I know, too, that he is powerful. But I hear strange stories of his birth. There are people who say that he is not a king's son. However great he is, I cannot give him my only daughter unless he is really a true king, born of royal blood."

He called the oldest knight in his kingdom and said to him:

"Do you know anything about Arthur's birth?"

The old man looked very wise and said:

"There are two men who do know; the younger of them is twice as old as I am. They are Merlin, and Bleys, the master of Merlin. Bleys has written down the secret of Arthur's birth in a book."

Then King Leodogran laughed a little and said:

"My friend, your words have not helped me much. If Arthur had not helped me in my time of need more than you have helped me now, I should have been lost indeed. Go and call Sir Ulfius and Sir Brastias and Sir Bedivere."

So the old man brought in the three knights, and Leodogran said to them:

"I hear strange tales of your king's birth. Some say that he is indeed the son of the late King Uther, but others say that he is the son of Sir Hector. Do you believe that he is Uther's son?"

They said "Yes," and then told King Leodogran that Sir Hector had brought up King Arthur as his son, for fear that those who wanted the throne would kill the child; and that Arthur was undoubtedly Uther's son.

Still King Leodogran could not make up his mind. He bade the three lords remain with him for a few days.

Meanwhile the beautiful Queen Bellicent came to the Court, and Leodogran asked her advice.

"Do you think Arthur is a great king?" he asked. "Will he always be great?"

"He is very great," said the queen. "And all his people love him. Perhaps he has not many lords, but their deep love makes up for their small number."

"That may be true," replied the king.

"Besides that," added the queen, "they are good men. As you know, the Knights of the Round Table are bound by vows to be kind and true and merciful and helpful."

"I have heard it," said the king.

"Moreover," went on Queen Bellicent, "Arthur has powerful friends: Merlin, the magician, and the Lady of the Lake, who gave him his sword Excalibur, and the three fair queens, who will help him when he needs help most."

"Yes, yes," said King Leodogran, "if all this is true, Arthur must prevail over his enemies. But is he the son of King Uther and Queen Yguerne? You are the daughter of Queen Yguerne by an earlier marriage, and, therefore, Arthur's half-sister if Arthur is really Uther's son. You ought surely to know the truth."

Bellicent waited a little while, and then said:

"King Leodogran, I do not know what the truth is. There are two stories: the story Merlin tells and the story Bleys tells. Merlin says that Arthur is Uther's son, and indeed I should like to believe it."

"But you are not sure?" asked the king.

"I am not sure. For my mother Yguerne was dark, and King Uther was dark. Their hair and eyes were black like mine. Yet Arthur's hair is as bright as gold. Besides, there is the story of old Bleys."

"What is his story?"

"He says that Uther died, weeping because he had no heir. Then Bleys and Merlin, who were present at his death, passed together out of the castle. It was a stormy night, and as they walked along by the lake they were forced by the roar of the tempest to look out upon the waves, whipped by the wind.

"Suddenly they saw a ship on the water. It had the shape of a winged dragon. All over its decks stood a multitude of people shining like gold. Then the ship vanished, and a number of great waves began to roll in towards shore. The ninth of these waves seemed as large as half the sea. It was murmuring with strange voices and rippling with flames. In the midst of the flames was a little fair-haired baby who was borne to Merlin's feet. Merlin stooped and picked it up, and cried, 'The King! Here is an heir for Uther!' This, King Leodogran, is the story Bleys told me before he died."

King Leodogran wondered very much. Then he said:

"But did you not question Merlin about this?"

"Yes," answered Queen Bellicent. "I asked him if this story of Bleys was true. He would only answer me with a riddle."

As King Leodogran was still silent, she said:

"Do not fear to give your daughter to Arthur, for he will be the greatest king the world has ever seen."

Leodogran felt less doubtful. While he was thinking, he fell asleep and had a dream. He saw in his dream a field covered with mist and smoke, and a phantom king standing in the cloud. He heard a voice which said, "This is not our king; this is not the son of Uther." But suddenly the mist disappeared and the king stood out in heaven, crowned.

King Leodogran took this dream for a good sign. He called the three knights, Sir Ulfius and Sir Brastias and Sir Bedivere, and said to them:

"Say to your king that I will give him Guinevere for his wife."

So the three hastily returned to King Arthur, who was overjoyed with their message.

In the month of May he sent Sir Lancelot, the son of King Ban, for Guinevere. When she came, the Archbishop of Canterbury married them. And he blessed them and said that they, with the help of the Knights of the Round Table, must do much good for the land.



## THE COMING of GARETH

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The beautiful Queen Bellicent had many sons, all of whom had gone out in the world except the youngest. His name was Gareth. His two brothers, Gawain and Modred, were with the good King Arthur, and Gareth longed to join them. His mother, however, would not let him go.

"You are not yet a man," she said. "You are only a child. Stay a little longer with me."

So Gareth stayed. One day he came to his mother and said:

"Mother, may I tell you a story?"

"Gladly," she replied.

"Then, mother, once there was a golden egg which a royal eagle had laid, away up in a tree. It was so high up that it could hardly be seen. But a youth, who though poor was brave, saw it, and longed for it. He knew that if he could get it, it would bring wealth and prosperity to him. So he tried to climb. One who loved him stopped him, saying, 'You will fall and be killed if you try to reach that height.' Therefore the poor boy did not climb, and so did not fall; but he pined away with longing till his heart broke and he died."

Queen Bellicent answered:

"If the person who held him back had loved him, that person would have climbed, and found the egg, and given it to the youth."

"That could not be," said Gareth. "Mother, suppose the egg were not gold, but steel, the same steel that Arthur's sword Excalibur is made of."

The queen grew pale, for she now understood his meaning.

But Gareth spoke on:

"Dear mother, the gold egg is the glory to be won at Arthur's Court; I am the poor youth, and you are the one who holds me back. Mother, let me go!"

Then Bellicent wept, and she said:

"Oh, my son, do not leave me. You love me more than Gawain and Modred. You are all I have left in the world."

But Gareth replied:

"Mother, I waste my strength here."

"No, no," she said. "You shall hunt; you shall follow the deer and the fox,

and so grow strong. Then I will find you a beautiful wife, and we shall all live together till I die."

Gareth shook his head.

"No, mother. I do not want a wife until I have proved myself to be a worthy and brave knight. I wish to follow Arthur, my good king and uncle."

"Perhaps he is not the true king and your uncle," Bellicent said. "At least wait a little till he has shown himself to be the greatest king in the world. Stay with me."

"Nay, mother," he said. "I must go."

Then the queen thought of a plan which she hoped would soon make him willing to stay home.

"If I let you go, my son, you must make me a promise. The promise will prove your love to me."

"I will make a hundred promises," cried young Gareth, "if you will only let me go."

"Then," she said, "you must go in disguise to the court of Arthur. You must hire yourself out as a kitchen boy. You shall wash the pots and pans for a whole year and tell no one that you are the son of a queen."

Queen Bellicent was sure that Gareth would not wish to make such a promise. He was silent a long, long time. He had hoped to take part at once with the Knights of the Round Table in great deeds. At last he said:

"I may be a kitchen boy and still be noble in heart and mind. Besides, I can look on at the tournaments. I shall see King Arthur and Sir Lancelot and Sir Kay. Yes, mother, I will go."

Queen Bellicent was very sad. All the days before Gareth's departure her eyes followed him until he felt that he could not bear to see her grieve longer. So in the middle of the night he rose quietly and woke two of his faithful servants. They dressed themselves like plowmen and started towards Camelot.

It was Easter time and the young grass was a bright green. The birds were beginning their chirping, although it was not yet light. As the dawn came, they saw the early morning mist sweeping over the mountain and forest near Arthur's city of Camelot. Sometimes the mist drew away and showed in the distance the towers gleaming like silver.

One of the servants said:

"Let us go no farther, my lord Gareth. I am afraid. That is a fairy city."

The second said:

"Yes, lord, let us turn back. I have heard that Arthur is not the real king, but a changeling brought from fairyland in a great wave all flame. He has done all his deeds with the help of Merlin's enchantment."

The first one spoke again:

"Lord Gareth, that is no real city. It is a vision."

But Gareth laughed and said:

"Arthur is real flesh and blood, a brave man, and a just king. Come with me to the gate of his city, and do not be afraid."

When they reached the gate of the city, they stared in amazement. It was made of silver and mother-of-pearl. In the center was carved the figure of the Lady of the Lake, with her arms outstretched in the form of a cross. In one hand she held a sword, and in the other a censer. On both sides of her figure was carved the story of the wars of King Arthur. Above all were the figures of the three queens who were to help Arthur in time of need.

The three looked till their eyes were dazzled. Then they heard a peal of music, and the gate slowly opened. An old man with a long gray beard came out to greet them, and returning led them up past the gardens and groves and roofs and towers of Camelot to Arthur's great palace on the summit of the hill.

Gareth hardly thought of the splendors of the palace. He approached the arched doorway of the Assembly Hall, thinking only as his heart beat quickly, that at last he was to see the good King Arthur. Even before he entered he heard the voice of the king. For it was one of the days when Arthur was giving judgment to his people.

The king sat on a throne made of gold and ivory and ebony. On its arms and back were carved great dragons. Arthur wore a gold crown which was not brighter than his own beautiful hair and beard. His blue eyes were as calm and clear as the sky in summer time. His trusty knights stood about him on each side of the throne. The tallest of these, who had a worn, browned face, and piercing dark eyes, under frowning brows, must be, Gareth knew, the famous knight, Sir Lancelot.

As Gareth entered, a widow came forward and cried to Arthur:

"Hear me, oh, King! Your father, King Uther, took away a field from my husband, who is now dead. The king promised us gold, but he gave us no gold, nor would he return our field."

Then Arthur said:

"Which would you rather have, the gold or the field?"

The woman wept, saying:

"Oh, King, my dead husband loved the field. Give it back to me."

"You shall have your field again," said Arthur, "and besides I will give you three times the amount of gold it is worth to pay you for the years King Uther had it."

Gareth thought that Arthur was indeed a just king. And while this was

passing through his mind, another widow came forward and cried:

"Hear me, oh, King! Heretofore you have been my enemy. You killed my husband with your own hands. It is hard for me to ask justice or favor of you. Yet I must. My husband's brother took my son and had him slain, and has now stolen his land. So I ask you for a knight who will do battle and get my son's land for me, and revenge me for his death."

Then a good knight stepped forward and said:

"Sir King, I am her kinsman. Let me do battle for her and right her wrongs."

But Sir Kay, Arthur's foster brother, said:

"Lord Arthur, do not help a woman who has called you her enemy in your own hall."

"Sir Kay," replied Arthur, "I am here to help all those who need help in my land. This woman loved her lord, and I killed him because he rebelled against me. Let her kinsman go and do battle against the man who has wronged her. Bring him here, and I shall judge him. If he is guilty he shall suffer."

While Gareth was still listening to the king's words, a messenger entered from Mark, the king of Cornwall. He carried a wonderful gold cloth which he laid at Arthur's feet, saying:

"My lord, King Mark sends you this as a sign that he is your true friend."

But Arthur said:

"Take back the cloth. When I fight with kings who are worthy men, after I have conquered them I give them back their lands, and make them my subject-kings and Knights of the Round Table. But Mark is not fit to be a king. He is cruel and false. I will not call him friend."

The messenger stepped back in alarm. Arthur said to him kindly:

"It is not your fault that Mark is unworthy. Stay in this city until you are refreshed and then go back home in safety."

While the king judged other cases, Gareth looked around the great hall. Underneath the fourteen windows he saw three rows of stone shields, and under each shield was the name of a knight. If a knight had done one great deed, there was carving on his shield; if he had done two or more, there were gold markings. If he had done none, the shield was blank. Gareth saw that Sir Lancelot's shield and Sir Kay's glittered with gold. He looked for the shields of his brothers, Sir Gawain and Sir Modred. Sir Gawain's was marked with gold, but Sir Modred's was blank.

Meanwhile, Arthur had judged all the cases. Then Gareth came forward timidly and said:

"Lord King, you see my poor clothes; give me leave to serve for twelve months in your kitchen without telling my name. After that I will fight."

"You are a fair youth," Arthur replied, "and you deserve a better gift. However, since this is all you ask, I will put you under the care of Sir Kay, who is master of the kitchen."

Sir Kay looked at Gareth with scorn.

"This youth has come from some place where he did not get enough to eat," he said, "and so he thinks of nothing but food. Yet if he wants food, he shall have it, provided he does his work well."

Sir Lancelot, who stood near by, said:

"Sir Kay, you understand dogs and horses well, but not men. Look at this youth's face; see his broad forehead and honest eyes, and beautiful hands. I believe he is of noble birth, and you should treat him well."

"Perhaps he is a traitor," Sir Kay said. "Perhaps he will poison King Arthur's food. Yet I believe he is too stupid to be a traitor. If he were not stupid, or if he were noble, he would have asked for a different gift. He would have asked for a horse and armor. Let him go to my kitchen."

So Gareth went to the kitchen. And there he worked faithfully at hard tasks, such as cutting wood and drawing water. Sir Lancelot spoke to him kindly whenever he passed him, but Sir Kay was always very strict and severe. Sometimes Gareth grew discouraged and wished his mother had not exacted such a promise of him.

Whenever there was a tournament he was happy. He liked to watch the horses prancing, and the brave knights riding, with the sun shining on their helmets and lances. And he would say to himself:

"Only wait till the twelve months have passed, and then I shall ask King Arthur to let me do some brave deed. Perhaps some one will come to the hall and demand to have a wrong righted. Then I will beg the king to let me do that act of justice."

Such thoughts kept him cheerful. And indeed, before many weeks, his chance came for doing a great deed.

## THE STORY OF SIR GARETH & LYNETTE

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Gareth served in the kitchen of the king only one month, for his mother became sorry for the promise she had asked of him, and sent armor for him to Arthur's Court, with a letter to the king telling who the youth was. With great joy Gareth then went to Arthur and said:

"My lord, I can fight as well as my brother Gawain. At home we have proved it. Then make me a knight,—in secret, for I do not want the other knights to know my name. Make me a knight, and give me permission to right the first wrong that we hear of."

The king said gravely:

"You know all that my knights must promise?"

"Yes, my lord Arthur. I am willing to promise all."

"I will make you my knight in secret, since you wish it," Arthur said, "except that I must tell Sir Lancelot. He is my dearest knight, and I keep no secrets from him."

Gareth said that he would be glad to have Sir Lancelot know. Accordingly the king spoke to Sir Lancelot about Gareth.

"I have promised him that he may right the first wrong we hear of," said Arthur, "but as he has not yet proved what he can do, I want you to take a horse and follow him when he sets forth. Cover up the great lions on your shield so that he will not know who you are." Sir Lancelot agreed. Then Gareth was secretly made a knight.

That same day a beautiful young damsel came into Arthur's hall. She had cheeks as pink as apple blossoms, and very sharp eyes.

"Who are you, damsel?" asked the king, "and what do you need?"

"My name is Lynette," she said, "and I am of noble blood. I need a knight to fight for my sister Lyonors, a lady, also noble, rich, and most beautiful."

"Why must she have a knight?" questioned Arthur.

"My Lord King, she lives in Castle Perilous. Around this castle a river circles three times, and there are three passing-places, one over each circle of the river. Three knights, who are brothers, keep a constant guard over these passing-places. A fourth knight, also a brother, clad in black armor, stands guard in front

of my sister's castle. We have never seen this knight's face or heard his voice, but his brothers tell us he is the most powerful and daring knight in the world. All these four keep my sister a prisoner."

"And why?"

"Because they want her to marry one of them so that they can have her great wealth. She refuses, but they say that they will have their way. In the meantime, they demand that you send Sir Lancelot to fight with them. They hope to overthrow Sir Lancelot, thus proving themselves the greatest warriors in the land. But I believe that Sir Lancelot could overthrow them; therefore, I have come for him."

Arthur remembered his promise to Sir Gareth, and did not speak of Sir Lancelot, but asked:

"Tell me what these four knights, your enemies, are like."

"The three I have talked to are vain and foolish knights, my lord," answered the damsel. "They have no law, and they acknowledge no king. Yet they are very strong, and therefore am I come for Sir Lancelot."

Then Sir Gareth rose up, crying:

"Sir King, give me this adventure."

At this, Sir Kay started up in anger, but Gareth continued:

"My king, you know that I am but your kitchen boy, yet I have grown so strong on your meat and drink that I can overthrow an hundred such knights."

The king looked at him a moment, and said:

"Go, then."

At this all the knights were amazed. The damsel's face flushed with anger.

"Shame, King!" she cried. "I asked you for your chief knight, and you give me a kitchen boy!"

Then, before any one could prevent, she ran from the hall, mounted her horse, and rode out of the city gate. Gareth followed, and at the doorway found a noble war horse which the king had ordered to be given him. Near by were the two faithful servants who had followed him from his mother's home. They held his armor. Gareth put it on, seized his lance and shield, jumped upon his horse, and rode off joyfully.

Sir Kay, who was watching, said to Sir Lancelot:

"Why does the king send my kitchen lad to fight? I will go after the boy and put him to his pots and pans again."

"Sir Kay, do not attempt to do that," said Sir Lancelot. "Remember that the king commanded him to go."

But Sir Kay leaped on his horse and followed Gareth.

Meanwhile, Sir Gareth overtook the damsel and said:

"Lady, I am to right your wrong. Lead and I follow."

But she cried:

"Go back! I smell kitchen grease when you are near. Go back! your master has come for you."

Gareth looked behind and saw that Sir Kay was riding up to him. When Sir Kay was within hearing distance, he shouted:

"Come back with me to the kitchen."

"I will not," said Gareth.

Then Sir Kay rode fiercely at the youth. Gareth, however, struck him from his horse, and then turned to the damsel, saying:

"Lead on; I follow."

She rode for a long time in silence, with Gareth a few paces behind her. At last she stopped and said:

"You have overthrown your master, you kitchen boy, but I do not like you any better for it. I still smell the kitchen grease."

Sir Gareth said, very gently:

"You may speak to me as you will, but I shall not leave you till I have righted your wrong."

"Ah!" she said, scornfully, "you talk like a noble knight, but you are not one," and she again galloped in front of him.

Presently, as they passed a thick wood, a man broke out of it and spoke to them:

"Help! help! they are drowning my lord!"

"Follow! I lead!" shouted Gareth to the damsel, and rushed into the wood. There he found six men trying to drown a seventh. Gareth attacked them with such vigor that they fled. When the rescued man had recovered, he thanked Gareth warmly.

"I am the lord of the castle yonder," he said, "and these are my enemies. You came in time."

Then he begged Gareth and the lady to stay all night in his castle. They agreed, and he led the way. He took them into his large hall and was about to seat them side by side at a dining table. But the damsel said in scorn:

"This is a kitchen boy, and I will not sit by him."

The lord looked surprised. He took Gareth to another table and sat beside him. After they had eaten, he said:

"You may be a kitchen boy, or the damsel may be out of her mind, but whichever is the case, you are a good fighter and you have saved my life."

The next morning Gareth and the damsel set forth. They rode for a while in silence, and then she said:



"Sir Kitchen Boy, although you are so low, I would like to save your life. Soon we are coming to one who will overthrow you; so turn back."

But Gareth refused. In a little while they came to the first circle of the river. The passing-place was spanned by a bridge. On the farther side of the bridge was a beautiful pavilion, draped in silk of gold and crimson colors. In front of it passed a warrior without armor.

"Damsel," he cried, "is this the knight you have brought from Arthur's Court to fight with me?"

"Ah!" she said, "the king scorns you so much that he has sent a kitchen boy to fight with you. Take care that he does not fall on you before you are armed, for he is a knave."

The warrior went inside his tent for his armor, and the damsel said to Gareth: "Are you afraid?"

"Damsel," he said, "I am not afraid. I would rather fight twenty times than hear you speak so unkindly of me. Yet your cruel words have put strength into my arm. I shall fight well."

Then the knight came forth all in armor, and he said:

"Youth, you are a kitchen boy. Go back to your king; you are not fit to fight with me."

Gareth rode at him fiercely, saying:

"I am of nobler blood than you."

He fought so well that soon his enemy was overcome. Then Gareth said:

"Go to Arthur's Court and say that his kitchen boy sent you."

When the knight had departed, Gareth rode on, with the damsel in advance. After a little while she stopped her horse, and when he had caught up with her, she said:

"Youth, I do not smell the kitchen grease so much as I did."

Then she galloped off, laughing over her shoulder, while Gareth followed her, a little more slowly.

When they reached the second circle of the river, the damsel said:

"Here is the brother of the knight you overthrew. He is stronger than the first. You had better go home, kitchen boy."

Gareth answered nothing. Out of the tent by the bridge which crossed the second circle of water, came a knight, clad in armor which glowed like the sun. Lynette shouted to him:

"I bring a kitchen boy who has overthrown your brother."

"Ah!" shouted the knight, and rode fiercely at Sir Gareth.

The two fought for a long time. The warrior was strong, but Sir Gareth was stronger, and at last overthrew him, and sent him back to Arthur's Court.

The damsel Lynette had ridden far ahead of him. When he came near her, she said:

"The knight's horse slipped, and that is why you overcame him. And now are you ready to fight with the third knight, for there he stands?"

At the third and innermost circle of the river stood the third knight, clad not in armor, but in hardened skins. Sir Gareth saw that he was more powerful than his brothers. The two at once began to fight on the bridge, but Sir Gareth's sword could not pierce the hard skins. Again and again he tried and failed. He grew tired, and began to fear that he should be conquered. But all at once, when his strokes were becoming feeble, Lynette cried out to him:

"Well done, good knight! You are no kitchen boy, but a brave lord. Strike for me! Do not lose. You are worthy to be a Knight of the Round Table."

When Sir Gareth heard this, he was so encouraged that he made a final great effort and threw his enemy over the bridge into the water. Then he turned to Lynette, saying:

"Lead; I follow."

But Lynette, proud now of her valiant escort, and humbled and ashamed at her misjudging of him, said:

"No, we shall ride side by side. I am very sorry I called you a kitchen boy, for I know that you are a noble knight."

They rode happily side by side till dusk, when they came in sight of Castle Perilous. Just as they were about to cross the moat, a knight overtook them. It was Sir Lancelot, who had been delayed because he had stopped to help Sir Kay after Sir Gareth had thrown him from his horse.

The great knight, as he rode up to the two in the twilight, seeing only the shields which Sir Gareth had taken from the three knights, thought the young man was an enemy, and attacked him. Sir Lancelot was so strong that he soon overcame the youth.

As he fell, Lynette cried out in shame and sorrow, and Sir Gareth said:

"Oh, I am thrown."

Sir Lancelot knew Sir Gareth's voice, and raised him up, saying:

"I am Lancelot, and I am sorry to have overthrown you, my friend."

Sir Gareth said that it was no dishonor to be beaten by Sir Lancelot. Then the three rode into the castle, and there they met the fourth knight, who was all covered with black armor.

Sir Lancelot wished to fight with him, but Sir Gareth would not permit it.

"This must be my adventure," he said.

Sir Gareth rode at the knight, expecting to meet a very strong man, but he easily unhorsed him. His enemy cried:

"Oh spare my life; I am not a knight."

Then he took off his helmet and showed the face of a young boy.

"My three brothers made me pretend to be a fierce knight," he explained. "They thought it would make people more afraid if they believed we were four strong knights."

Sir Lancelot and Sir Gareth laughed heartily, and so did Lynette. They took the boy into the castle, where Lynette's sister, Lyonors, who was now freed from her money-loving captors, greeted them with much joy. She put before them a great feast, and this time Sir Gareth and Lynette sat side by side. Afterwards a marriage was made between them, and they went to live with King Arthur in Camelot.

## SIR IVAINE

---



Among Arthur's Knights of the Round Table was one who was a mixture of good and bad, as indeed most people are. His name was Sir Ivaine; brave, kind-hearted, and merry; but at the same time fickle, sometimes forgetful of his promises, and inclined to make light of serious things.

One night, in the early spring, the knights and ladies of Arthur's Court were sitting in the dining-hall. The king and Guinevere had withdrawn, but were expected to return. Supper had been served, and the last course, consisting of pomegranate seeds and dates, had just been carried off. A fire had been built in the deep hearth, and the four bronze pillars in front were lighted by the flames. Four little pages in blue and white velvet kirtles sat on stools watching the fire, and perhaps dreaming of the days when they, too, should be warriors and have adventures.

Sir Ivaine was telling of his experience with the Black Knight.

"It was when I was very young," he said; "indeed, I had just been made a knight. Some one told me of the wicked Black Knight who lived, and still lives, in a wood a long way from here. Knowing that he did much evil, I determined to kill him. I rode to the wood where he lived, and in which I found a marble platform. In the middle of it was a sunken space holding a fountain. I walked to this, and following the directions of some writing which was on the stone, picked up a cup that lay at hand, and filling it with water, poured it into the fountain.

"Then a great storm of wind and rain arose, and when it was at its height the Black Knight rode up and began to attack me. We fought for a little while, but he easily overthrew me. Thinking me dead, he rode back, leaving me on the ground. But after a time I was able to mount my horse, and went back to my mother's castle."

At this moment the king and the queen entered, unperceived by any one except Sir Ivaine. The young man, who was always polite, sprang to his feet; then the other knights rose. Sir Kay, who was not always sweet-tempered, said to Sir Ivaine:

"We all know that you are very polite, but you have more courtesy than

bravery."

At that Sir Ivaine said:

"I was almost a boy when the Black Knight overthrew me, but I could conquer him now."

"It is very easy to say that after you have eaten," said Sir Kay. "Almost any knight feels brave and self-satisfied when he has had a good supper of venison."

The king asked what the conversation was about, and Sir Ivaine repeated the story of his adventure, adding:

"And, Sir King, I crave your permission to set forth to-morrow to slay this Black Knight who is a pest in the land."

"I have heard of this man," said the king, "and have often thought of sending some one to punish him. But he lives far away, and it has been necessary heretofore to right first the wrongs nearest home. Yet now his evil deeds and persecutions must cease. To-morrow a company of us will set forth and conquer him and all his people."

The king named some half-dozen of his knights, Sir Ivaine among them, who were to undertake this adventure.

Sir Ivaine was displeased; he thought that the adventure should be his alone. So he rose in the middle of the night and stole away unattended, determined to go in advance of the others and kill the Black Knight. It did not occur to him that in proving himself brave, he was also proving himself disobedient.

He rode forth in the darkness, humming merrily to himself. At daybreak he reached a valley, and as he went through it, saw a great serpent fighting with a lion. Sir Ivaine stopped to watch this curious combat. At first the two fighters seemed evenly matched, but soon the huge serpent wrapped all its folds about the lion and began squeezing it to death. When Sir Ivaine saw this, he drew his sword and killed the serpent.

When the lion was free, it bounded up to Sir Ivaine, and he was afraid that it meant to kill him; but it fawned at his feet like a spaniel. He stroked it, and put his arms about its neck. When he mounted his horse, the beast followed him, refusing to go away. Then Sir Ivaine made up his mind that they were to be companions.

For many days the two kept close together, and at night Sir Ivaine would go to sleep with his head on the lion's neck. One day, as they came to a square castle set in a meadow, some people who stood on the castle walls began to shoot arrows at the lion, but Sir Ivaine stopped them, telling them that the animal was tame.

Then they told him that it was their rule that no one should pass by that castle without doing battle with their lord. Sir Ivaine told them that he was quite

willing to obey their rule; so they opened the castle gate. They said he must make his lion stay outside, but Sir Ivaine refused to do this. He promised, however, to make the lion lie down quietly; then the two were allowed to enter.

The courtyard was a large paved place, in which there were a score of armed men. Presently the lord of the castle came forward. This lord was much larger than Sir Ivaine, and the lion, on seeing him, began to lash its tail. But Sir Ivaine ordered it to be still, and it at once obeyed.

Then Sir Ivaine and the knight battled together. The knight was powerful, but Sir Ivaine was very agile and skillful. He was not able to strike so hard as could his enemy, but he was better able to avoid blows. Therefore it was not long before he got the advantage and overthrew the lord.

When this happened, the lord called for help, and ordered his armed men to kill Sir Ivaine. The whole twenty began to obey this treacherous order, but just as they were about to fall upon Sir Ivaine, the lion bounded among them, roaring savagely. With a few strokes of its powerful paws it disabled the men. Sir Ivaine told the lord of the castle that he must ride to Camelot and give himself up to Arthur to be judged for his treachery. Then Sir Ivaine rode away from the castle; and now that the lion had saved his life, he became very fond of the animal.

After many days of travel, Sir Ivaine reached the forest in the midst of which was the castle of the Black Knight. He rode to the platform of stone, dismounted and poured water into the fountain. As before, a storm arose, and at its height the Black Knight appeared.

He recognized the armor of Sir Ivaine, and said:

"Aha! I see I did not kill you before, but you shall not escape me this time."

"The best man shall win," said Sir Ivaine, cheerfully.

Then the two began a great combat. Their swords clashed so that the noise of the fountain was drowned; they fought so eagerly that they were not even aware of the storm. It was not long before the Black Knight began to grow weak from the many powerful and death-dealing strokes from Sir Ivaine's sword. At last, seeing that he was mortally wounded, the Black Knight turned his horse and galloped in the direction of his castle.

Ordering the lion to stay where it had lain during the combat, Sir Ivaine followed. But he could not quite catch up with the Black Knight, although gaining on him inch by inch. By the time the castle moat was reached, Sir Ivaine was only five feet behind. The horses thundered one after the other over the bridge. The Black Knight rode under the portcullis, or sharp iron gate, which was raised. The instant he was inside, the portcullis fell, in order to shut out Sir Ivaine.

But Sir Ivaine had already passed beneath it, and as it fell his horse was cut

in two. Even the long plume in Sir Ivaine's helmet was shorn off, and lay outside the gate.

Sir Ivaine sprang to his feet and drew his sword to renew his attack upon the Black Knight, but he was already dead, and lay across his panting horse's neck.

Then Sir Ivaine realized what his recklessness had cost him. There he was, alone in a strange castle, the lord of which he had killed. Soon the people of the castle would come and capture him, for he could not escape, since the portcullis was down.

He ran into the castle, and up the stairs leading to the turret. He was fast growing weak from the wounds he had received, and his armor was heavy. Moreover, in spite of his care, it clashed at every step, and he was afraid some one would soon hear him. He had all but reached the top of the stairs when the door of the turret room opened, and a little maiden looked down upon him. He begged her not to cry out, and telling her who he was and what he had done, asked her to hide him.

"I will," she said, "because you are brave and you are wounded, and because you have killed that wicked tyrant, the Black Knight. He does not own this castle at all; it belongs to a beautiful lady, his cousin, who is my mistress. He keeps her here a prisoner because she will not marry him."

Then the little maiden led him into the turret room. She concealed his armor in a hole in the side of the wall, and told him to hide himself between the two mattresses of the bed. Before he had time to do so, however, they heard a great noise in the courtyard, and looking down, saw that the body of the Black Knight had been discovered. Near it stood a beautiful lady, more beautiful than any Sir Ivaine had ever seen, except Queen Guinevere. She was dark like the queen, and her eyes were as bright as stars. He would have looked at her a long time, but the little maiden begged him to hide without delay.

"Quick!" she cried. "The men have seen that there is the front part of a horse inside the gate, and know that the person who has killed our lord must be here. Even now they have begun the search, for they all love the Black Knight, although my mistress does not, and they will hang you if they find you."

So Sir Ivaine crept between the mattresses, and the little maiden hurried down the stairs and went to her beautiful mistress. Presently Sir Ivaine heard men tramping up the turret steps. They often stopped, trying all the doors they came to, and at last entered the room in which he lay. One of them, peering into the hole in the wall where his armor was, said:

"Here is armor."

But another replied:

"That is some that once was used by our master; there is no need to drag it

into the light."

Then they searched among all the furnishings of the room, but found no one. At last, as they were leaving, one of the men thrust his sword twice through the mattress. The second thrust cut deeply into Sir Ivaine's arm; but as the knight was brave, he did not utter a cry.

When the men had gone, he crept out, and found that the cut in his arm and his other wounds were bleeding badly. Just then the little maiden came in with food. She cried out in alarm when she saw the blood, and quickly tore a piece of linen from her robe for bandages. When all the wounds had been carefully attended to, she gave him a plentiful supper and promised to take care of him until there was a good opportunity for him to escape.

She visited him every morning, and told him the day's news in the castle. He learned that a lion kept roaring about the walls, and that the bowmen had tried to kill it, but could not. Sir Ivaine was sure that it was his lion, and longed to have it, but knew that this was impossible. And she told him how the people of the castle had been angry at their lady because she would not marry the Black Knight; but now that he was dead, acknowledged her as mistress and obeyed her in everything. The little maiden said she thought that if the lady were told that Sir Ivaine was hidden she would probably see that he had a safe conduct out of the castle.

"I want never to leave this castle," said Sir Ivaine; "for I love your lady."

This pleased the little maiden, for she had learned to respect Sir Ivaine. So she went to the lady of the castle and told her all about the stranger. The lady had Sir Ivaine moved to a rich apartment where she could visit him often and help the little maid in her care of him. She did not tell her people, however, that this stranger knight had killed their lord.

As Sir Ivaine recovered, he soon found courage to tell her how beautiful she was, and that he loved her more than anything in the world. He said that if she would marry him, he would stay with her forever, and never seek for more adventures. All he asked was that she would let in his lion, which still continued to roar outside the castle walls. When the lady heard the story of the lion, it seemed to her that if Sir Ivaine were so kind to an animal, he would probably be much kinder to her.

So she said that she would marry him. The people of the castle saw and liked him, and agreed to obey him as their lord. When they were told that the lion they had tried to kill belonged to him and must be admitted to the castle, they showed some fear. Sir Ivaine told them that there was no need of this, for the beast was very gentle, and was making noise only because of its desire for its master. He went outside the castle walls and called. Soon there was heard a loud roaring; a



big yellow body bounded out of the forest, and the lion came leaping to its master's feet. It frisked about him, and rubbed its head on his arm, just as a favorite dog might do. When the people saw how tame it was, they were no longer afraid.

Sir Ivaine and the beautiful lady were soon married, and for a long time everyone was very happy. Sir Ivaine sent a letter to King Arthur telling the result of his adventure. Soon the messenger returned bearing rich gifts from the king and Guinevere, and an invitation to come to Camelot whenever they wished to. The lady, however, persuaded Sir Ivaine to promise to remain with her in her castle.

One day a party of the Knights of the Round Table rode into the courtyard. They were going on a great adventure, and stopped by the way to see how Sir Ivaine and his beautiful wife fared. When Sir Ivaine saw them, all his old-time love of fighting came back, and he went to his lady and begged her to let him go with the knights.

"Ah, my Ivaine," she said, "you told me that you would never leave me."

"A knight ought to seek adventures," he said. "And I will return to you."

She paused for a while and then said:

"I will let you go if you will promise to come back in a year and a day; that is, next Whitsuntide."

He gladly promised, and she said:

"If you break this promise, I will never see you again."

But Sir Ivaine was sure he would not break the promise, because he loved her too much for that.

So off he rode with the knights, followed by his faithful lion. The lady and the little maiden waved farewells to Sir Ivaine from the tower until they could no longer see him; then they again took up the life they had lived before he came to the castle.

Sir Ivaine rode with the knights for many months, and had many adventures. At last, just as the year was drawing to a close, he started homeward. On the way, however, he stopped at Arthur's Court to pay his respects to the king and the queen. They both remembered him and greeted him kindly.

A great tournament was being held at that time in Camelot, and the king asked Sir Ivaine if he would like to take part. Sir Ivaine was pleased, for he loved the display of such combats. During the three days of the tournament he distinguished himself greatly.

On the evening of the third day, as the knights were sitting in the great hall of the Round Table, a little maiden entered. She went up to King Arthur and gave him a ring.

"This ring," she said, "is one Sir Ivaine gave my lady. She returns it, and has vowed never to see him again because he has broken his promise to her."

Then, before any one could stop her, she left the hall, mounted her horse, and rode away. Sir Ivaine sprang to his feet, staring wildly. Whitsuntide had fallen on the first day of the tournament, his year and a day had more than passed, and he had forgotten his promise!

He rushed from the hall and down the hill through the streets of Camelot, out of the city gate, and into the forest. He ran on and on until he fell exhausted.

The next day he awoke in a fever, and would have died but for his faithful lion. The poor animal tried to make Sir Ivaine rise, but seeing that he could not, dragged him to the edge of a brook, where he could drink when he was thirsty. The lion also brought him game. At first Sir Ivaine would not touch it, but finally began to eat it raw.

After a time he became better, physically, but his senses were gone. In his madness he wandered all through the woods, fighting with the trees and bushes. The lion always followed him, protecting him from other animals and from men.

One day when the lion was absent finding food, Sir Ivaine lay asleep. A good hermit came up to him, and pitying his condition, lifted him in his arms and carried him to his hut. He bathed the poor knight, cut his hair, and put a robe upon him. He was laying him upon a bed when the lion came roaring to the door and dashed it open.

When it saw the hermit tending its master, it fawned at his feet. After that Sir Ivaine spent much of his time in the hut. The lion supplied him with food, bringing meat to the hermit, who always divided it into four parts: three parts he gave to the lion, and one he cooked for Sir Ivaine and himself.

Sometimes Sir Ivaine would run away from the hermit and wander for days in the forest. The lion took care of him, and always led him back to the hermit's hut. Once, however, Sir Ivaine set forth in the direction of his wife's castle. At night the lion tried to take him to the hut, but in vain. For days he wandered, always in the same direction, until at last he reached the wood where the stone platform was. He laid himself down upon it and slept. Soon a lady and a maid appeared. The lion sprang at them, but when it reached their feet, it licked the lady's hand, for she was its mistress.

It took her robe in its teeth and pulled her gently to the spot where Sir Ivaine lay. At first she would not look at him, because she had not forgiven him for breaking his promise. But the little maiden said:

"Dear mistress, look at him. The story which the knights of Arthur's Court told us about his madness must be true. If you will but look at his face you will see that it is the face of a man who has lost his senses."

Then the lady knelt beside him. When she saw his worn features and his tattered garments, she began to believe that he really had lost his senses from grief. She sent the little maiden to the castle for an ointment she had. It was so powerful that if it were rubbed over a person who was ill, it would cure him, no matter what his disease was. When the little maid brought it, the lady put it upon Sir Ivaine, but so gently as not to rouse him.

After several hours, Sir Ivaine awoke. At first he hardly knew where he was, but soon he recollected all that had happened, and seeing his lady near, begged her to forgive him. This she did, and they were reconciled. Sir Ivaine was sure that he would never again forget to keep a promise.

For some months they lived very happily in the castle. Then they went to Camelot in order to be near to Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table.

## SIR BALIN

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In Arthur's Court there dwelt a poor knight named Balin, who had accidentally killed the cousin of King Arthur, and had been taken to the court of the king for trial. He had lived there almost as a prisoner for six months, until it was decided that he had not meant to do wrong. All his money was gone, and his clothes and armor were poor. He was sorry for this, but he was still more sorry that he was not doing brave deeds like the other knights.

One day when he sat in the great hall at Camelot, looking at the shields which were carved or covered with gold, a damsel entered who wore a rich mantle, trimmed with fur. As Arthur and the knights looked at her, she let it fall to the floor, and they saw that she wore a heavy sword.

"Damsel," said Arthur, "why do you, a maiden, wear a sword?"

"Alas!" said the maiden, "I should be glad if I did not wear it. It is very heavy, and causes me pain. But I am forced to wear it until I meet a knight who can take it from me."

"Surely many knights could do that, and gladly," the lords said.

"No," said the lady. "It seems that there is but one knight in all the world who is to take the sword. I heard that there were brave knights at the Court of King Rience, the enemy of King Arthur, and I went there. Yet no one could unfasten the sword. Now am I come here on the same errand."

"In truth, damsel," said the king, "you are right welcome. My knights shall try to take your weapon."

Then, at a sign from Arthur, a knight stepped forward. But, even though he exerted all his strength, the sword could not be unfastened.

"Sir, you need not pull so hard," said the damsel. "The one who is to take the sword will do so easily."

All the knights tried except Sir Balin, who stood back because of his poor clothes. Yet he wanted very much to see if he was the chosen knight, and just as the damsel was going away, he said:

"Damsel, will you let me try? I am poorly clothed, but my heart tells me that I may succeed."

The damsel saw that he had a good face. But his clothes were so poor she

doubted if he were really a knight.

"I am afraid you will fail," she said.

"Ah, maiden," he returned, "poor clothes are but the outside. Good deeds are just as worthy, whether done by a rich person or a poor one. Many a man who is badly clothed has real valor and kindness."

"That is very true," she said; "so try, good sir."

Then Sir Balin seized the hilt of the sword, and the weapon came away easily. All the lords wondered, and the lady said:

"You are a good knight, the best I have met. You shall do many brave deeds. And now, give me my sword again."

"No," said Sir Balin, "I should like to keep this sword, for I have no other."

"Alas!" said the maiden, "I am sorry to hear these words, for now I must give you the sword."

"Surely he deserves it," said Arthur, "for it weighed heavily on you."

"Yes," she replied, "but it is a misfortune for him to keep it. He shall slay with it the best friend he has in the world. It is going to prove his destruction."

Sir Balin would not believe her.

"I could not slay my best friend," he said. "Besides, I am willing to meet whatever happens, and I wish to keep the sword."

Then the maiden departed in great sorrow, while Balin said to the king:

"My lord, give me permission to leave your court."

"I do not like to lose you," said the king. "Perhaps you are angry because you were in prison so long. You must know that it takes time to find out who is innocent and who is guilty."

"My lord," answered Sir Balin, "I know it is not wise to make a judgment hastily, and I do not blame you for keeping me in prison. I love you, and wish to leave your court that I may do some deed worthy of the Round Table."

Then Arthur said that he might go. Soon a servant brought to Balin a fine horse and good armor which were the gifts of the king. Balin at once took leave of Arthur and the knights, and rode away, singing as he rode, for he was very happy. Sometimes he stopped to lift up his shield and admire it. It had a blue emblem upon it, and to Sir Balin's eyes its beauty was that of the sky, the soft blue of heaven.

Sir Balin rode until he was tired. At last, from the crest of a hill, he saw a gloomy stone castle, and galloped towards it joyfully, hoping to rest there.

At a turn of the road, he saw a cross with gold letters upon it. He stopped to read the words, which were: "Let no knight go to the castle, for great danger is there."

"Oh," said Sir Balin, "I am used to danger. I fear nothing," and he went on.

Presently an old man started up beside the road. He had a long gray beard, and was dressed in a long gray robe that sparkled with little specks of frost. The old man said to Sir Balin:

"Did you not read the letters on the cross?"

"Yes," replied Sir Balin, "but I am not afraid."

"Oh, Sir Balin, you of all men should fear to go to that castle," the old man said.

"Why?" he asked in amazement. "Nevertheless, I shall go."

"Sir Balin, Sir Balin!" cried the old man after him, "you are too self-willed. You will be very sorry for what you have done before you die."

But Sir Balin rode on without fear, and soon reached the gate of the castle. A hundred beautiful ladies and many knights welcomed him. They took off his armor and put a rich crimson cloak upon his shoulders. Then they led him into a banquet hall where there was music and dancing. They set food before him, and he ate, thankfully. He was very happy, feeling sure that he could rest here for many days.

Just as he was thinking this, the lady who was mistress of the castle said:

"Sir knight, it is the rule of this castle that every lord who comes here as a guest must fight."

"That is a hard custom," said Sir Balin.

"Yet you need fight but once," answered the lady. "We have here the knight who entered just before you came."

"Alas!" said Sir Balin, "I would rather not fight, for I wish to rest. Since such is the custom of the castle, however, I must do my part. Let some one bring my armor."

A servant at once came up to him with a suit of black armor.

"This is not my armor," said Sir Balin. "My armor is not painted black. It is honest gray steel, decorated with blue."

"It is the custom of the castle to wear black," they told him. "This armor is as good as your own."

Sir Balin felt sad, he could hardly tell why; and was very sorry that he had ever come to the castle. Putting on the armor, however, he went into the courtyard and mounted his horse. No sooner was he ready than another knight, clad all in black, entered the courtyard.

The two knights rode together so fiercely that the shock threw them both off their horses in a swoon. After a time they recovered and began to fight on foot, pressing each other near the walls of the castle.

Sir Balin was fighting with the sword that he had taken from the damsel in King Arthur's Court. It was a strong sword, and whenever it struck, the armor of

his opponent cracked. They fought till their breath failed, and then they rested. Each knew that never before had he dealt with such a strong enemy.

Then they fought again, and gave each other seven deep wounds, the least of which would prove fatal. All the ground was red with blood, but Sir Balin fought on still, for the people of the castle were watching from the walls, and he wished to be thought a great warrior. So at last he used all his remaining strength and gave the other knight such a hard blow that he fell to the ground. Sir Balin knew that it was a death stroke. He felt that he, too, was about to die, and said:

"Who are you? I never fought with such a strong knight before."

The other answered faintly:

"I am Sir Balan, the brother to the good knight Sir Balin."

Then Sir Balin cried out:

"Alas, alas! that I should live to see this day!" and he fell backward in a swoon.

Sir Balan was dying, but he crawled on his hands and knees to where Sir Balin lay, and took off his helmet only to discover the face of his brother. Then he wept bitterly till Sir Balin recovered from his swoon.

"Alas!" said Sir Balan, "if we had but worn our own armor we should have known each other. And now we must die; we have killed each other."

Sir Balin was too full of remorse to weep.

"All this is my fault," he said. "As the old man on the road told me, I have been too self-willed. First, I would have the damsel's sword, although she told me that I should slay with it the best friend I had. That is you, Balan. And then I would enter this castle in spite of warnings. I deserve to die, but it is a hard punishment that I should have killed you, my brother."

Soon some ladies came from the wall into the courtyard, and to them Sir Balin said:

"We are two dear brothers who have killed each other. I pray you, promise to bury us in the same grave."

The ladies wept as they made the promise. The two brothers put their arms about each other and waited for death. They hoped to die together, but Sir Balan died first. Soon after, when Sir Balin had also died, the ladies buried them together, and put a stone above the grave, telling the sad story of their combat and death.

## SIR GERAIN'T AND ENID

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One of the bravest knights in King Arthur's Court was Sir Geraint. Once he was in the forest with Queen Guinevere and one of her maidens, when a lady, a knight, and a dwarf rode by. The queen told the maiden to go to the dwarf and ask who his master was.

As the maiden approached them, she saw that the knight had a very proud face. She asked the dwarf his master's name, but he said, roughly:

"I do not know."

"If you do not know," answered the maiden, "I will ask him myself."

She started to ride up to the knight, but the dwarf struck at her with his whip. Upon this, she went back and told the queen and Sir Geraint what had passed. Sir Geraint was very angry, and he said to the queen:

"Fair queen, I will ride after this knight and his dwarf and avenge the insult done to your maiden. If I succeed, I shall return in three days."

"Do so," said the queen, "and I trust you will succeed, not only in this, but in all things which you attempt. Some day you will love some fair lady. Before you marry her, bring her to me, and no matter how poor or how rich she may be, I will clothe her for her wedding in the most beautiful garments in the world. They shall shine like the sun."

So off rode Sir Geraint, keeping at some distance behind the lady, the knight, and the dwarf. At last, after passing through many woods, he lost sight of them as they disappeared beyond the top of a hill. Sir Geraint rode up, and saw below him, in a valley, the one street of a little town. On one side was a fortress, so new that the stone of which it was built was still white; while on the other side stood a gray old castle, fast falling into decay. He saw the three people he was following enter the fortress.

In the little town there was a great deal of noise and bustle. At first Sir Geraint could not find any place to stay, for the houses were all full. He stopped before a servant who was scouring his master's armor, and asked what all the noise meant. The servant said:

"The Sparrow-hawk," and went on working.

Then he met an old man carrying a sack of corn, and asked him the same



question. The old man made the same reply. Next Sir Geraint approached one who was making armor, and questioned him. Without looking up the man replied:

"Friend, he who works for the Sparrow-hawk has little time for answering questions."

Sir Geraint was vexed, and said:

"I am weary of hearing of your Sparrow-hawk. I do not understand what you mean. Will you not tell me where I can find a place to stay for to-night? And will you not sell me some armor? I have but my sword."

Then the man looked up, and said:

"Your pardon, sir. We are all very busy here, for to-morrow we hold a tournament, and our work is not half done. I cannot give you armor, for we need all that we have in the town. As to lodging, all the room is taken. However, perhaps Earl Iniol in the castle will receive you."

Sir Geraint rode over to the gray old castle, and as the gate was open, entered the ruined courtyard. Dismounting, he went into the hall. Here he found the earl, an elderly man dressed in clothes which had once been handsome, but were now old and worn. To him Sir Geraint said:

"Good sir, I seek lodging for the night."

The old Earl Iniol answered:

"Sir, I was once rich and am now poor; nevertheless, I will gladly give you the best I have."

As he spoke, some one in the castle began to sing. The voice was very sweet. Sir Geraint thought he had never heard anyone sing so wonderfully.

"That is my daughter Enid," said the earl.

Then he took Sir Geraint into a room in which sat an old lady in a faded velvet gown. She was the earl's wife. By her side stood Enid in a faded silk gown. She was as beautiful as her voice was sweet, and after watching her, Sir Geraint said to himself:

"I already love this maiden."

He said nothing out loud, only looked at her. Earl Iniol spoke to her:

"Enid, this good knight will stay with us. His horse is in the courtyard; take it to the stall and give it corn. Then go into the town and buy us some food."

Sir Geraint wished to put away his horse himself, but the old earl said:

"Sir, we are very poor, but we cannot permit our guest to do any work. I pray you, stay here."

So Enid took the horse to the stall. After that, she went into the town and soon returned with meat and sweet cakes. Then, because most of the rooms in the old castle were in ruins, she cooked the meat in the same hall in which they

were to eat. When the meal was ready, she waited on her father and her mother and Sir Geraint. The knight watched her and loved her more and more.

When they had risen from the table, he said to the earl:

"My lord, pray tell me what the people of this town mean when they speak of the Sparrow-hawk."

The earl's face grew sad, as he said:

"That is the name given to the young knight who rules in this town."

"Does he live in the fortress?" asked Sir Geraint. "And do a lady and a dwarf ride with him?"

"Yes," said the earl.

"Ah, then he is the man I am in search of," said Sir Geraint. "I must fight with him before three days are over. I am Geraint of King Arthur's Court."

"I know your name well," said the earl. "We often hear of your great deeds at Camelot. Many times have I related to my Enid the story of your brave deeds."

"I am bound to do my duty with the other knights," answered Sir Geraint. "And now tell me more of this Sparrow-hawk."

"Alas! he is my nephew," said the earl. "At one time I ruled this town. My nephew, the Sparrow-hawk, was powerful, too, and he asked to unite our power by marrying Enid, but neither she nor I wished it. Then he collected a body of men and attacked me, and took all my wealth, leaving me nothing but this old castle."

"To-morrow," said Sir Geraint, "I will fight in the tournament with this Sparrow-hawk, and conquer him, and give you back your lands. But I lack armor."

"I can give you armor, although it is old and rusty," said the earl. "But no one is allowed to fight in this tournament unless there is some lady he loves best in all the world. Then he fights for the sake of this lady, and if he wins, receives the prize, which he in turn gives to her."

"What is the prize?" asked Sir Geraint.

"A hawk, a sparrow-hawk made of gold. This nephew of mine is very strong and has always overcome every knight who has opposed him in these tournaments, which are held yearly. It is because he has won the prize so often that he is called the Sparrow-hawk. But tell me, is there some lady whom you love?"

Then Sir Geraint said:

"I love this child of yours, my lord, and will gladly make her my wife if you will permit it."

The earl was very glad, but Enid was afraid, for she thought she was not worthy of such a great knight. Yet, she knew she loved him, and said so, and

soon promised to go with him to Arthur's Court within three days.

The next morning, the earl and Sir Geraint and Enid went to the field where the tournament was to take place. Many knights and ladies were there. The ladies sat under a pavilion which was draped in purple velvet ornamented with gold, while the knights were on horseback. A herald blew a trumpet, and the knight who was called the Sparrow-hawk galloped into the field.

He rode around it three times, and then went up to the pavilion and said to his lady:

"I give you the gold sparrow-hawk again, because no one dares to fight with me for it."

Then Sir Geraint rode forward in his rusty armor and said:

"I will fight with you."

The knight looked upon him, and gave a very scornful laugh as he rode at Sir Geraint. The two clashed together and began to fight fiercely, while all the people watched. Twice they had to stop and rest. For a long time they seemed evenly matched, and no one could decide which would win. But when Sir Geraint looked to where Enid sat in her faded silk gown among the richly dressed ladies in the pavilion, he grew very strong and struck his enemy such a blow that he fell to the earth.

"Now, Sparrow-hawk," said Sir Geraint, "I have overthrown you. You must do two things: you must ride with your lady and your dwarf to Arthur's Court and ask pardon of Queen Guinevere because your dwarf struck her maiden; and you must restore all the riches you have taken from your good uncle, Earl Iniol."

This the knight promised to do. And afterwards, in Arthur's Court, he grew very sorry for his evil deeds, and became a good man.

Meanwhile, Enid was making ready to go to Arthur's Court with Sir Geraint. She was sorry that she had only her robe of faded silk. She remembered a robe her mother had given her before the Sparrow-hawk took their riches. It was of velvet, the color of mother-of-pearl, with gold leaves and flowers and birds embroidered upon it.

While she was thinking of this beautiful robe, her mother entered the room, carrying it. Enid gave a cry of joy, and her mother told her that the Sparrow-hawk had just given it back, together with other robes and gold and jewels. "Put it on, Enid," she said, and helped her daughter to array herself in the handsome gown, exclaiming: "How beautiful you look, my dear child! Sir Geraint may well be proud to fetch such a fair lady to King Arthur's Court."

Just then the earl entered to tell them that the knight wanted Enid to ride with him to Camelot in the faded silk dress in which he had first seen her.

Enid, although she was deeply disappointed, at once put on again her faded

gown. When Sir Geraint came in he saw that the earl's wife was also disappointed, so he told them that the queen had promised to dress his bride in the most beautiful robes in the world for her wedding. At this both the ladies were much pleased.

So after bidding farewell to her parents, Enid rode with Sir Geraint to Camelot, where the queen welcomed her, and gave her a robe that was as bright as the sun. Then the good Archbishop of Canterbury married Sir Geraint and Enid amid great rejoicings.

## ARTHUR AND SIR ACCALON

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There was a woman in Arthur's Court named Morgan le Fay, who had learned a great deal about magic. She was a wicked woman, and hated the king because he was more powerful than she, and because he was so good.

However, she pretended to be a true friend to him, and the king believed in her. One day when they were talking together, she asked him if he would not let her take charge of his wonderful sword Excalibur, and its scabbard. She said that she would guard them so carefully that they would never be stolen. As she was very eager, Arthur granted her request.

One day in time of peace, King Arthur went out hunting with a certain knight named Sir Accalon, who was the lover of Morgan le Fay. They rode for a long time, and when they were tired, stopped to rest beside a great lake. As they looked over its shining waters, they saw a beautiful little ship, which sailed straight towards them, and ran up to the sands at their feet. It was all covered with golden silks, which waved in the gentle wind. King Arthur and Sir Accalon climbed into it and examined it thoroughly, but they found no one on board.

They rested on two couches which were on the deck, until it grew dark. Then they were about to return home, when all at once, a hundred torches, set on the sides of the ship were lighted, and suddenly there appeared twelve beautiful damsels who told the two that they were welcome, and that they should be served with a banquet.

Presently the maidens led the king and the knight into a room which had a table covered with a white cloth embroidered in purple. It bore many golden dishes, and each dish had a beautiful design carved upon it. Some dishes had vine-leaves, others ivy-leaves; some had angels with long robes sweeping back in graceful lines; and all these dishes held choice food. The king and Sir Accalon ate to their hearts' content.

Then the damsels led them into two separate chambers. King Arthur was tired and so sleepy that he gave but one glance at his bedroom. He saw that it was hung in red silk embroidered with gold dragons and griffins. Then he threw himself on his bed and slept very soundly.

When he awoke, he found himself not in the pretty bed-chamber, but in a

dark place. He could see nothing, but all about him he heard the sound of complaining and weeping. He was much bewildered, but in a moment he cried:

"What is this? Where am I?"

Then a voice answered:

"You are in prison, as we are."

"Who are you?" asked Arthur.

The voice replied:

"We are twenty knights, prisoners, and some of us have been here as long as seven years. We are in the dungeons of a wicked lord named Sir Damas. He has a younger brother, and the two brothers are enemies, quarreling about their inheritance. Now the younger brother, Sir Ontzlake, is very strong, but Sir Damas is not strong, and moreover, he is a coward. So he tries to find a knight who will fight for him against Sir Ontzlake.

"But Sir Damas is so much hated that no one will fight for him. So he goes about the country with a body of rough men, and whenever he sees a knight, he captures him. Then he asks him to fight with Sir Ontzlake. So far, all the knights have refused, and have been thrown into prison. We do not have food enough, but we would rather die here than fight for Sir Damas, who is so wicked."

At that moment a damsel entered the prison with a torch, which faintly lighted the dismal place, and advanced to the king.

"Sir," she said, "will you fight for my lord, Sir Damas? If you will, you shall be taken from this prison. If you will not, you shall die here."

Arthur considered for some time, and then said:

"I would rather fight than die in prison. If I fight, will you deliver also all these prisoners?"

The damsel promised, and Arthur consented to fight. While she went to tell Sir Damas, Arthur said to the other prisoners:

"My friends, I do not know Sir Damas, and I do not know Sir Ontzlake. I do not know whether they are bad or good. But I will fight, and then, when I have conquered, I shall judge between them, and do justice to both."

"That is a good plan," said the knights, "but why are you so sure that you will conquer?"

"I am Arthur, the King," he replied.

At that the knights set up a great cry of joy, and the king continued:

"I shall send for my good sword Excalibur and the scabbard, and with these I shall surely win."

So when Arthur and the knights were led out of prison, the king sent the damsel who had visited them to Morgan le Fay for his sword and scabbard.

Meantime, the knight who had accompanied Arthur on the little ship, Sir

Accalon, also awoke. He found himself in the palace of Morgan le Fay, and he wondered very much where Arthur was. He went to the lady, who said to him:

"My dear lord, the day has come when you can have great power if you want it. Should you like to be king of this land, instead of Arthur?"

Now Sir Accalon was a traitor at heart. He wanted very much to be king, even if the good Arthur was to be killed; so he said:

"Yes, truly."

Then she said:

"You shall be king, and I shall be your queen. All you need to do is to fight a great battle, which you shall win. I have been using my magic. It was I who sent the ship of silk to you and Arthur. I had him put into prison, and I had you brought here."

Sir Accalon wondered very much. Then she told him of the fight King Arthur was to make against Sir Ontzlake.

"But I have caused Sir Ontzlake to fall sick," she said, "and he cannot fight. I shall go with you to his castle and you can offer to fight for him."

"I to fight with the king!" cried Sir Accalon. "He would surely overthrow me."

"He cannot," said Morgan le Fay, "because you are to fight with his sword. A little while ago he sent to me for Excalibur and the scabbard, but I returned him a false sword which looks like Excalibur, and a false scabbard. You shall take the true ones, and then you shall surely overcome him and rule this land."

Then Sir Accalon was glad, and he hastened with the lady to the castle of Sir Ontzlake. They found him groaning because he was ill and because Sir Damas had sent him a challenge to fight with a knight, and he could not accept it. He was much relieved when Morgan le Fay told him that Sir Accalon would fight in his place.

Early in the afternoon, King Arthur and Sir Accalon rode into the field where the combat was to be held. Arthur did not know who Sir Accalon was, nor did any one else, except Morgan le Fay. Two sides of the field were full of people who came to watch, half of whom were friends of Sir Damas, and the other half were friends of Sir Ontzlake.

Arthur and Sir Accalon rode at each other so furiously that at the shock of the meeting both fell off their horses. Then they began to fight fiercely with their swords. The king could make no headway with his false steel, but whenever Sir Accalon struck at Arthur he drew blood.

The king was much amazed. He grew weaker and weaker, but still he kept on his feet. Those who watched him were sorry for him; they thought they had never seen a man fight so bravely. At last Arthur's sword broke, and fell in two

pieces on the ground. When Sir Accalon saw this, he cried:

"Now, yield to me."

"I will never yield," said the king, "and if you do not get me another sword, you will be shamed before all men, for it is an unknightly thing to fight with a defenseless man."

"I do not care," said Sir Accalon. "If you will not yield, defend yourself with your shield as best you can."

He rushed at the king. Arthur was so weak that he could hardly stand, but he guarded himself as well as he could with his shield. Soon he could do no more, and fell to the ground.

At this moment the Lady of the Lake, who had given Arthur his sword, came upon the field. She was invisible, but anyone who had listened intently could have heard a sound like the ripple of water as she walked. She caused Excalibur to fall out of the hand of Sir Accalon and drop near Arthur.

When it fell, Arthur saw that it was his own Excalibur. He grasped its handle and some of his strength came back. He struggled to his feet, and rushing up to Sir Accalon, seized the scabbard of Excalibur and threw it far over the field.

"Now," he said, "send for a second sword and fight with me."

Then Sir Accalon was afraid. Yet he thought that Arthur was so weak that he could still be overcome. So he sent for a second sword, and they began to fight again. Arthur's strength, however, had largely returned, and in a short time he gave Sir Accalon a mortal stroke.

Sir Accalon fell to the ground, and the king, leaning over him, cried:

"Tell me who you are."

Then Sir Accalon was filled with remorse, and he said:

"Oh, my king, I have been a traitor to you, but now I am dying, and I am sorry for what I have done. I deserve my death."

He told the king his name, and all about his treachery, and that of Morgan le Fay.

King Arthur was sad.

"It is very hard to be deceived in a friend," he said, "but I forgive you freely. I will try to cure your wound, and sometime I shall trust you again."

"You cannot cure me," said Sir Accalon. "I am dying. Let them carry me off the field."

So he was taken to a neighboring abbey, while the people crowded about the king to congratulate him, but Arthur said:

"I am sad at heart. My victory is no comfort to me, for to-day I have lost a friend whom I believed true."

Then he called the two brothers, Sir Damas and Sir Ontlake, and judged



their cause. He decided that their property must be divided equally between them, and that they must be friends. They promised never to quarrel again. Arthur told them that they must be kind to other knights and to all people. He said that if he heard that they were not, he would come and punish them.

After this, Sir Damas gave back to the twenty knights all their money, and they went on their way rejoicing. King Arthur mounted his horse and rode over to the abbey, where he sat by the bed of Sir Accalon till the poor knight died. Then the king went back alone to his Court at Camelot.

# HOW ARTHUR FOUGHT WITH A GIANT

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Once upon a time King Arthur and some of his knights were sailing in a ship. The king, being tired, went to sleep in his cabin, and began to dream. It seemed to him that he was sailing with his people when a great dragon flew out of the west. This dragon had a blue head and a gold back. Underneath he shone like a rainbow. Flames of fire rushed out of his mouth and covered land and sea.

As he flew, there came out of the east a great bear, very rough, and as black as coal, and with wings that flapped like windmills. The bear and the dragon roared loudly, and they began to fight and struggle till the sea was all red with blood. At last the dragon conquered.

When the king awoke from this dream he sent for Merlin and told him of it, and asked for an explanation.

"My lord," Merlin replied, "the dragon betokens yourself; the colors on its body are signs of your glory. The bear betokens some tyrant who torments the people and whom you will slay."

Soon after this, the ship in which the company was, came in sight of land. When they had anchored, the knights noticed on the beach a crowd of people who were weeping. Descending from the ship, Arthur asked one of the men what troubled them, and what was the name of their country.

"Good sir," returned the man, "this is the country of Brittany, and we weep because our county is desolated by a giant. He makes us bring him food. First, he ate up all the oxen we had, and then our horses. Next he demanded our children, and now there are no little ones in the land. To-day he took our good duchess of Brittany, and carried her off to his mountain."

"Alas!" said the king. "It grieves me to hear this, not only because a cruel deed has been done, but because the duchess of Brittany is my cousin's wife. I must save this lady. I will fight with the giant."

"Good sir," cried the people in amazement, "it is not possible! A whole company of us dare not attack him, and yet we account ourselves brave men."

"That may well be," replied Arthur, "and yet with my good sword and scabbard, I have no fear."

Then the men said:

"If you will go, my lord, yonder is the great mountain where the giant lives. At the top, two huge fires burn continually in front of a cave, and in that cave are greater treasures than you can dream of. They are all yours if you will but slay this monster."

Arthur replied nothing to them, but called Sir Kay and Sir Bedivere, and rode with them to the foot of the mountain. From that point he ascended alone. When he was nearly to the top he came upon a woman, clad all in black, who sat weeping by the side of a newly-made grave.

"Good woman, why do you weep?" asked Arthur.

"Hush, hush!" she cried, "or the giant will hear you and come and kill you. He can hear me, but the sound of weeping delights him, and therefore I need not restrain my grief."

"Why do you grieve?" the king asked.

"Alas! Because my good mistress, the duchess of Brittany, is dead. The giant has killed her."

At that Arthur gripped tightly the handle of his sword and said:

"I will kill this wretch before I am an hour older."

"Ah, my lord," said the woman, "the greatest kings in the country are afraid of him. He has a coat embroidered with the beards of fifteen of them. He demanded these beards as a sign that they acknowledged him as lord."

"There is at least one king who does not acknowledge him as lord," shouted Arthur, as he strode hastily forward.

When he reached the top he saw the giant asleep in front of the two great fires before the cave. He was taller than the tallest pine that ever grew. His arms were as big as the trunk of an oak tree. His mouth was as large as a cave, and from it and his nostrils came forth fire and flame like that from the mountain of Vesuvius. Although his huge eyes were closed, flashes of lightning seemed to shoot from beneath the lids. At his side was an iron club as large as a steeple. About him stood trembling old women fanning him as he slept.

King Arthur approached the monster, and said to him:

"Wretch, awake and fight, for your hour has come."

The giant, starting up, looked down scornfully upon the king and, laughing, threw his great club at Arthur. But the king leapt aside and the club fell harmlessly on the ground, making a hollow where it struck.

Then Arthur rushed toward the giant, waving his good sword Excalibur. The giant caught him in his arms, in order to squeeze him to death. The king's armor pressed closer and closer about him, and he began to lose his strength. But he kept his hand upon his scabbard, and so did not die.

In a few minutes the monster, making sure that Arthur was dead, dropped

him to the ground. After the king had recovered himself, he sprang to his feet, and taking his sword, threw it at the giant. The good steel pierced his neck, and he sank to the ground, shouting so loudly that Sir Kay and Sir Bedivere at the foot of the mountain heard, and trembled for their master's safety.

Then the giant again seized Arthur in his arms, and the two began to roll down the mountain side. Whenever Arthur was able to, he struck at the giant with his dagger, wounding him sorely. At last, still struggling and rolling, they came to the spot where Sir Kay and Sir Bedivere were. These two loosed the giant's arms from the king, who then gave one last blow to the monster, killing him. Then he sent Sir Kay and Sir Bedivere for his sword Excalibur.

When the people on the seashore heard what Arthur had done, they fell on their knees and thanked him, offering him all the giant's treasure. He said, however, that he would leave it with them to divide among the poor people of the country. For himself, all he wanted was the giant's iron club.

The people sent fifty men to the top of the mountain to get it for him. As they had no horses, it was a long time before they could drag the club to the seashore. There they put it on a barge. It was so heavy that it pressed the barge down till the water came almost to the edge of the vessel. Then King Arthur bade the people good-by, and took ship with his knights. The grateful men of Brittany stood on the shore, and shouted and waved until the ship could no longer be seen.

# HOW ARTHUR FOUGHT WITH ROME

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In the time of the great Roman, Julius Cæsar, about five hundred years before King Arthur was born, the people of Rome conquered Britain. They made many improvements in the land, building roads and walls, the remains of which may be seen to this day. But they also forced the Britons to pay them much money. All the kings did this up to the time of Arthur. He, however, considered that England was his own. He had conquered the lesser kings, and made one realm of all the land, over which he ruled with wise government. So he refused to send any money to Rome.

Once King Arthur's knights were all together in the great hall. It was a time of peace, and they spent the days in riding and hunting. On this day, while the king was sitting on his throne, twelve old men entered, each bearing a branch of olive, as a sign that they came in peace. They were the messengers of the emperor of Rome, and, after bowing to the king, they said:

"Sir, our mighty emperor sends you greeting, and commands you to acknowledge him as lord, and to send him the money due him from your realm. Your father and his predecessors did this, and so must you. If you refuse, the emperor will make such war against you that it will be an example to all the world."

At this the young knights laid their hands to their swords, but the older knights, who had self-control enough to hide their feelings, waited to see what the king would do.

Arthur bowed courteously to the messengers, and told them that he would soon give them an answer. He commanded a knight to take them to a lodging, and to see that they had all they needed, and he ordered that no harm should be done them. Then he called a council of his great lords and asked their advice.

Sir Lancelot, Arthur's favorite lord, spoke first, saying:

"My lord, we have rested for many weeks, and can make sharp war now. In days gone by, we should not have dared attack the Romans, and indeed, our attempt will make the world wonder. But of a truth, we ought to fight."

Then spoke King Angus of Scotland:

"My lord Arthur, you are the greatest lord on earth. You have made all of us

lesser kings your subjects, and bound the kingdom together, and stopped our civil wars. We love you and we will help you. We pray you to make war on these Romans. When they ruled our elders, they demanded much gold and made our people very poor. If you will fight, I will furnish you with twenty thousand men, and will bear all the cost of them myself."

Then all the other lords promised to furnish men and arms. When Arthur heard this, he was glad of their courage and good will. He called in the messengers and said to them:

"Return to your emperor. Tell him that I refuse his command, for I owe him nothing. I have won this kingdom by my own strength. Tell him that I shall come with all my army to Rome and make him acknowledge me as lord."

Then Arthur told his treasurer to give the messengers gifts, and to take them safely out of the country. Sir Lancelot conducted them to the sea, where they took ship and sailed to France. On they journeyed over the Alps and into Italy. When they told the emperor of Rome their message, he said:

"I had thought Arthur would yield."

But the messengers said:

"Sir, his face would have told you, if you had seen it, that he would never yield. In truth, there is need of fear, for he is a great king and surrounded by great knights."

"This is foolish talk," the emperor said. "Remember that we are Romans. We have ruled the world for centuries, and a little king of little England shall not make us fear. You say that he is coming to fight with us. We will take a few troops and go forthwith to France to meet him."

The messengers begged the emperor to take many troops.

"My lord emperor," they said, "these men of Arthur are very numerous and very brave."

So at last the emperor brought all his men to France, and there, whenever he found people who were loyal to Arthur, he killed and laid waste.

Meanwhile, Arthur had gathered together all his troops. He bade farewell to Queen Guinevere, who was so grieved that she fell in a swoon. Then he rode off at the head of his men till they came to the sea, and there they embarked in ten thousand boats and sailed to France.

They marched till they came near to the troops of the emperor of Rome, where they rested for the night. In the morning they rose at dawn and looked at the Roman legions. These were encamped in a green field which glittered with the gold on their tents and armor. The emperor's tent was of purple silk and bore on the top a golden eagle, the emblem of Rome.

Two of Arthur's knights, Sir Lancelot and Sir Gawain, rode out to the

emperor, and told him that their king had come.

"That I see," said the emperor laughing, "and he shall soon return."

The two knights made no answer, but rode back to Arthur. Soon all the soldiers on each side made ready for fighting. The preparation was careful, for they knew that the contest was to be a great one. The emperor of Rome addressed his soldiers:

"Romans, remember that Rome is the chief city of the world. I do not say fight as men; I say to you, fight as Romans. Then you will surely conquer these Britains."

King Arthur galloped up and down before the front rank of his men, looking at them carefully. He was on a beautiful white horse whose mane rose and fell in the wind like a wave of the sea. His soldiers cheered lustily for their beloved commander. Then King Arthur raised his hand for silence, and spoke in a loud, clear voice:

"My knights and men whom I love, remember that you are fighting to-day for your rights and for the independence of Britain. Strike well, and do not forget that great courage is as powerful as great numbers."

With that, he gave the signal for attack. The Romans stood in full battle array with their emperor in front. Beside him were sixteen kings with gold helmets and silver armor. The English approached, shouting a battle-cry.

Then the Romans, at the call of the trumpet, rushed forward, and in a moment the two great armies clashed together. Clouds of dust arose through which could be seen at intervals the heads of horses and the helmets of men. The few poor shepherds and women who stood on the outside did not know that the greatest battle of the time was going on under that cloud of dust.

Inside the cloud there was great confusion. Britains and Romans were fighting side by side, so closely packed that sometimes it was hard to strike. All fought bravely, but no one did so well as Arthur and Sir Lancelot. The battle did not cease until it was dark. Each side had lost many men. King Arthur wept as he rode over the field and counted his dead knights, and even his beautiful horse drooped its head as if it, also, understood.

But the next day the two armies began to fight again, and when the emperor finally saw that his men were losing and that most of the kings who were helping him were dead, he said:

"This Arthur is a demon and not a man. I will fight with him myself and end this battle." And before any one could stop him, he spurred up to King Arthur and said:

"You on the white horse who refuse to pay me tribute, come out that I may kill you."

Then Arthur rode quickly towards the emperor. The two men began to fight, and Arthur soon saw that he was contending with a powerful man. He gave the emperor many a stroke with Excalibur, but he himself received deep blows. At last the emperor pierced Arthur's helmet, and wounded him deeply in the cheek.

King Arthur raised his good Excalibur with a last effort and struck his enemy with it so fiercely on the head that the blow cleft the helmet and pierced to the emperor's chin. He fell from his horse without a moan. When the Romans near by saw that their ruler was dead, they gave a great cry of grief and rushed upon Arthur, but his good knights protected him.

At last, seeing themselves conquered, the Romans surrendered. Arthur found among his prisoners three senators, and among the dead, sixty senators, the sixteen kings, and the emperor.

He was sorrowful, for he knew that they were great men. So he had them embalmed and laid in chests of lead. Around each chest flags were wound, and the shields of the dead warriors placed on top. Then he said to the three surviving senators:

"Take these noble dead bodies back to Rome. When the Romans see them they will never again dare ask tax or tribute of me. I will not go to Rome and take the city from you, but if ever you send to me for gold, I shall invade your land and never rest till all Italy is mine."

The senators bowed their heads. Then they laid the body of the emperor on a car, all alone, with the gold eagle above him. They laid the bodies of the kings and the senators two by two on chariots, and so went slowly towards Rome. And never again did the kings of Britain have to pay a tax to the Romans.



# THE KNIGHT WITH the BADLY MADE COAT

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One day when Arthur and his knights were in the hall of the Round Table, a young man entered. He was so large that his shoulders were as wide as the doorway, and he could hardly squeeze through. The knights looked at him in amazement, for he was almost a giant.

When he came closer to them, they saw that he had on a coat which was far too large for him. It hung in wrinkles and folds all over his back, and the sleeves were so long that he had to turn them up almost to the elbow. The coat was of rich material, gold cloth, but it was old and blood-stained.

The young man strode up to the king and said:

"My lord, my name is Brune. I can tell you no more than that. I beg you to make me a knight."

At this Sir Kay laughed and said:

"He must be called The Knight with the Badly Made Coat."

"Call me what you will," said the young man. "Yes, I take that name, for I will not tell my real one."

Then Arthur spoke to him gently:

"Young man, you ask a great thing. All those in my Court who are made knights must serve for a long time as squires. If they prove themselves loyal and brave, I make them knights. But I must always know whence they come, and who their fathers are."

"My lord," said the young man, "I do indeed ask a great thing. I would gladly tell you more of myself, but I am under a vow to reveal no more than you already know. Yet I will tell you this, further. I am the son of a noble who was as big as a giant. My good father was very peaceable and did not care to fight; so he never came to your Court, and you did not hear of him. He lived at home with my mother and me, and the simple people who plowed the land about our castle.

"Every one ought to have loved him; but he had one enemy. One day, six years ago, when I was only a boy, my father and I were in the forest. My father was sleeping at the foot of a tree, and I was bathing in a brook near by. This enemy, who wanted my father's lands, came up and drove his sword into my father's heart. Then he rode away. I ran up to my dead father and took off the

coat which he wore and put it on. I swore never to take it off, and never to tell my father's name or where I came from, till I had avenged his death.

"Then I rode home to our castle, but our enemy had taken possession of it, and had made my mother prisoner. As I was not yet grown up I vowed that I would stay with the good shepherds near by till I was strong enough to pull up a young tree by the roots. Then I would go to King Arthur's Court and ask to be made a knight. So every month I have tried to uproot a young tree. This morning I succeeded, and here, my lords, I am."

The knights were much moved and prayed the king to make him a knight. They said that they would teach him to use arms. The king said that he would wait to see what sort of man Brune was.

A few days after this all the knights rode off to a tournament and Brune was left at home with a few soldiers. He was in the castle yard practicing some of the lessons in warfare which the knights had been teaching him. While he was hard at work, Queen Guinevere with twelve soldiers who were her bodyguard passed by.

As she was speaking kindly to Brune, they heard a terrible noise, and looking in the direction from which it came, saw a dreadful sight. A fierce lion which had been confined in a tower of stone had broken out of its prison and was rushing towards them. The twelve soldiers fled, leaving the queen and Brune alone.

"Ah," said Brune, "not all the cowards in the world are dead."

He stood still while the lion bounded towards him. He had dropped his sword, and as the beast leaped upon him, he seized its head in his hands. Then he slowly, slowly, bent its head back. It was a strong lion, and with the effort the muscles on Brune's neck stood out like great ropes. Presently, the queen and Brune heard a loud crack and they knew that the lion's neck was broken. Brune loosed his hold, and the huge tawny body dropped to the ground, quivered a moment, and was still.

While this was going on, the king and his knights returned. They saw at a glance what Brune had done, and cheered him loudly. The king rode up to him.

"Kneel down," he said.

Brune knelt down by the body of the lion, and the king touched him lightly with his sword, saying:

"Sir Brune, I make you a knight of my Round Table. Be always loyal, brave, and merciful."

Then all the knights were glad, but Sir Brune was gladdest of all.

## SIR LANCELOT & SIR BRUNE

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After Sir Brune, the Knight with the Badly Made Coat, had been at Arthur's Court for some months, he became eager to seek for the enemy of his father. Sir Lancelot, who took an interest in the big young knight, advised him to wait and try his strength at some smaller adventure first.

One day, when Sir Lancelot was away hunting, a damsel entered Arthur's hall. She carried a black shield which had painted on it a white hand holding a sword. She bowed to the king and said:

"My lord, I come for a knight to undertake the adventure of the black shield."

"And what is that adventure, fair damsel?" asked the king.

"That I may not tell you," answered the damsel, "except that it will cause much fighting and bloodshed to the knight who chooses it."

Some of the knights were eager to go, and Sir Kay pressed forward to finger the shield.

"Do not touch it, good Sir Kay," said the maiden, "for this adventure is not for you. I am to choose the knight."

She passed up and down the hall, looking into the face of each one. When she had seen them all she came back to Sir Brune and said:

"Young Knight with the Ugly Coat, will you take this shield?"

"Gladly, if my king allows," said the knight.

Then Arthur gave his permission, and Sir Brune followed the damsel out of the hall. Her horse was black, and wore white trappings. Sir Brune's horse was as brown as an autumn leaf. The two mounted and rode away. Sir Brune began to talk to the damsel, whose name was Elinor. At first she was agreeable, but after they had ridden many miles she became scornful, and told him she was sorry she had chosen him.

Sir Brune felt sad, because he had begun to love the damsel. He was afraid she did not like him because his coat was poor. He did not speak to her any more, but rode on sorrowfully beside her. After a long time they came to a castle enclosed by high walls. The gate stood open, and the damsel Elinor pointed to it and said, sighing:

"Since you have not left me as I hoped you would, go in there. You will find

your first adventure. I may not tell you what it is."

Sir Brune galloped inside the gate. There he saw a hundred knights on horseback, armed and waiting for him. He had to think and act quickly. So he decided to rush in between the knights and put his back against the castle wall. Then he could fight with his back protected. He did this, though not without receiving some spear-wounds. Then he began to fight.

The lady of the castle, whom the knights were keeping prisoner, watched the fight out of the window, and grieved for the brave young man who had so many against him. She began to speak to him in a low voice:

"Young knight, if you can only get to the left side of the castle wall, there is a secret door through which you can escape. If you look, you will see that one portion of the wall is made of black stones. Strike the stones with the hilt of your sword, and a door will open through which you can ride out."

The other knights did not hear what the lady said, for they were farther away from her than Sir Brune was. Even he could hardly catch her words. He took a quick glance to the left and saw that there was indeed a portion of the wall marked with black stones. Then he began to work his way carefully towards the secret gate.

He was obliged to move slowly for fear the knights would guess what he was doing. Moreover, it was becoming very hard to fight, because of his many wounds. However, he at last came near the door; then he backed his brown horse up against it, struck the black stones with the handle of his sword, and the door opened. The knights shouted with rage, but they were unable to reach him in time. Sir Brune escaped, leaving behind him twelve men dead.

He was very weak, and he made his way painfully to the side of the wall where the maiden Elinor waited for him. She ran to meet him, and led him gently to a brook in a forest near by. There she took off his armor and bathed his wounds, anointing them with a precious salve she carried.

Sir Brune thought that she was sorry because she had been scornful of him, and he began to talk to her. But she said:

"Do not talk to me. If you want to please me, go back to Arthur's Court."

Sir Brune did not know why she spoke so, but he was too tired to think. So he lay down on the grass by the brook and went to sleep.

Meantime, at Arthur's Court Sir Lancelot had returned from his hunting expedition, and was told how Sir Brune had gone out with a damsel on the adventure of the shield.

"Oh!" cried Sir Lancelot, "what have you done! He will surely be killed. Merlin has told me what this adventure of the shield is. Many and many a knight has taken it up and each has been killed. A knight who vows to follow this

adventure has to meet dangers of all sorts. This young untried Sir Brune will certainly be killed."

He called for his horse and arms, and said to the king:

"My lord, I will ride after this poor young man and give him what help I can. Perhaps I shall be too late; but if not, I shall ask him to give me this adventure of the shield."

Then Sir Lancelot mounted his horse and rode after Sir Brune. When he came near the brook where Sir Brune and the damsel had rested, he heard the sound of a great combat. Spurring forward he saw Sir Brune, fighting single-handed against six knights. Sir Lancelot rushed to the rescue and quickly overthrew the enemy. He found that they belonged to the company of the hundred knights whom Sir Brune had attacked. He ordered them, first of all, to free the lady of the castle, and then to go to Arthur's Court and surrender themselves to the mercy of the king.

Poor Sir Brune was almost dead, but Sir Lancelot revived him, and in a feeble voice he thanked Sir Lancelot for his help. But the damsel begged:

"Take him back to the Court of your king. I do not want him to follow this quest any longer."

"This is surely ungrateful of you," said Sir Lancelot. "He has fought bravely and well."

"The maiden scorns me, though I love her," bitterly said Sir Brune.

Then the damsel Elinor cried out:

"I will tell the truth. I love you and I am afraid you will be killed. Therefore, I wish you to return to Camelot."

Sir Brune was very glad, and he said:

"I have pledged my word and must follow this quest. When I have succeeded we shall go together back to Arthur's Court."

"Give this adventure to me," said Sir Lancelot, "and go back now with the damsel."

But Sir Brune refused. Then Sir Lancelot said that they must undertake the adventure together, and Sir Brune consenting, they rode slowly forward. Soon they came to an abbey, where they rested for some days until Sir Brune was well.

Then they traveled as the damsel gave directions. She always knew what they had to do. At times they passed through woods full of wild beasts, some of which attacked them. Again they passed over enchanted meadows where wicked magicians tried to cast spells over them. They also fought with many knights. However, they escaped all dangers, although it is certain that Sir Brune would never have succeeded without the help of Sir Lancelot.

At length the damsel Elinor told them that they were nearing the last adventure. She pointed to a castle on a hill; a square structure built of black stones, with a turret on top. The damsel told them that at the gate of the castle were two huge dragons. These they must slay.

"Whose is the castle?" asked Sir Brune.

"It belongs now to the wicked Lord Brian of the Isles," answered the damsel.

At this Sir Brune gave such a loud shout that the dragons on top of the hill heard him and roared in reply.

"Ah!" cried he, "that is the name of my enemy, who killed my dear father. At last I shall slay him."

He rode off so quickly that Sir Lancelot had much trouble to keep up with him. It seemed scarcely five minutes before they came to the dragons; terrible creatures, all of green, with eyes and tongues of flame. And their wings were as large as the sails of a ship.

Sir Brune had never before seen a dragon, but he was not afraid. He fought very bravely, and even when the teeth of the dragons crunched on his helmet, he did not lose courage. After a fierce fight of half an hour, the two knights had killed the dragons.

They hoped to rest, but at that moment the castle gate opened and a porter appeared.

"Enter and fight," he said.

Both spurred forward, but the porter said:

"One only may enter."

"Let me go," said Sir Brune to Sir Lancelot. "Remember I am to avenge my father's death. It may be that Lord Brian of the Isles is waiting just inside the gate."

Sir Lancelot consented, and the porter led in Sir Brune and locked the gate. Inside were two great knights, the brothers of Lord Brian of the Isles. They were almost as large as Sir Brune. Together they set upon him. He was already tired from his fight with the dragons, but his desire to avenge his father strengthened his arm. One brother was soon overthrown. When the other saw that, he yielded. Then Sir Brune sent them both to Sir Lancelot outside the gate.

While Sir Brune was looking about him, a third knight appeared at the end of the courtyard. He was quite as large as Sir Brune, and as he came spurring up, the noise of his horse's hoofs was deafening. Sir Brune recognized him as Sir Plenorius, the cousin of Lord Brian.

"Ah!" cried he, "where is that wretch, Lord Brian? Am I to fight with all his family before I meet with him?"

Sir Plenorius wasted no words. He rushed upon Sir Brune and struck him

with his long spear. The blow broke Sir Brune's helmet, and he had much trouble to guard his head with his shield. He fought courageously, but he became weaker and weaker. Then Sir Plenorius stopped fighting.

"I know you will never yield," he said. "You are the bravest knight I have yet seen. In truth, I loved your good father, and grieved because my cousin slew him. I have no love for my cousin, Lord Brian of the Isles, but I am vowed to fight for him as long as he lives, or until I am overcome."

Sir Brune was about to answer, but he fell back in a swoon. Sir Plenorius lifted him gently in his arms and bore him into the castle. He carried him up the winding stairs to the turret room, and gently laid him on a bed. Then he went back to the courtyard.

Meantime, Sir Lancelot, hearing the porter shout that Sir Brune was killed, beat on the gate, but nobody would let him in. Then with great difficulty he climbed the castle wall and leaped down. Sir Plenorius was just about to care for the horse of Sir Brune.

"Give me back my friend!" cried Sir Lancelot, fiercely. "Where is my friend?"

Then he began to fight with Sir Plenorius. Sir Plenorius was so much larger than Sir Lancelot that he thought he could easily overcome him. As the fight went on, however, he found himself all but defeated.

"Yield now to me," said Sir Lancelot. "I am Sir Lancelot of the Lake."

Then Sir Plenorius said:

"Ah, my good lord, I know of your fame. If we go on fighting, you will certainly kill me. Yet I do not want to yield, so I ask you to treat me as I have treated Sir Brune."

When Sir Lancelot heard how Sir Plenorius had spared Sir Brune, he said:

"You are a gentle knight. I am sorry you are vowed to the service of Lord Brian of the Isles. He shall surely die."

Sir Plenorius answered:

"When he is dead, I will come to Arthur's Court as one of his followers."

All this time Sir Brune was lying in a swoon on the bed in the turret room. But at last he came to himself and looked about him. He saw near him his sword and shield; so he lifted them up beside him. As he lay still, trying to recover his strength, he heard stealthy footsteps coming up the turret stairs. They came nearer and nearer. Suddenly, in rushed Lord Brian of the Isles. He knew that Sir Brune was there, alone and wounded, and he intended to kill him as he lay defenseless. Sir Brune understood this and he cried:

"Ah, wretch, you were ever a coward. You come to kill me as I lie wounded here, just as you killed my poor father while he slept. But the sight of you makes

me forget my wounds."

At these words, and at the fierce rage which shone in Sir Brune's eyes, Lord Brian, who was indeed a coward, tried to retreat. But Sir Brune sprang to the doorway.

"You shall never go down by these stairs, villain," he said, "for I will kill you!"

Lord Brian rushed to the window and sprang out upon the battlements. Sir Brune followed him, though with difficulty. The two began to fight, and Sir Brune soon saw that his enemy was trying to push him close to the edge of the battlements, that he might fall down into the courtyard below.

Sir Brune, at this, put himself behind Lord Brian, determined to cast him off instead. Slowly he pushed him, until Lord Brian was but a step from the edge. Then Sir Brune lifted his shield and struck his enemy with it. The wicked lord lost his footing, and was dashed to pieces at the feet of Sir Lancelot and Sir Plenorius in the courtyard below.

They ordered his soldiers to bury him, and while Sir Lancelot went to care for Sir Brune, Sir Plenorius went down the hill to find the damsel Elinor. She came back with tears of joy to Sir Brune.

When Sir Brune was well enough to travel, he visited all the castles of Lord Brian, in search of his lost mother. He was very much afraid that she was dead, but at last he found her alive, in the very castle which had belonged to his father. There was great joy at their meeting. He took her to Arthur's Court, whither Sir Lancelot had already conducted the damsel Elinor. A few days afterward Sir Brune and the damsel were married amid great festivities.



# THE ADVENTURE OF KING PELLENORE

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In Arthur's Court, every knight or lady who was found unworthy was banished; yet it often took some time to discover one's real character.

One of the ladies of Arthur's Court was named Vivien. She was very pretty, and as graceful as a willow wand, and so bright and attractive in her ways that no one suspected her of being very wicked.

Among Arthur's bravest warriors was King Pellenore. He had once had a great fight with Arthur, but after that they had become friends, and King Pellenore had been made a Knight of the Round Table. He was not often at court, for he spent much of his time seeking for adventures. Now and then he would return and put away his armor. Then he rode with the ladies or talked to the other knights.

The lady Vivien admired King Pellenore for his valor and his mighty deeds, and whenever she could she talked with him about his adventures. One afternoon she begged him to go for a long ride with her through the forest. So their horses were brought and they set forth. Just as they were passing a thick part of the wood, a beautiful golden-haired lady stepped out.

"Good sir knight," she cried to King Pellenore, "I ask your help. I am here in the wood with the dear lord who is to be my husband. He is sore wounded, for an enemy crept up behind him as we were riding to Arthur's Court, and thrust a sword in his back."

Then King Pellenore turned his horse's head toward the maiden.

"Gladly will I help," he said; "lead me, maiden."

But Vivien called him back.

"Do not go with her," she said. "She may be a witch. Ride on with me."

"She is no witch, but a good maiden," said King Pellenore.

Then the golden-haired lady spoke again. "Oh, sir knight, help me! I must go to Arthur's Court to see my father. My dear lover is going to ask permission to marry me. Help us or he will die."

"Assuredly I will help you, damsel," said King Pellenore.

Vivien held his arm, but he put her gently aside. When the wicked woman saw that he was going to leave her, she made her horse plunge and throw her to

the ground. There she lay as if in a faint.

King Pellennore did not know what to do. He felt as if he must help the beautiful lady, and yet he could not leave Vivien. So he said:

"Fair damsel, you shall have my help. I have never wanted to aid anyone so much as I do you. I must save your lover and bring you both to Arthur's Court. But let me first ride back with this lady who has swooned. Then I will return here to you."

"Alas, alas, I fear it will be too late," cried the damsel, turning back into the forest.

Then King Pellennore lifted Vivien on her horse, and tied her to its back by her long green scarf. At this she opened her eyes and groaned, and said that she was very sick. She made him ride very slowly to the court.

King Pellennore did not talk to her. He was thinking all the time of the golden-haired maiden. As soon as he reached the city gate he gave Vivien over into the care of a knight who was passing, and galloped back to the woods.

When he reached the spot where the beautiful damsel had spoken to him, he turned into the thick part of the wood and followed a narrow path. It was so narrow that the branches of the trees on both sides struck his shoulders, but still he hurried on. The path ended in a glade, and there he saw the lady and her lover lying on the grass.

"Alas, alas!" the lady said, "my dear lord is dead and I am dying."

Then King Pellennore saw that the fair young knight who lay on the ground was very pale and quiet, and that all the grass about was blood-stained.

"Ah, good knight," said the lady, "after you left me, a lion ran out of the wood and slew my lover with one stroke of his paw. He has wounded me so sorely that I too shall die."

Then King Pellennore wept.

"I wish that I had made Vivien wait here," he said, "and had helped you. I fear I have done wrong."

He sat down and took her golden head on his knee, and spoke to her gently till she died. Then he put her body and her lover's body on his horse, and walked beside them sorrowfully until he reached Arthur's Court.

Near the great hall he met Arthur and Merlin and several knights.

"I am a miserable man," he said.

Then the wise Merlin said: "You are more miserable than you know. This beautiful lady was your own daughter who was stolen from you as a child. Only lately she learned who her father was. She was coming here to seek you."

Then King Pellennore wept loudly.

"This is my punishment," he cried, "for not aiding the maiden. The one who

needs help most should be given it first, and she needed it more than Vivien. I am indeed punished."

"And you shall be punished yet more," said Merlin; "and in good time, Vivien also for the part she took. Some day the friend whom you most trust shall deceive you, and you shall be betrayed to death."

King Pellenore bowed his head meekly.

"I have deserved it," he said. "And now I must bury my dear child and her lover."

The beautiful golden-haired lady and her lover were buried with great mourning, and it was many a day before King Pellenore cared to seek for adventures.

## SIR LANCELOT & HIS FRIENDS

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Sir Lancelot was acknowledged by all the knights of the Round Table to be the bravest of their number, and the one whom the king loved most. He was not often at court, because he was nearly always engaged in adventures which took him away from the town of Camelot. The knights were always sorry when he went away, yet they were sure he would return safely and with much to tell them.

One day Sir Lancelot called his nephew Sir Lionel, and told him to mount his horse, for they must go to seek adventures. Sir Lionel was very glad, for it was a great honor to be chosen as a companion by Sir Lancelot. They rode off through a deep forest, and then across a wide, treeless plain. The sun was shining hot and bright, and when they reached a clump of trees, Sir Lancelot bade Sir Lionel dismount. Then the two sat in the shade to rest.

It was not long before Sir Lancelot fell asleep. While Sir Lionel kept guard, he saw three knights furiously pursued by another knight, who was very large. This knight overtook the three knights, one after another, and overthrew them, and bound them by the reins of their bridles. Sir Lionel, who was young and self-confident, thought that he would like to fight with this knight. So he mounted his horse very quietly without waking his uncle, and rode into the plain.

When the big knight saw him coming, he laughed and rode up quickly. At the very first stroke, young Sir Lionel fell to the earth. The strong knight bound him fast to the other three knights and drove them all to his castle. There he took off their armor and clothes, and beat them with thorny sticks. After that he threw them into a deep dungeon where there were many other knights.

Meanwhile Sir Hector, the foster father of King Arthur, hearing that Sir Lancelot and Sir Lionel had gone in search of adventures, determined to join them; so he rode hastily in pursuit. When he had gone some distance through the forest, he met a wood-cutter, and asked him if he had seen Sir Lancelot and Sir Lionel. The man replied that he had not.

"Then do you know of any adventure which I can seek?" asked Sir Hector.

The man answered:

"Sir, a mile from here is a strong castle. On one side of it is a large stream,

and by that stream a large tree. At the foot of the tree is a basin of copper. Go and strike on that three times with your spear and you will meet with an adventure."

"Thank you heartily," said Sir Hector.

He rode on and soon came to the tree. Hanging on it were a great many shields, and among them Sir Lionel's. There were also shields which belonged to other knights of the Round Table. Sir Hector knew that the knights must be prisoners, and he grew very angry.

He struck sharply on the copper basin, and at once a huge knight appeared.

"Come forward and fight!" cried the knight.

"That I will," said Sir Hector.

"But I shall win," said the knight, "for I am the great Sir Turquaine."

Sir Hector had heard of this powerful knight whom so many of Arthur's lords had tried in vain to overthrow. But he was a brave old man, and so he began to fight fearlessly. He wounded the big knight once, but the knight wounded him many times, and at last overcame him. He picked Sir Hector up and carried him under his right arm into the castle.

"You are very brave," he said, when they had reached the great hall. "You are the first knight who has wounded me these twelve years. Now I shall give you your freedom if you will swear to be a follower of mine."

"I shall never swear that," said Sir Hector; "I am a follower of King Arthur."

"I am sorry for that," said Sir Turquaine, "for now I must treat you as I do all my other prisoners."

Then he took off Sir Hector's armor and clothes, and beat him with the thorny stick, and threw him into the dungeon. There the old man found Sir Lionel and many other knights.

"Is Sir Lancelot here?" asked Sir Hector, feebly.

"No," said Sir Lionel, and told how he had left Sir Lancelot sleeping.

Then Sir Hector became cheerful.

"Sir Lancelot will surely find us," he said, "and give us our freedom."

But Sir Lancelot still slept on under the tree. Soon four beautiful ladies rode by, and, seeing a sleeping knight, dismounted to look at him. They at once recognized him as Sir Lancelot, the bravest knight in the land. One of these ladies was Morgan le Fay, whom Arthur had forgiven for her treachery to him. She said to her companions:

"I will cast a spell over him, and we will carry him to my castle. Then, when he wakes, we will make him choose one of us as his wife."

The other three agreed, and Morgan le Fay cast her spell. Then the four women lifted the knight upon his horse and went with him to the castle of

Morgan le Fay. They put the knight in a richly decorated chamber and left him.

In the morning he awoke and wondered where he was. Soon a fair damsel entered with food, and he asked her to explain how he came to be in that place.

"Sir, I cannot," she said. "But I can tell you this much: you are under a spell. In twelve hours the spell will break, and perhaps I can help you then."

After the damsel had gone out, the four ladies entered. They were clad in most beautiful robes. One had on silk that looked like the foam of the sea. Another had on velvet that seemed like moss from the forest. The third wore satin that was the color of maple leaves in autumn. Morgan le Fay wore a robe that looked like a storm-cloud, and her diamonds were like stars.

"Choose one of us for your wife," she said, "and you shall be very happy."

But Sir Lancelot said:

"Fair ladies, I have no wish to marry. I would rather fight for my good King Arthur who needs me."

At this the ladies were angry.

"You shall stay here till you choose," they said. "And if you will not choose, then you shall die in prison."

They went out, and Sir Lancelot remained alone all day. At dusk the fair damsel came to him.

"My lord," she said, "the spell is broken now, and I can help you. These ladies are not kind to me, and I am going to run away. I will take you with me on one condition."

"Name it, damsel," he said.

"I am a king's daughter," she said. "My father is King Bagdemagus."

"He is a good man," Sir Lancelot said. "I know him well."

"My father has been fighting in a tournament," said the maiden, "and has been overcome, with all his knights. He feels very sad. Now, in two days there will be another tournament at which he must fight. If you help him, he will surely win and be happy again."

"I will gladly help him," said Sir Lancelot.

Then the damsel bade him walk softly with her. She opened twelve great doors one after another. Each had a lock with a key so heavy that the maiden had to use both hands to turn it. At last they reached the courtyard, and there she gave Sir Lancelot his horse and armor. She also mounted a horse, and the two rode away.

After riding all night, they came to the court of King Bagdemagus. He was overjoyed to welcome Sir Lancelot, for well he knew that none could overcome that good knight in combat. All day there was music and dancing and feasting. Sir Lancelot, however, could not be merry. He kept thinking of his nephew, Sir

Lionel, and wondering where he was.

On the morning of the tournament Sir Lancelot asked King Bagdemagus to furnish him with a white shield, because he did not want to be known. The king did so, and also gave each of the three knights who rode with him a shield of the same color. Sir Lancelot went with the knights into a little leafy wood near the field where the tournament was to be held.

Meanwhile King Bagdemagus rode to the tournament with sixty men, and met there the king of Northgalis with eighty men. They began to fight, and soon those on the side of King Bagdemagus began to be worsted. Then Sir Lancelot, with the three knights, dashed out of the little wood and into the thick of the fight.

No one could stand against Sir Lancelot. One of King Arthur's knights, Sir Modred, the brother of Sir Gawain and Sir Gareth, was fighting against King Bagdemagus. Not knowing who Sir Lancelot was, he rushed upon him. Sir Lancelot unhorsed him, but would not hurt him, because he was a Knight of the Round Table. Years afterward he was sorry he had not killed him, for Sir Modred proved to be a traitor to King Arthur.

Sir Lancelot fought so well that, for his sake, all the prizes of the tournament were given to King Bagdemagus, who was greatly rejoiced, and offered large gifts to Sir Lancelot, and begged him to be his guest for a time. But Sir Lancelot was so anxious to find out what had become of Sir Lionel that he could not remain. So the next day he set forth.

He rode back towards the clump of trees where he had fallen asleep while Sir Lionel kept watch. On the highway he met a damsel riding on a white palfrey.

"Fair damsel," said Sir Lancelot, "can you tell me of any adventures hereabouts? I am Sir Lancelot of the Lake."

"Oh, Sir Lancelot," said she, "it is indeed fortunate that you have come, for there is here a knight named Sir Turquaine who has put in prison many of the knights of the Round Table. You shall fight with him for the freedom of your friends."

Then she turned her horse, and Sir Lancelot gladly followed her. She brought him to the tree on which hung the shields of his brother knights. Sir Lancelot let his horse drink a little water, and then he struck on the iron basin at the foot of the tree so fiercely that the bottom fell out.

No one appeared, however. Then he rode up to the castle of Sir Turquaine. Near the gate he met the big knight. He was on foot, driving his horse before him. On the horse lay a knight, securely bound. Sir Lancelot recognized him as Sir Gaheris, the brother of Sir Gawain and Sir Gareth.

"Put down the knight," said Sir Lancelot. "Mount and fight."

"Gladly," said Sir Turquaine. "Before long you will be sorry for your challenge."

Then the two rode at each other. Their horses' feet beat the dust into clouds, and they used their swords so fiercely that their armor rang continually like the clanging of heavy bells. They fought until they were breathless, each bleeding from many wounds. Then Sir Turquaine, leaning on his sword, said:

"By my faith, never have I fought with such a strong man before. I admire you, and I would be your friend. You fight as they say that knight does whom I hate most in all this world. If you are not that knight, I give you my friendship, and shall free all my prisoners for your sake."

"That is well said," replied Sir Lancelot. "Tell me who this knight is whom you hate so much."

"He is Sir Lancelot of the Lake. For hatred of him, I kill or imprison all the knights of the Round Table whom I can find."

"Then let us begin to fight again," said Sir Lancelot, "for I am Sir Lancelot of the Lake."

Then they struck at each other furiously, and soon gave each other so many wounds that the ground was covered with blood. Sir Turquaine was a brave man, but he was not so strong as Sir Lancelot. After a long conflict he fell, mortally wounded, to the ground. Then Sir Lancelot unlaced his helmet and eased him as well as he could till he died. Afterwards he left Sir Turquaine, and went to the porter who held the keys of the castle.

Sir Lancelot took the keys and unlocked the doors of the prison. He led the poor knights out into the daylight and struck off their chains. Sir Lionel and Sir Hector were overjoyed to see that their deliverer was indeed Sir Lancelot. Each knight found his own armor in the armory, and his own horse in the stables. After that a servant came with four horses laden down with venison, and the poor knights, who for a long time had had nothing but bread and water, enjoyed a good meal. Then Sir Lancelot rode away in search of new adventures.



# HOW SIR LANCELOT SAVED THE QUEEN

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One day in May Queen Guinevere invited ten ladies and ten knights to ride a-Maying with her the next morning in the woods. So at the appointed time they assembled, all dressed in green silk and green velvet, the color of young grass. The knights wore white plumes in their helmets, and the ladies wore white May-blossoms in their hair. They rode off very happily, telling the king that they would return before noon.

Now the good King Bagdemagus, for whom Sir Lancelot had fought, had a bad son named Sir Malgrace. For a long time he had wanted to capture the queen and carry her off to his castle. He had been afraid to try, however, because of her large bodyguard. All the young knights of the Round Table liked to ride with her and protect her. They took good care of all the ladies of the Court, but they loved the queen most.

When Sir Malgrace heard that the queen was out a-Maying with only a few knights, and these not fully armed, he determined to take her prisoner. So he called together eighty men-at-arms and a hundred archers, and set out. Soon he came upon her and her attendants. They were sitting on a little hill, with wreaths of flowers and leaves on their arms and necks. Before they could rise to their feet, Sir Malgrace and his men dashed upon them.

"Traitor!" cried the queen. "What would you do?"

"I will carry you to my castle, fair queen," he said. "And never again shall you go free."

"I will not go with you," said the queen.

Then the ten knights drew their swords and set on the hundred and eighty men of Sir Malgrace. They fought so well that they overthrew forty. Still, they could do little against such numbers, and soon all were wounded. When the queen saw this, she cried out:

"Sir Malgrace, do not slay my noble knights, and I will go with you. I would rather die than cause them further harm."

The knights said that they would rather perish than be prisoners to Sir Malgrace. However, upon an order from their lord, the archers tied up the wounds of the queen's followers, and put them on horseback. Then the whole

company rode slowly towards the castle of Sir Malgrace.

Sir Malgrace kept close to the queen for fear she would escape. Once when they were in a thick part of the wood he rode ahead to break the branches so that they should not strike her face. Then the queen whispered to a little maiden who rode near her:

"If you can do so, slip away from the company. You are so small that perhaps they will not notice you. Take this ring and give it to our greatest knight, Sir Lancelot, and pray him to come and rescue me."

The little maid waited until she thought the time for escape had come, and rode off as quietly as she could. Sir Malgrace saw her go, and suspected that the queen had sent her. He ordered his archers to shoot at the child, but she escaped unhurt.

"Madam," said Sir Malgrace to the queen, "I know well that you have sent for Sir Lancelot, but you may be sure that hither he shall never come."

Then Sir Malgrace ordered his archers to stand guard on the road and shoot down any knight they saw.

"But if he should be Sir Lancelot," he said, "be sure that you do not venture very close to him, for he is hard to overcome."

Meantime the little maid reached Arthur's Court in safety. She found the king and his knights very anxious because the queen had not returned. She told her story, and gave the queen's ring to Sir Lancelot.

"Bring me my armor!" shouted Sir Lancelot. "I will rescue my good and dear queen before the night falls. I would rather see her safe here again than own all France."

He put on his armor and mounted his white horse and rode off without delay. The little maid led him to the place where the ten knights had fought with the hundred and eighty. From this point he traced them by the blood on the grass and on the road. At last he reached the archers.

"Turn back," they said. "No one may pass here."

"That I will not," said Sir Lancelot. "I am a Knight of the Round Table, and therefore have the right of way throughout the land."

At that they shot their arrows at him. He was wounded with many of them, and his white horse was killed. Sir Lancelot tried to reach the men, but there were so many hedges and ditches in the way that he could not. They hastened back to tell Sir Malgrace that a knight whom they had not succeeded in killing was coming to the castle.

Sir Lancelot tried to walk, but his armor was too heavy for him to carry in his wounded state. He dared not leave any of it behind, for he would need it all in fighting. Just as he was wondering what he could do, a carter passed him,

driving a rough wagon.

"Carter," said Sir Lancelot, "let me ride in your wagon to the castle of Sir Malgrace."

The carter was amazed, for in that day a knight never entered into a cart unless he was a condemned man going to be hanged. Sir Lancelot, however, did not stop to explain. He jumped into the cart and told the driver to go quickly.

Some of the ladies of Queen Guinevere were looking out of their window, and one said to her:

"See, my queen, there is a poor knight going to be hanged."

The queen looked out of the window and recognized Sir Lancelot by the three lions blazoned upon his shield. She was overjoyed, and waved him a glad greeting as he came up to the castle gate.

Sir Lancelot beat on the gate with his shield, and cried:

"Come out, false traitor, Sir Malgrace; come out and fight. If you do not, you will be branded as a coward forever."

At first Sir Malgrace thought that he would keep his gates shut fast and not answer the challenge. But in those days it was a sign of great cowardice not to accept a challenge. Moreover, since Sir Lancelot had been able to reach the castle in spite of the archers, he was afraid other knights of the Round Table might do the same. Then they would besiege him and force him to surrender. Still he was afraid to fight. So he went to Queen Guinevere and said:

"Fair queen, remember how I saved your ten knights when I could have killed them. Now I am sorry I took you prisoner. I beg that you will go to Sir Lancelot and urge him not to fight. Then I will entertain him in this castle with the best I have, and to-morrow you shall all go back to the court."

Then the queen said:

"Peace is always better than war. I will do the best I can."

So she went down to Sir Lancelot, who still beat upon the gate, and besought him to come in peaceably, for Sir Malgrace was sorry for what he had done. Sir Lancelot was unwilling, for he knew that Sir Malgrace was a traitor, deserving punishment. Still, he could not refuse the queen anything she asked him, and, therefore, he entered the castle.

Sir Malgrace greeted him with politeness, and served to him and to the others of Arthur's Court, a great banquet. After that, to the surprise of everyone, he rose and accused the queen of treason. All the company was astonished. Sir Lancelot was very angry.

"If you say the queen is a traitress," he cried, "you shall fight with me, although you were afraid just now."

"I am not afraid to fight," said Sir Malgrace.

"When and where will you meet me in combat?" asked Sir Lancelot.

"In eight days," replied Sir Malgrace, "in the field near Westminster."

Sir Lancelot agreed to this. Then Queen Guinevere rose with all her attendants and went into the courtyard. Their horses were brought them and they mounted. Sir Lancelot was the last to pass out of the banquet hall. As he was going through the door he stepped upon a trap which Sir Malgrace had prepared for him. The trapdoor fell and dropped him into a dark dungeon.

When the queen and her knights and ladies had ridden out of the courtyard, they noticed that Sir Lancelot was not with them. They supposed, however, that he had ridden off by himself, as was often his custom, so they went without him to Camelot, and told the king what had happened. He was very angry at Sir Malgrace's accusation, but he was sure that Sir Lancelot would punish Sir Malgrace, and so vindicate Queen Guinevere.

Meantime, the unhappy Sir Lancelot lay bruised in the dungeon, feeling very sure that Sir Malgrace meant to starve him to death. He lay hungry and thirsty for nearly two days. Then Sir Malgrace peeped in to see if he were dead.

"Ah, traitor!" cried Sir Lancelot, "I shall overcome you yet."

At that Sir Malgrace shut the trapdoor hastily, as if he were afraid that Sir Lancelot could leap up ten feet in the air. That one look, however, cost the wicked knight dear, for the daughter of the porter saw him shutting the trapdoor, and was curious to know who was in the dungeon. So at night she opened the trapdoor and let herself down by a rope.

When she saw Sir Lancelot she was very sorry for him. He offered her much money if she would free him. At last she said:

"I will do it for love of Queen Guinevere and not for money."

She let him climb up by the rope, and took him out of the courtyard. He was so sick that he went to a hermit's hut and rested for several days. When next Sir Malgrace looked into the dungeon he heard no movement. Then he rejoiced greatly, for he thought Sir Lancelot was dead.

When the eighth day had come, all the knights of the Round Table assembled in the tournament field and waited for Sir Lancelot to appear. They all thought he would surely come. But Sir Malgrace rode jauntily about the field. Many of the knights wondered at his courage, not knowing the reason for his confidence.

The herald blew his trumpet once, but Sir Lancelot did not appear; twice, and still he did not come. Then up started several knights and begged the king to let them fight instead of Sir Lancelot.

"He has been trapped," they said, "or he would be here."

While the king was hesitating whom to choose, in rode Sir Lancelot. He dashed up to Sir Malgrace.

"Here I am, traitor," he said. "Now do your worst."

Then they fought, but at the first stroke Sir Malgrace fell to the earth.

"Mercy!" he cried, "I yield to you, Sir Knight. Do not slay me. I put myself in the king's hands and yours."

Sir Lancelot was much vexed. He wanted to kill Sir Malgrace for his treachery, and yet, since the man had asked for mercy, he could not. So he said:

"What, coward, would you stop already? Shame upon you! Get up and fight."

"I shall not rise unless you take me as one who has yielded," answered the knight.

Then Sir Lancelot said:

"Traitor, I make you this offer: I will take off my helmet, unarm my left side, and tie my left hand behind my back. In that way I will fight with you."

Upon hearing this, Sir Malgrace rose to his feet, sure now of killing Sir Lancelot.

"My lord King," cried Sir Malgrace, "you have heard this offer. I accept."

The king was very sorry that Sir Lancelot had made the offer. However, it was impossible to withdraw it. A squire came and disarmed Sir Lancelot, so that his head and left side were without cover; and since he had only one arm to fight with, he could not use his shield.

Then Sir Malgrace dashed at him, aiming for his left side. Sir Lancelot waited till he was very near, and then lightly stepped aside. Before Sir Malgrace could turn, Sir Lancelot lifted his spear and struck his enemy such a blow that he broke his breastplate and pierced his heart.

The body of Sir Malgrace was carried off the field and taken to the castle of his good father; Queen Guinevere was proclaimed innocent of treason; and Sir Lancelot was honored more than ever by his king and his queen.

## SIR LANCELOT AND ELAINE

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Every year King Arthur's knights held a grand tournament among themselves, and contended in friendly combat for a prize. This prize was a diamond.

Once, in the early days of his kingship, Arthur was walking on a craggy hill, when he came upon the skeleton of a man who had once been a ruler. The skull still wore a gold crown set with nine large diamonds. King Arthur took the crown and had the diamonds unset. Each year at the friendly tournament he gave one of these diamonds as a prize.

There had been eight tournaments, and at each Sir Lancelot had won the diamond. The jewel that was to be given as a prize at the ninth tournament was the largest and most beautiful of all. Everyone, of course, expected that Sir Lancelot would win it, but only a few days before the contest he announced to the king that he would not compete.

Then the queen was vexed, for she loved Sir Lancelot more than all the other knights, and it gave her great joy to see him always successful in the tournaments. Therefore she urged him to change his decision.

"My queen," he said, "I told the king I would not fight."

The queen replied:

"My advice is that you go in disguise. The knights who contest with you do so but half-heartedly, for they know your great fame and feel sure of failure. If they did not know who you were, they would fight better and win more glory for themselves. Then fight as a stranger knight, and afterwards explain to the king."

Sir Lancelot took her advice. He rode away over the woods and hills till he came to the castle of Astolat, where he decided to stop and ask for a disguise. He knocked on the gate, which was opened by an old dumb servant, and entered the courtyard. The lord of Astolat came to meet him with his two sons, Sir Torre and Sir Lavaine, and his beautiful daughter Elaine. The lord of the castle said:

"Fair sir, whoever you are, you are welcome. You seem to me much like a Knight of the Round Table."

"That I am," said Sir Lancelot. "Hereafter I will tell you my name; at present I wish to remain unknown. I must enter the coming tournament as an unknown

knight, and I should like to leave with you my great shield, for it is as well known in Camelot as I. Will you keep it and lend me another one?"

Then answered the Lord of Astolat:

"You may take the shield of my son Torre. He was hurt in his first tournament, and has not been able to fight since. My son Lavaine will gladly go with you to the tournament. Perhaps," added the lord, laughing, "he can win the diamond, and put it in his sister Elaine's hair."

"Nay, father, do not make me ashamed before this noble knight," said the young Lavaine. "I know I can never win the diamond for Elaine, but I can at least do my best to fight."

"Gladly will I take you for a companion," said Sir Lancelot, "and if you can, win the diamond for this fair maiden."

"Such a diamond," said Sir Torre, "is fit for a queen, and not for a simple girl."

Sir Lancelot smiled to himself. He was sure that he should win the diamond. Then he meant to give it with the eight others to Queen Guinevere. He spoke kindly, however, to the beautiful Elaine.

"In truth, this fair maiden is fit to be a queen."

Then Elaine lifted her eyes and looked at him. He was twice as old as she was. His face was cut and scarred with wounds which he had received in battle, but as she looked at him, she loved him, and felt that she would continue to love him till the day of her death.

They went into the great hall where a supper was laid. Sir Lancelot talked of King Arthur and his goodness and all his glorious deeds. Elaine thought that even Arthur could not be so brave as this wonderful lord. All night long she dreamed of him. In the morning she rose early and went down in the courtyard where Sir Lancelot and Sir Lavaine were mounting their horses.

"Fair lord," she said boldly to Sir Lancelot, "will you wear my token in your helmet?"

Then said Sir Lancelot:

"Fair maiden, I have never worn favor nor token for any lady in the tournaments. This is well known to be my custom."

"But if you wear my token," she said, "there will be far less likelihood of your being known by your fellow knights."

"That is very true, my child," he said. "Bring it to me. What is it?"

She held it out to him; it was a red sleeve embroidered with pearls. Sir Lancelot bound it in his helmet and said:

"I have never done so much before for any maiden."

Then he and Sir Lavaine bade Elaine farewell, and the beautiful maiden ran

up to the tower of the castle and watched them from the window for a long time. When they were out of sight she asked the old dumb servant to carry Sir Lancelot's shield to the tower. It was a large shield of silver, with three lions emblazoned upon it in gold and blue, but its polished surface was covered with dents and scratches. Elaine knelt before it, and made a story for each scratch and mark, picturing to herself the contests in which the good shield had taken part. For many weeks she stayed near it all day long in the turret, watching for Sir Lancelot and her brother to return.

Meanwhile those two had ridden lightly to Camelot, and when they were almost there, Sir Lancelot told Sir Lavaine his name. The young man was astonished. He was very happy, too, to think that he was a companion to the great knight of whom he had heard so often.

When Sir Lancelot and Sir Lavaine arrived at the field where the tournament was to be held, they stood looking at the king, who sat upon the great carved chair which had dragons' heads for the arms and the back. On his red robe was embroidered a golden dragon, and a golden dragon was also on his crown. Above him, set in a canopy, was the ninth diamond. All about the king to left and right were rows of ladies whose robes gave to the pavilion in which they sat the brilliant hues of the rainbow.

Sir Lancelot said to young Sir Lavaine:

"Look at the king. You think I am great, but he is greater than I. I can fight better than he can, but his soul is greater than mine. Aim to become a Knight of the Round Table, and follow the example of goodness which Arthur sets for his knights."

At this moment the trumpets blew as a signal that the tournament was to begin. The knights spurred their horses forward, and in a moment their spears and shields clashed. Sir Lancelot rode lightly here and there, overthrowing everyone with whom he contested. All wondered at the skill of this unknown knight. Then Sir Lancelot's kinsmen, his nephew, Sir Lionel, and others, were angry and jealous.

"Our Sir Lancelot should be here," they said, "to overcome this stranger knight."

"Perhaps this is Sir Lancelot," said one. "Two knights cannot fight so well in this world. It must be Sir Lancelot."

"No, no," said the others; "Sir Lancelot would never wear a lady's favor, and this knight wears a red sleeve embroidered with pearls. Let us set on this man and teach him that if Sir Lancelot is not here, we, his kinsmen, will fight for his fame."

Then all together they bore down on Sir Lancelot. His horse went down in



the shock, and he himself was wounded. A spear had pierced his breastplate and snapped off in his side.

Young Sir Lavaine rushed to help Sir Lancelot. The great knight rose slowly and, with the help of his friend, drove back his kith and kin to the far side of the field. Then sounded a great blare of trumpets, and the king proclaimed the stranger knight victor.

"Come forward," the herald cried, "and take your diamond."

But poor Sir Lancelot said:

"Talk not to me of diamonds. Give me air. I fear me I have received my death wound. Let me go hence, and I bid you follow me not."

Sir Lavaine helped him upon his horse, and they two rode slowly off the field. When they were near the neighboring forest the great knight fell from his horse and cried:

"Pull forth the spear-head which is in my side."

"Oh, my lord," said Sir Lavaine, "I am afraid you will die if I draw it forth."

"I shall die if you leave it," said Sir Lancelot.

So Sir Lavaine drew it forth quickly, causing Sir Lancelot to faint from the pain. Then a hermit who lived near by came to them, and bore the wounded knight into his hut, where for many a week Sir Lancelot lay between life and death.

When Arthur found that the unknown knight had gone, no one knew whither, he was sorry. He called the light-hearted Sir Gawain and said to him:

"Go forth, take this diamond and seek the stranger knight. Do not cease from your search till you have left the diamond in his hand."

Then Arthur went to the queen. She had been ill and had not attended the tournament. When the king told her all that had happened, she cried:

"A stranger knight! My lord, my lord! That was our dear Sir Lancelot. He was fighting in disguise."

"Alas! he is hurt," said the king. "Perhaps he is dying. He said that he would not fight. He should have told me that he meant to fight in disguise. The truth, my queen, is always best."

"Yes, my good lord, I know it," she said. "If I had but let our Lancelot tell the truth, perhaps he would not have been wounded. You would have called on his kinsmen to cease."

For many days the king and Guinevere waited in deep anxiety for news of Sir Lancelot. Meantime, Sir Gawain rode forth and sought for the great knight in vain. At last he came to the castle of Astolat, where he was welcomed by the lord and Sir Torre and the fair Elaine. He told them the result of the tournament, and how the stranger knight had won. They showed him Sir Lancelot's shield.

"Ah!" said Elaine, when he had told them the name of the unknown knight, "I knew that he must be great."

Sir Gawain guessed by the expression of her beautiful face that she loved Sir Lancelot. So he said:

"Fair maiden, when he returns here for his shield, give him this diamond, which is the prize he won. Perhaps he will prize it the more because you put it into his hand."

Then Sir Gawain bade them farewell and rode off, lightly singing. When he told Arthur what he had done, the king said:

"You should have done as I bade you, Gawain. Sir Lancelot deceived me about his disguise, and you have disobeyed me. The kingdom will surely fail if the king and his rules are not honored. Obedience is the courtesy due to kings."

Meanwhile the fair Elaine went to her father and said:

"Dear father, let me go and seek the wounded Sir Lancelot and my brother."

"Nay," said the lord, "it is not a fitting thing for a young maiden like you to seek a wounded knight. He is not your lover. It cannot be."

"I would give him his diamond," she said, "and since he is so sorely wounded, I would take care of him. It is not fitting, my father, but I cannot live unless I know where he is and how he does."

Then, because he loved his child very much and had never refused any request she made of him, the old lord let her go in care of Sir Torre. The two rode for a long time, until at last, near Camelot, they met Sir Lavaine. Elaine ran up to him and cried:

"Lavaine, take me to Sir Lancelot."

Sir Lavaine was much astonished that Elaine knew the name of the stranger knight. He was glad to see her, because he thought she could help his friend. Sir Lancelot seemed glad to see her, too, and the beautiful maiden cared for him so tenderly that the old hermit said he never could have recovered without her nursing. When he was well enough, they all rode to the castle of Astolat.

There Sir Lancelot remained for a few days; then he took his shield and prepared to return to Camelot. Before he went he asked Elaine if he could not do something for her in return for her care of him.

She grew very pale and then she said:

"I am going to say something which I should not. I love you. Take me with you to Camelot."

Sir Lancelot said very gently:

"My poor little maiden, if I had meant to take a wife, I should have wedded earlier. All the court knows that I love only the king and the queen. You do not really love me. Some day you will marry a young knight, and then I shall give

you many castles and much land as a dowry."

"I will have nothing of all that," said Elaine.

She turned away and climbed up to the tower, while her father said to Sir Lancelot:

"I pray you, be discourteous in some way so that she will cease to love you. Such love is madness."

"It is not my habit to be discourteous," said Sir Lancelot. "However, when she stands at the turret window to wave me farewell, I will not look up at her."

Sir Lancelot rode sadly away, and did not look up at the window where Elaine stood. She watched him till he disappeared, and then she fell in a swoon. Day after day she pined away, and one morning she said to her father:

"Dear father, I am going to die. When I am dead, take my bed and cover it with rich draperies. Then dress me in my most beautiful clothes; put a letter I have here in my hand, and lay me on the bed. Set it on a barge, and let our dumb servant steer it down the river to Camelot."

Her father wept, and promised to do all that she asked.

Sir Lancelot had gone to the Court, where he was received with great rejoicing. For many days the knights and ladies held great feasting in his honor, and the king and the queen would hardly allow him to leave their presence. One day while the three stood looking out of the palace window, they saw a black barge come slowly down the river.

It stopped at the palace door, and the king, going down, saw on it the beautiful maiden Elaine, pale in death. She was dressed in white satin, and bore a lily in her left hand and a letter in her right. The king ordered two of his knights, the good Sir Galahad and Sir Perceval, to carry Elaine into his great hall. Then Arthur read the letter, which said:

"Most noble lord, Sir Lancelot of the Lake: I, Elaine, the maid of Astolat, come to take my last farewell of you, for you left me without a farewell. I loved you, and my love had no return, and so I died."

The knights and ladies wept. Sir Lancelot said to Arthur:

"My king, I grieve for the death of this maiden, but as I did not love her, I could not wed her."

The king answered:

"You are not to blame, Sir Lancelot. The world has in it much that is sad as well as much that is joyous. There are happenings for which no human being can be blamed. It would be a fitting deed, however, if you had this maiden richly buried."

Sir Lancelot ordered a splendid funeral, such as should be given to a queen. Over Elaine's grave was raised a beautiful tomb on which was carved her figure,

with the left hand holding a lily; at her feet lay the shield of Sir Lancelot, and the sad story of her death was written on the tomb in letters of gold and blue.

# THE SEARCH FOR THE HOLY GRAIL

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In Arthur's Court there were many virtuous knights and ladies, but the best of all was a beautiful maiden, sister to Sir Perceval. She was so good that the evil in the world oppressed her, and she could be happy only when she was praying for all people to be made better.

Once a good old man told her what was meant by the Holy Grail.

"Grail," he said, "is the word for the cup out of which our Lord Jesus drank, the night that he held the last supper with his disciples. Therefore, it is called holy. There is a tradition which says that for a long time after the death of Christ the Holy Grail remained on earth, and any one who was sick and touched it was healed at once. But then people grew to be so wicked that it disappeared from earth. It is said that if a person in our day were only good enough, he could see the Holy Grail."

"Really see it?" asked the maiden, eagerly, "or see it in a vision?"

"I do not know," answered the good old man, "but either one would be a great happiness. For a real sight of it, or a vision, would show the person who saw it that he was sinless."

Then the beautiful maiden prayed more than ever. She became so thin and pale that it seemed as if she were almost transparent, and at last she lay dying. One morning she sent for her brother, Sir Perceval, and for his friend, Sir Galahad.

Sir Perceval and Sir Galahad were the two best knights in Arthur's Court. They were not so powerful as Sir Lancelot or Sir Geraint or Sir Gareth, but they had purer souls than these. When they came to the bedside of the maiden, she said:

"Oh, my brother and my friend, I have seen the Holy Grail. Last night I was awakened by a sound like the music of a silver horn across the hills. It was more beautiful music than any I have ever heard. Then through my window shone a long cold beam of silver light, and slowly across that beam came the Holy Grail. It was red like a beautiful rose, and the light reflected from it covered all the walls with a rosy color. And then it vanished. Now I beg you to seek it; and go to the hall of Arthur and tell all the other knights to take the quest. If they can but

see the Grail, it will be a sign that they are good, and that the world is growing better."

As she spoke, Sir Galahad's face wore an expression so like her own that Sir Perceval was amazed. But the maiden took from the side of her bed a sword-belt, and gave it to Sir Galahad.

"Fair knight," she said, "I have made this golden belt of my hair, and woven on it, in crimson and silver thread, the device of the Holy Grail. Put on this belt, bind your sword to it, and go forth; for you, too, shall see the Holy Grail."

Then Sir Galahad and Sir Perceval went away quietly, for they saw that the beautiful maiden had not long to live. That night they went to Arthur's hall. The king was absent with the queen, but most of the knights of the Round Table were there, and to them Sir Galahad and Sir Perceval told the vision that Sir Perceval's sister had seen.

As they spoke, suddenly the torches in the hall were extinguished; there was a loud sound like thunder and a sudden cracking of the roof. Then a beam of light, seven times stronger than day, streamed into the room. Across the beam stole the Holy Grail. But it was covered by a luminous cloud, so that its shape could not be seen. Slowly it vanished away.

There was silence in the hall for a long time; the knights were awe-struck and could not speak. At last Sir Perceval rose in his seat and said in a low tone:

"My sister saw the vision of the Holy Grail, but I, because I am more sinful, have seen it covered with a cloud. Yet because I wish to see it, I vow to spend twelve months and a day in search of it. I will pray, and live as holy a life as I can, and perhaps this vision will be mine."

Then good Sir Bors, the cousin of Sir Lancelot, made the same vow, as did also Sir Galahad and Sir Lancelot and Sir Gawain and many others. After the vows had been taken, King Arthur entered. When all had been explained to him, his face grew sorrowful.

"If I had been here," he said, "I should not have allowed you to swear the vow. None of you really saw the Grail; you say it was covered with a cloud."

Then Sir Galahad cried out:

"My king, I saw the Grail, all crimson like a ruby, and I heard a voice which said, 'O Galahad, O Galahad, follow me!'"

"Ah, Galahad," said the king, tenderly, "you are fit for this quest, this search, but the others are not. Sir Lancelot is our strongest warrior, but he is not like Sir Galahad. Most of you, my knights, are men with strength and will to right wrongs; that is the work you are fitted for. You have fought in twelve great battles with the heathen, but only one of you is fit for this holiest of visions. Yet go, and fulfill your vow."

The faces of the knights were downcast. The king continued:

"While you are gone, I shall need your strength here at home, but you will be following a wandering fire. Many of you will never return."

All the company felt sad. The next day when the knights departed upon their quest, the king could hardly speak for grief, and many of the knights and ladies wept. Those who had sworn the vow went together to the great gate of the city of Camelot, and there they separated.

During the next twelvemonth many a poor laborer who had been wronged came to Arthur's Court to find a knight who would fight for him, and many a poor widow and maiden. But because so many of the knights of the Round Table were absent there was little help to be had, and Arthur's face grew sadder and sadder as time went on.

At last, after the twelvemonth and the day had passed, those in Camelot began to look for the return of the knights who had taken the vow. Alas, though they waited all day long, only Sir Gawain, Sir Bors, Sir Perceval, and Sir Lancelot returned. In the evening the knights of the Round Table assembled in the great hall. When each was seated, the king rose, and said to those who had been upon the quest:

"My lords, I need only look at your faces to know that you have fared ill. I dare not think of those of you who have not come back. And now, Perceval, my knight who, next to Galahad, has the purest soul, tell me what has happened to you."

Sir Perceval rose slowly from his chair and said:

"Dear my liege, when I left your court on the sad morning that we all set forth, I did not feel the grief that many of the other knights felt. I had been fighting so well, so many lances had gone down before my stroke, that I was full of confidence in what I could do.

"I rode happily, planning all the great victories I should win. I was sure if I righted a great many wrongs, I should soon see the Grail. But after many days I began to grow weary. I was riding through rough forests, and the branches bruised me and my horse; there seemed to be no great deeds to do. I could not even slay wild beasts, and so be of use to the poor country people. My bed was on the hard ground, and my food was wild berries.

"One day I came to a great castle, and here I decided to rest. When I entered, I was warmly greeted and brought to the princess of the castle. I found her to be one whom I had loved long ago in her father's court. I was but a young squire and she was a great princess, and so I had gone away without telling her how dear I held her.

"She greeted me kindly, and after a time she began to love me. Soon I

wondered whether I was fit to see the Holy Grail. I thought perhaps I was one of those who were pursuing a wandering fire. And then the people of the castle begged me to marry their princess, and be their lord and live a happy and easeful life.

"One night I awoke, and thought longingly of the Holy Grail. Whether I were fit to see the vision or not, I had at least sworn to seek it for a year and a day. And yet, I had not tried two months! I rose hastily, dressed, and left the castle. Then for many days I prayed and mourned. At last I sought a holy hermit, and told him all I had done and thought since I had left Arthur's Court.

"The good hermit, after a short silence, said: 'My son, you have not true humility. You have been too proud of your strength, and too sure in the beginning that you were fit for the vision. You have always thought first of yourself and your own glory, and not of the good you could do.'

"I went into the chapel of this hermit, and prayed to be relieved of the sin of pride. As I prayed, Sir Galahad entered. He was clad in silver armor, and his face looked like that of an angel.

"'Oh, my brother,' he said, 'have you not seen the Grail?' And after I had answered, he said:

"'From the moment when I left the court of our king, the vision has been with me. It is faint in the daytime, but at night it shines blood red. I see it on the mountains, and in the lakes, and on the marshes. It has made me so strong that everywhere I am able to do good. I have broken down many evil customs. I have fought with pagan hordes and been victor, all because of this blessed vision. Perceval, I have not long to live. I am going to the great city above, which is more beautiful than any earthly city. Come out with me this night, and before you die you shall see this vision.'

"Then I followed Sir Galahad out of the chapel. We climbed a hill which was steep and rugged, Sir Galahad going first, and his silver armor guiding me. When we came to the top, a storm broke over us, and the lightning seemed to follow us as we descended the hill on the other side. At the bottom of it there was a great black swamp, leading to the sea. It was crossed by a huge bridge built by some forgotten king. Here Sir Galahad left me and ran over the bridge till he reached the sea. His armor shone like a star, far away at the edge of the water. And then I saw him no more.

"I knelt on the black ground and wept, and wished that I were as good as Sir Galahad, and could do deeds as he did, not to win glory, but to help those who needed help. And as I wept, I was aware of a great light over me. I looked up and saw a silver beam, and across it slowly moved the Holy Grail. It was no longer muffled in a cloud, but shone crimson as a ruby.



"I made my way back to the chapel and prayed all the rest of the night. In the morning I found Sir Galahad's body by the sea. He was beautiful as a saint, though he was worn and thin from long self-sacrifice. I buried him and then turned my steps to Camelot.

"And now, my lord Arthur, I shall never fight again. I shall become a monk and pass my life in prayer as my sister did. Among my brother monks, there will be very many little deeds of service I can do. Thus will I spend my life."

All the knights were very much moved and the king looked affectionately at Sir Perceval, but he did not speak to him. He turned to Sir Gawain and said:

"Sir Gawain, was this quest for you?"

Then Sir Gawain, always light-hearted and easily turned away from one thing to another, said:

"Nay, my king, such a search is not for one like me. In a little time I became tired. I talked to a holy man who told me that I was not fit for such a vision. So I journeyed till I came to a field with silk pavilions and very many knights and ladies. And with them I lived happily for the year."

The good king looked displeased, but his face grew tender as he turned to Sir Bors.

"Bors," he said, "good, faithful, and honest you have ever been. Tell me what you have seen."

Sir Bors, who stood near Sir Lancelot, said:

"My lord Arthur, after I had started on the quest, I was told that madness had fallen upon my kinsman, Sir Lancelot. This so grieved me that I had but little heart to seek for the Holy Grail. Yet I sought for it. I believed that if God meant me to see the vision he would send it.

"I traveled till I came to a people who were heathen. They knew much of magic, but nothing of God. I stayed with them, and tried to teach them our faith, but they were angry because I would not believe in their gods, and they put me into prison.

"I was there many months in darkness and cold. But I tried to be patient, and prayed that my patience would count for something, although I could not do any good deeds. I had at least been faithful though I failed.

"One night a stone slipped from my prison wall, and I could see a space of sky, with seven stars set across it. Then slowly across the space glided the Holy Grail. My happiness was great, for I had seen the vision.

"The next morning, a maiden who had been secretly converted to our religion released me from prison, and I came hither."

Then the king spoke to Sir Lancelot.

"My Lancelot, the mightiest of us all, have you succeeded in this quest?"

Then Sir Lancelot groaned.

"O, king!" he cried, "your mightiest, yes; and yet, far better it would be if I were like Sir Galahad. A great sin is on my soul, and it was to be rid of this sin that I undertook the quest of the Holy Grail. A hermit told me that only by putting this sin away should I ever see the vision. I strove so hard against it that my old sickness came upon me. I became mad, and rode up and down among waste places, fighting with small men who overthrew me. The day has been when the very sound of my name would have made them tremble.

"At last I came to the sea and saw a boat anchored near the shore. I stepped into it, loosed the anchor, and floated away. For seven days I sailed, and at last I came to an old castle. I entered and heard a voice singing. I followed it up, up for a thousand steps. At last I came to a door, which burst open before me. Perhaps I dreamed, and yet I believe I saw the Holy Grail, though it was veiled and guarded by great angels. I thought I saw all this, and then I swooned away. When I came to myself, I was alone in the room. It was many days before I made my way back to Camelot."

For a long time there was silence in the hall, and then Sir Gawain said:

"Sir king, I can fight, and I always shall fight for you. But I do not believe in this vision. All the knights were mad, like Sir Lancelot. They did not really have the vision; it was but fancy."

Then the king spoke gravely to Sir Gawain.

"Sir Gawain, you are indeed not fit for such a vision, but you should not doubt that others have seen it. I was right, my knights, when I said that most of you would follow a wandering fire. How many of those who left me have not returned, and never will!"

The knights looked at the empty chairs. The king went on:

"Sir Galahad was the only one who completely saw the vision. He was indeed blessed, and fit for such a quest. You who were unfit should have stayed with me to help govern this land."

The knights were silent and sad; then the king said:

"My dear knights whom I love, always remember this: whether you seek for a vision, or do humble service as Sir Perceval will for his fellow-monks, or fight to right wrongs as Sir Lancelot does, whatever you do your aim must be to make yourself useful to the world by the work for which you are best fitted."

The king rose from the Round Table and left the company, Sir Lancelot following him. Then the other knights departed, one by one, and the great hall was left empty, with its shields glimmering in the moonlight.

# THE DEATH OF ARTHUR

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King Arthur's Round Table had lasted many years, and the knights had done much to help the people of the country; yet there were traitors to the king among his own subjects. One of these traitors made war in a distant part of the kingdom, and Arthur went with most of his knights to punish him. His nephew, Sir Modred, the brother of Sir Gawain and Sir Gareth, ruled in his stead at Camelot.

Now Sir Modred was a wicked knight. He hated the king and the queen, and Sir Lancelot. Since King Arthur was absent a long time, Sir Modred had the opportunity of doing much harm. He let evil go unpunished; he allowed bad customs to come into the country; and at last he raised a rebellion against the good king.

When Arthur returned to Camelot to quell this rebellion, he had lost many of his faithful knights. Sir Hector was dead, and Sir Ulfius and Sir Brastias; Sir Kay was dead, and Sir Bors, and Sir Gawain. Sir Lancelot was far away. Sir Bedivere alone remained of those who had been with Arthur since he had first ruled in Wales and Britain.

The king and Sir Bedivere, with the help of such knights as still were faithful, tried to put down those rebels. They drove the traitors back until they came at length to Lyonesse by the sea. Here the last great battle took place.

The night before the battle, Sir Bedivere heard the king praying. Then Arthur slept, and when he awakened he called to his friend:

"Sir Bedivere," he said, "I have had a dream. I thought that Sir Gawain came to me and told me that to-morrow I shall die."

"My lord, it is but a dream," answered Sir Bedivere. "You are great; you have done much good which will last forever, and you will live many years yet to perform many gracious acts. The day will soon dawn, and you will win the battle."

Arthur shook his head.

"This is not like my other battles. I have no heart for it. It is hard to slay my own people, even if they are traitors."

Day came, but no sun. A cold white mist lay over land and sea. It chilled the knights to the bone. And when the battle began, the mist was so thick that no one

could see with whom he was fighting. Friends slew each other, not knowing whom they killed. Some could not fight at all, for it seemed to them that those moving on the battle-field were ghosts of warriors long since slain. There was many a noble deed and many a base one done in that mist.

The fighting went on with clashing of lances and shields throughout the afternoon, and then the sounds grew fainter, till there was silence. At last, towards sunset, a wind from the west blew the mist away. Then Arthur, with Sir Bedivere by his side, looked over the field of battle. He saw but one man standing; all the rest were dead on the seashore. And the tide had risen, and was swaying the helpless hands, and tumbling up and down the hollow helmets and the broken spears that once had fought with Rome. The king's face was white, and his voice was low as he said to Sir Bedivere:

"There lie my slain, who have died for me. I am king only of the dead."

"Nay, lord," said Sir Bedivere. "You are king everywhere still. Now strike a kingly stroke against the one traitor who still stands."

Sir Bedivere pointed at the one other living man, and the king saw that it was Sir Modred. Arthur threw down his scabbard and lifted his good Excalibur. Then he sprang upon the traitor. Sir Modred struck the king on the helmet, which had been worn thin in many battles. The stroke cut through the steel, and wounded Arthur mortally, but he used his ebbing strength for one last blow with Excalibur, and killed Sir Modred.

The king sank to the ground, but Sir Bedivere lifted him, and bore him to a ruined chapel near the seashore. When he had laid him down by the broken cross in the chancel, Arthur said:

"You know well that my Excalibur was given to me by the Lady of the Lake. I have used it like a king. And now the time has come to obey the writing on the blade. So take my sword Excalibur, and throw it far out into the lake."

Sir Bedivere took the sword and went out from the ruined chapel. He walked amid the graves of ancient knights over which the sea wind was singing. He passed the barren cliffs and chasms, and reached the lake at last.

He lifted Excalibur, and as he did so the moon came from behind the clouds. The light fell on the hilt of the sword, and all the jewels shone. Sir Bedivere looked until his eyes were dazzled; he could not throw the beautiful weapon away. So he hid it in the weeds upon the shore of the lake, and returned to the king.

"What did you see or hear?" asked Arthur.

Sir Bedivere replied:

"I heard the ripple washing in the reeds, and the wild water lapping on the crags."

King Arthur, faint and pale, said:

"You have betrayed me. You have acted a lie. Had you thrown the sword, something would have happened, some sign would have been given. Go back now, and throw it into the lake."

Sir Bedivere went back and again picked up Excalibur. As he looked at it he said aloud:

"Surely it is not right to throw away such a precious thing. It would please the eyes of people forever. I know it is wrong to disobey the king. Yet he is sick; perhaps he does not know what he is doing. If I keep Excalibur and store it in a great treasure-house, people will look at it throughout all the coming years, and feel great reverence for the king who fought with it."

So again Sir Bedivere hid the sword and returned to the king, who asked:

"What have you seen or heard?"

And Sir Bedivere replied:

"I heard the water lapping on the crag, and the long ripple washing in the reeds."

Then the king was very angry.

"Ah, unkind!" he cried. "You, too, are a traitor. Because I am dying, I have no authority. You refuse to obey me, you who are the last of my knights! Yet it is possible for a man to fail in his duty twice, and succeed the third time. Go now, and throw Excalibur."

Sir Bedivere ran quickly and seized the sword, shutting his eyes that he might not see its beauty. He whirled it round his head and threw it far out over the lake. It flashed in the moonlight and fell. But before it reached the surface of the water, an arm, clothed in pure white, rose and caught it, brandished it three times, and then drew it under the water.

When Sir Bedivere went back to Arthur, the king knew that he had been obeyed.

"I am dying," he said. "Lift me on your back and carry me to the lake."

Then Sir Bedivere carried the helpless king, walking quickly through the place of tombs, and over the crags, and past the chasms, till he came to the smooth shining lake. There beside the bank was a barge, all black. The deck was covered with stately figures of people clad in mourning. Among them were three fair queens with crowns of gold—the three queens who were to help Arthur at his need.

They had come to take him away, Sir Bedivere did not know where. When they saw the wounded king, they gave a cry of grief that seemed to rise to the stars. Then they lifted him into the barge. The tallest put his head on her knees, and took off his broken helmet. She called him by name, weeping bitterly.

Poor Sir Bedivere cried:

"Oh, my Lord Arthur, you are leaving me. Where shall I go? The great Round Table is broken up forever. What shall I do?"

Then Arthur answered:

"Old customs pass and new ones come. God makes his world better in many ways. The Round Table did its work and now has disappeared; but something else will surely come to advance the cause of truth and justice. Pray for me and for yourself. More things are done by prayer than this world dreams of. And now, farewell! You shall never see me again, my Bedivere. My work is done; yours, too, is nearly over. Farewell!"

Then the barge moved slowly away, while those on board lamented. Sir Bedivere watched it till it disappeared amid the shadows over the lake. Then he rose slowly and wandered back to Lyonesse.

After a time he went to Camelot. There was a new king there, who was good, and new customs, also good. But Sir Bedivere was too old to change his way of life. He spent the rest of his days in Camelot, but he lived only in the past, dreaming of the time when King Arthur and his knights of the Round Table ruled in the land.

# **KING ARTHUR AND THE KNIGHTS OF THE ROUND TABLE**

**by Sir James Knowles**

# Table of Contents

## **THE COMING OF ARTHUR AND THE FOUNDING OF THE ROUND TABLE**

[I. Merlin Foretells the Birth of Arthur](#)

[II. The Crowning of Arthur and the Sword Excalibur](#)

[III. Arthur Drives the Saxons from His Realm](#)

[IV. The King's Many and Great Adventures](#)

[V. Sir Balin Fights with His Brother, Sir Balan](#)

[VI. The Marriage of Arthur and Guinevere and the Founding of the Round Table](#)

[VII. The Adventure of Arthur and Sir Accolon of Gaul](#)

[VIII. Arthur is Crowned Emperor at Rome](#)

[IX. Sir Gawain and the Maid with the Narrow Sleeves](#)

## **THE CHAMPIONS OF THE ROUND TABLE**

[X. The Adventures of Sir Lancelot](#)

[XI. The Adventures of Sir Beaumains or Sir Gareth](#)

[XII. The Adventures of Sir Tristram](#)

## **SIR GALAHAD AND THE QUEST OF THE HOLY GRAIL**

[XIII. The Knights Go to Seek the Grail](#)

## **THE PASSING OF ARTHUR**

[XIV. Sir Lancelot and the Fair Elaine](#)

[XV. The War Between Arthur and Lancelot and the Passing of Arthur](#)



# CHAPTER I

## MERLIN FORETELLS THE BIRTH OF ARTHUR

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King Vortigern the usurper sat upon his throne in London, when, suddenly, upon a certain day, ran in a breathless messenger, and cried aloud—

"Arise, Lord King, for the enemy is come; even Ambrosius and Uther, upon whose throne thou sittest—and full twenty thousand with them—and they have sworn by a great oath, Lord, to slay thee, ere this year be done; and even now they march towards thee as the north wind of winter for bitterness and haste."

At those words Vortigern's face grew white as ashes, and, rising in confusion and disorder, he sent for all the best artificers and craftsmen and mechanics, and commanded them vehemently to go and build him straightway in the furthest west of his lands a great and strong castle, where he might fly for refuge and escape the vengeance of his master's sons—"and, moreover," cried he, "let the work be done within a hundred days from now, or I will surely spare no life amongst you all."

Then all the host of craftsmen, fearing for their lives, found out a proper site whereon to build the tower, and eagerly began to lay in the foundations. But no sooner were the walls raised up above the ground than all their work was overwhelmed and broken down by night invisibly, no man perceiving how, or by whom, or what. And the same thing happening again, and yet again, all the workmen, full of terror, sought out the king, and threw themselves upon their faces before him, beseeching him to interfere and help them or to deliver them from their dreadful work.

Filled with mixed rage and fear, the king called for the astrologers and wizards, and took counsel with them what these things might be, and how to overcome them. The wizards worked their spells and incantations, and in the end declared that nothing but the blood of a youth born without mortal father, smeared on the foundations of the castle, could avail to make it stand. Messengers were therefore sent forthwith through all the land to find, if it were possible, such a child. And, as some of them went down a certain village street, they saw a band of lads fighting and quarreling, and heard them shout at one—"Avaunt, thou imp!—avaunt! Son of no mortal man! go, find thy father, and

leave us in peace."

At that the messengers looked steadfastly on the lad, and asked who he was. One said his name was Merlin; another, that his birth and parentage were known by no man; a third, that the foul fiend alone was his father. Hearing the things, the officers seized Merlin, and carried him before the king by force.

But no sooner was he brought to him than he asked in a loud voice, for what cause he was thus dragged there?

"My magicians," answered Vortigern, "told me to seek out a man that had no human father, and to sprinkle my castle with his blood, that it may stand."

"Order those magicians," said Merlin, "to come before me, and I will convict them of a lie."

The king was astonished at his words, but commanded the magicians to come and sit down before Merlin, who cried to them—

"Because ye know not what it is that hinders the foundation of the castle, ye have advised my blood for a cement to it, as if that would avail; but tell me now rather what there is below that ground, for something there is surely underneath that will not suffer the tower to stand?"

The wizards at these words began to fear, and made no answer. Then said Merlin to the king—

"I pray, Lord, that workmen may be ordered to dig deep down into the ground till they shall come to a great pool of water."

This then was done, and the pool discovered far beneath the surface of the ground.

Then, turning again to the magicians, Merlin said, "Tell me now, false sycophants, what there is underneath that pool?"—but they were silent. Then said he to the king, "Command this pool to be drained, and at the bottom shall be found two dragons, great and huge, which now are sleeping, but which at night awake and fight and tear each other. At their great struggle all the ground shakes and trembles, and so casts down thy towers, which, therefore, never yet could find secure foundations."

The king was amazed at these words, but commanded the pool to be forthwith drained; and surely at the bottom of it did they presently discover the two dragons, fast asleep, as Merlin had declared.

But Vortigern sat upon the brink of the pool till night to see what else would happen.

Then those two dragons, one of which was white, the other red, rose up and came near one another, and began a sore fight, and cast forth fire with their breath. But the white dragon had the advantage, and chased the other to the end of the lake. And he, for grief at his flight, turned back upon his foe, and renewed

the combat, and forced him to retire in turn. But in the end the red dragon was worsted, and the white dragon disappeared no man knew where.

When their battle was done, the king desired Merlin to tell him what it meant. Whereat he, bursting into tears, cried out this prophecy, which first foretold the coming of King Arthur.

"Woe to the red dragon, which figureth the British nation, for his banishment cometh quickly; his lurking-holes shall be seized by the white dragon—the Saxon whom thou, O king, hast called to the land. The mountains shall be leveled as the valleys, and the rivers of the valleys shall run blood; cities shall be burned, and churches laid in ruins; till at length the oppressed shall turn for a season and prevail against the strangers. For a Boar of Cornwall shall arise and rend them, and trample their necks beneath his feet. The island shall be subject to his power, and he shall take the forests of Gaul. The house of Romulus shall dread him—all the world shall fear him—and his end shall no man know; he shall be immortal in the mouths of the people, and his works shall be food to those that tell them.

"But as for thee, O Vortigern, flee thou the sons of Constantine, for they shall burn thee in thy tower. For thine own ruin wast thou traitor to their father, and didst bring the Saxon heathens to the land. Aurelius and Uther are even now upon thee to revenge their father's murder; and the brood of the white dragon shall waste thy country, and shall lick thy blood. Find out some refuge, if thou wilt! but who may escape the doom of God?"

The king heard all this, trembling greatly; and, convicted of his sins, said nothing in reply. Only he hastened the builders of his tower by day and night, and rested not till he had fled thereto.

In the meantime, Aurelius, the rightful king, was hailed with joy by the Britons, who flocked to his standard, and prayed to be led against the Saxons. But he, till he had first killed Vortigern, would begin no other war. He marched therefore to Cambria, and came before the tower which the usurper had built. Then, crying out to all his knights, "Avenge ye on him who hath ruined Britain and slain my father and your king!" he rushed with many thousands at the castle walls. But, being driven back again and yet again, at length he thought of fire, and ordered blazing brands to be cast into the building from all sides. These, finding soon a proper fuel, ceased not to rage till, spreading to a mighty conflagration, they burned down the tower, and Vortigern within it.

Then did Aurelius turn his strength against Hengist and the Saxons, and, defeating them in many places, weakened their power for a long season, so that the land had peace.

Anon the king, making journeys to and fro, restoring ruined churches and,

creating order, came to the monastery near Salisbury, where all those British knights lay buried who had been slain there by the treachery of Hengist. For when in former times Hengist had made a solemn truce with Vortigern, to meet in peace and settle terms, whereby himself and all his Saxons should depart from Britain, the Saxon soldiers carried every one of them beneath his garment a long dagger, and, at a given signal, fell upon the Britons, and slew them, to the number of nearly five hundred.

The sight of the place where the dead lay moved Aurelius to great sorrow, and he cast about in his mind how to make a worthy tomb over so many noble martyrs, who had died there for their country.

When he had in vain consulted many craftsmen and builders, he sent, by the advice of the archbishop, for Merlin, and asked him what to do. "If you would honor the burying-place of these men," said Merlin, "with an everlasting monument, send for the Giants' Dance which is in Killaraus, a mountain; in Ireland; for there is a structure of stone there which none of this age could raise without a perfect knowledge of the arts. They are stones of a vast size and wondrous nature, and if they can be placed here as they are there, round this spot of ground, they will stand for ever."

At these words of Merlin, Aurelius burst into laughter, and said, "How is it possible to remove such vast stones from so great a distance, as if Britain, also, had no stones fit for the work?"

"I pray the king," said Merlin, "to forbear vain laughter; what I have said is true, for those stones are mystical and have healing virtues. The giants of old brought them from the furthest coast of Africa, and placed them in Ireland while they lived in that country: and their design was to make baths in them, for use in time of grievous illness. For if they washed the stones and put the sick into the water, it certainly healed them, as also it did them that were wounded in battle; and there is no stone among them but hath the same virtue still."

When the Britons heard this, they resolved to send for the stones, and to make war upon the people of Ireland if they offered to withhold them. So, when they had chosen Uther the king's brother for their chief, they set sail, to the number of 15,000 men, and came to Ireland. There Gillomanius, the king, withstood them fiercely, and not till after a great battle could they approach the Giants' Dance, the sight of which filled them with joy and admiration. But when they sought to move the stones, the strength of all the army was in vain, until Merlin, laughing at their failures, contrived machines of wondrous cunning, which took them down with ease, and placed them in the ships.

When they had brought the whole to Salisbury, Aurelius, with the crown upon his head, kept for four days the feast of Pentecost with royal pomp; and in

the midst of all the clergy and the people, Merlin raised up the stones, and set them round the sepulcher of the knights and barons, as they stood in the mountains of Ireland.

Then was the monument called "Stonehenge," and stands, as all men know, upon the plain of Salisbury to this very day.

Soon thereafter it befell that Aurelius was slain by poison at Winchester, and was himself buried within the Giants' Dance.

At the same time came forth a comet of amazing size and brightness, darting out a beam, at the end whereof was a cloud of fire shaped like a dragon, from whose mouth went out two rays, one stretching over Gaul, the other ending in seven lesser rays over the Irish sea.

At the appearance of this star a great dread fell upon the people, and Uther, marching into Cambria against the son of Vortigern, himself was very troubled to learn what it might mean. Then Merlin, being called before him, cried with a loud voice: "O mighty loss! O stricken Britain! Alas! the great prince is gone from us. Aurelius Ambrosius is dead, whose death will be ours also, unless God help us. Haste, therefore, noble Uther, to destroy the enemy; the victory shall be thine, and thou shalt be king of all Britain. For the star with the fiery dragon signifies thyself; and the ray over Gaul portends that thou shalt have a son, most mighty, whom all those kingdoms shall obey which the ray covers."

Thus, for the second time, did Merlin foretell the coming of King Arthur. And Uther, when he was made king, remembered Merlin's words, and caused two dragons to be made in gold, in likeness of the dragon he had seen in the star. One of these he gave to Winchester Cathedral, and had the other carried into all his wars before him, whence he was ever after called Uther Pendragon, or the dragon's head.

Now, when Uther Pendragon had passed through all the land, and settled it—and even voyaged into all the countries of the Scots, and tamed the fierceness of that rebel people—he came to London, and ministered justice there. And it befell at a certain great banquet and high feast which the king made at Easter-tide, there came, with many other earls and barons, Gorloās, Duke of Cornwall, and his wife Igera, who was the most famous beauty in all Britain. And soon thereafter, Gorloās being slain in battle, Uther determined to make Igera his own wife. But in order to do this, and enable him to come to her—for she was shut up in the high castle of Tintagil, on the furthest coast of Cornwall—the king sent for Merlin, to take counsel with him and to pray his help. This, therefore, Merlin promised him on one condition—namely, that the king should give him up the first son born of the marriage. For Merlin by his art foreknew that this firstborn should be the long-wished prince, King Arthur.

When Uther, therefore, was at length happily wedded, Merlin came to the castle on a certain day, and said, "Sir, thou must now provide thee for the nourishing of thy child."

And the king, nothing doubting, said, "Be it as thou wilt."

"I know a lord of thine in this land," said Merlin, "who is a man both true and faithful; let him have the nourishing of the child. His name is Sir Ector, and he hath fair possessions both in England and in Wales. When, therefore, the child is born, let him be delivered unto me, unchristened, at yonder postern-gate, and I will bestow him in the care of this good knight."

So when the child was born, the king bid two knights and two ladies to take it, bound in rich cloth of gold, and deliver it to a poor man whom they should discover at the postern-gate. And the child being delivered thus to Merlin, who himself took the guise of a poor man, was carried by him to a holy priest and christened by the name of Arthur, and then was taken to Sir Ector's house, and nourished at Sir Ector's wife's own breasts. And in the same house he remained privily for many years, no man soever knowing where he was, save Merlin and the king.

Anon it befell that the king was seized by a lingering distemper, and the Saxon heathens, taking their occasion, came back from over sea, and swarmed upon the land, wasting it with fire and sword. When Uther heard thereof, he fell into a greater rage than his weakness could bear, and commanded all his nobles to come before him, that he might upbraid them for their cowardice. And when he had sharply and hotly rebuked them, he swore that he himself, nigh unto death although he lay, would lead them forth against the enemy. Then causing a horse-litter to be made, in which he might be carried—for he was too faint and weak to ride—he went up with all his army swiftly against the Saxons.

But they, when they heard that Uther was coming in a litter, disdained to fight him, saying it would be shame for brave men to fight with one half dead. So they retired into their city; and, as it were in scorn of danger, left the gates wide open. But Uther straightway commanding his men to assault the town, they did so without loss of time, and had already reached the gates, when the Saxons, repenting too late of their haughty pride, rushed forth to the defense. The battle raged till night, and was begun again next day; but at last, their leaders, Octa and Eosa, being slain, the Saxons turned their backs and fled, leaving the Britons a full triumph.

The king at this felt so great joy, that, whereas before he could scarce raise himself without help, he now sat upright in his litter by himself, and said, with a laughing and merry face, "They called me the half-dead king, and so indeed I was; but victory to me half dead is better than defeat and the best health. For to

die with honor is far better than to live disgraced."

But the Saxons, although thus defeated, were ready still for war. Uther would have pursued them; but his illness had by now so grown, that his knights and barons kept him from the adventure. Whereat the enemy took courage, and left nothing undone to destroy the land; until, descending to the vilest treachery, they resolved to kill the king by poison.

To this end, as he lay sick at Verulum, they sent and poisoned stealthily a spring of clear water, whence he was wont to drink daily; and so, on the very next day, he was taken with the pains of death, as were also a hundred others after him, before the villainy was discovered, and heaps of earth thrown over the well.

The knights and barons, full of sorrow, now took counsel together, and came to Merlin for his help to learn the king's will before he died, for he was by this time speechless. "Sirs, there is no remedy," said Merlin, "and God's will must be done; but be ye all to-morrow before him, for God will make him speak before he die."

So on the morrow all the barons, with Merlin, stood round the bedside of the king; and Merlin said aloud to Uther, "Lord, shall thy son Arthur be the king of all this realm after thy days?"

Then Uther Pendragon turned him about, and said, in the hearing of them all, "God's blessing and mine be upon him. I bid him pray for my soul, and also that he claim my crown, or forfeit all my blessing;" and with those words he died.

Then came together all the bishops and the clergy, and great multitudes of people, and bewailed the king; and carrying his body to the convent of Ambrius, they buried it close by his brother's grave, within the "Giants' Dance."

## CHAPTER II

# THE CROWNING OF ARTHUR AND THE SWORD EXCALIBUR

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Now Arthur the prince had all this time been nourished in Sir Ector's house as his own son, and was fair and tall and comely, being of the age of fifteen years, great in strength, gentle in manner, and accomplished in all exercises proper for the training of a knight.

But as yet he knew not of his father; for Merlin had so dealt, that none save Uther and himself knew aught about him. Wherefore it befell that many of the knights and barons who heard King Uther speak before his death, and call his son Arthur his successor, were in great amazement; and some doubted, and others were displeased.

Anon the chief lords and princes set forth each to his own land, and, raising armed men and multitudes of followers, determined every one to gain the crown for himself; for they said in their hearts, "If there be any such a son at all as he of whom this wizard forced the king to speak, who are we that a beardless boy should have rule over us?"

So the land stood long in great peril, for every lord and baron sought but his own advantage; and the Saxons, growing ever more adventurous, wasted and overran the towns and villages in every part.

Then Merlin went to Brice, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and advised him to require all the earls and barons of the realm and all knights and gentlemen-at-arms to come to him at London, before Christmas, under pain of cursing, that they might learn the will of Heaven who should be king. This, therefore, the archbishop did, and upon Christmas Eve were met together in London all the greatest princes, lords, and barons; and long before day they prayed in St. Paul's Church, and the archbishop besought Heaven for a sign who should be lawful king of all the realm.

And as they prayed, there was seen in the churchyard, set straight before the doorways of the church, a huge square stone having a naked sword stuck in the midst of it. And on the sword was written in letters of gold, "Whoso pulleth out the sword from this stone is born the rightful King of England."



At this all the people wondered greatly; and, when Mass was over, the nobles, knights, and princes ran out eagerly from the church to see the stone and sword; and a law was forthwith made that whoso should pull out the sword should be acknowledged straightway King of Britain.

Then many knights and barons pulled at the sword with all their might, and some of them tried many times, but none could stir or move it.

When all had tried in vain, the archbishop declared the man whom Heaven had chosen was not yet there. "But God," said he, "will doubtless make him known ere many days."

So ten knights were chosen, being men of high renown, to watch and keep the sword; and there was proclamation made through all the land that whosoever would, had leave and liberty to try and pull it from the stone. But though great multitudes of people came, both gentle and simple, for many days, no man could ever move the sword a hair's breadth from its place.

Now, at the New Year's Eve a great tournament was to be held in London, which the archbishop had devised to keep together lords and commons, lest they should grow estranged in the troublous and unsettled times. To the which tournament there came, with many other knights, Sir Ector, Arthur's foster-father, who had great possessions near to London; and with him came his son, Sir Key, but recently made knight, to take his part in the jousting, and young Arthur also to witness all the sports and fighting.

But as they rode towards the jousts, Sir Key found suddenly he had no sword, for he had left it at his father's house; and turning to young Arthur, he prayed him to ride back and fetch it for him. "I will with a good will," said Arthur; and rode fast back after the sword.

But when he came to the house he found it locked and empty, for all were gone forth to see the tournament. Whereat, being angry and impatient, he said within himself, "I will ride to the churchyard and take with me the sword that sticketh in the stone, for my brother shall not go without a sword this day."

So he rode and came to the churchyard, and alighting from his horse he tied him to the gate, and went to the pavilion, which was pitched near the stone, wherein abode the ten knights who watched and kept it; but he found no knights there, for all were gone to see the jousting.

Then he took the sword by its handle, and lightly and fiercely he pulled it out of the stone, and took his horse and rode until he came to Sir Key and delivered him the sword. But as soon as Sir Key saw it he knew well it was the sword of the stone, and, riding swiftly to his father, he cried out, "Lo! here, sir, is the sword of the stone, wherefore it is I who must be king of all this land."

When Sir Ector saw the sword, he turned back straight with Arthur and Sir

Key and came to the churchyard, and there alighting, they went all three into the church, and Sir Key was sworn to tell truly how he came by the sword. Then he confessed it was his brother Arthur who had brought it to him.

Whereat Sir Ector, turning to young Arthur, asked him—"How gottest thou the sword?"

"Sir," said he, "I will tell you. When I went home to fetch my brother's sword, I found nobody to deliver it to me, for all were abroad to the jousts. Yet was I loth to leave my brother swordless, and, bethinking me of this one, I came hither eagerly to fetch it for him, and pulled it out of the stone without any pain."

Then said Sir Ector, much amazed and looking steadfastly on Arthur, "If this indeed be thus, 'tis thou who shalt be king of all this land—and God will have it so—for none but he who should be rightful Lord of Britain might ever draw this sword forth from that stone. But let me now with mine own eyes see thee put back the sword into its place and draw it forth again."

"That is no mastery," said Arthur; and straightway set it in the stone. And then Sir Ector pulled at it himself, and after him Sir Key, with all his might, but both of them in vain: then Arthur, reaching forth his hand and grasping at the pommel, pulled it out easily, and at once.

Then fell Sir Ector down upon his knees upon the ground before young Arthur, and Sir Key also with him, and straightway did him homage as their sovereign lord.

But Arthur cried aloud, "Alas! mine own dear father and my brother, why kneel ye thus to me?"

"Nay, my Lord Arthur," answered then Sir Ector, "we are of no blood-kinship with thee, and little though I thought how high thy kin might be, yet wast thou never more than foster-child of mine." And then he told him all he knew about his infancy, and how a stranger had delivered him, with a great sum of gold, into his hands to be brought up and nourished as his own born child, and then had disappeared.

But when young Arthur heard of it, he fell upon Sir Ector's neck, and wept, and made great lamentation, "For now," said he, "I have in one day lost my father and my mother and my brother."

"Sir," said Sir Ector presently, "when thou shalt be made king be good and gracious unto me and mine."

"If not," said Arthur, "I were no true man's son at all, for thou art he in all the world to whom I owe the most; and my good lady and mother, thy wife, hath ever kept and fostered me as though I were her own; so if it be God's will that I be king hereafter as thou sayest, desire of me whatever thing thou wilt and I will do it; and God forbid that I should fail thee in it."

"I will but pray," replied Sir Ector, "that thou wilt make my son Sir Key, thy foster-brother, seneschal of all the lands."

"That shall he be," said Arthur; "and never shall another hold that office, save thy son, while he and I do live."

Anon, they left the church and went to the archbishop to tell him that the sword had been achieved. And when he saw the sword in Arthur's hand he set a day and summoned all the princes, knights, and barons to meet again at St. Paul's Church and see the will of Heaven signified. So when they came together, the sword was put back in the stone, and all tried, from the greatest to the least, to move it; but there before them all not one could take it out save Arthur only.

But then befell a great confusion and dispute, for some cried out it was the will of Heaven, and, "Long live King Arthur," but many more were full of wrath and said, "What! would ye give the ancient scepter of this land unto a boy born none know how?" And the contention growing greatly, till nothing could be done to pacify their rage, the meeting was at length broken up by the archbishop and adjourned till Candlemas, when all should meet again.

But when Candlemas was come, Arthur alone again pulled forth the sword, though more than ever came to win it; and the barons, sorely vexed and angry, put it in delay till Easter. But as he had sped before so he did at Easter, and the barons yet once more contrived delays till Pentecost.

But now the archbishop, fully seeing God's will, called together, by Merlin's counsel, a band of knights and gentlemen-at-arms, and set them about Arthur to keep him safely till the Feast of Pentecost. And when at the feast Arthur still again alone prevailed to move the sword, the people all with one accord cried out, "Long live King Arthur! we will have no more delay, nor any other king, for so it is God's will; and we will slay whoso resisteth Him and Arthur;" and wherewithal they kneeled down all at once, and cried for Arthur's grace and pardon that they had so long delayed him from his crown. Then he full sweetly and majestically pardoned them; and taking in his hand the sword, he offered it upon the high altar of the church.

Anon was he solemnly knighted with great pomp by the most famous knight there present, and the crown was placed upon his head; and, having taken oath to all the people, lords and commons, to be true king and deal in justice only unto his life's end, he received homage and service from all the barons who held lands and castles from the crown. Then he made Sir Key, High Steward of England, and Sir Badewaine of Britain, Constable, and Sir Ulfius, Chamberlain: and after this, with all his court and a great retinue of knights and armed men, he journeyed into Wales, and was crowned again in the old city of Caerleon-upon-Usk.

Meanwhile those knights and barons who had so long delayed him from the crown, met together and went up to the coronation feast at Caerleon, as if to do him homage; and there they ate and drank such things as were set before them at the royal banquet, sitting with the others in the great hall.

But when after the banquet Arthur began, according to the ancient royal custom, to bestow great boons and fiefs on whom he would, they all with one accord rose up, and scornfully refused his gifts, crying that they would take nothing from a beardless boy come of low or unknown birth, but would instead give him good gifts of hard sword-strokes between neck and shoulders.

Whereat arose a deadly tumult in the hall, and every man there made him ready to fight. But Arthur leaped up as a flame of fire against them, and all his knights and barons drawing their swords, rushed after him upon them and began a full sore battle; and presently the king's party prevailed, and drove the rebels from the hall and from the city, closing the gates behind them; and King Arthur brake his sword upon them in his eagerness and rage.

But amongst them were six kings of great renown and might, who more than all raged against Arthur and determined to destroy him, namely, King Lot, King Nanters, King Urien, King Carados, King Yder, and King Anguisant. These six, therefore, joining their armies together, laid close siege to the city of Caerleon, wherefrom King Arthur had so shamefully driven them.

And after fifteen days Merlin came suddenly into their camp and asked them what this treason meant. Then he declared to them that Arthur was no base adventurer, but King Uther's son, whom they were bound to serve and honor even though Heaven had not vouch-safed the wondrous miracle of the sword. Some of the kings, when they heard Merlin speak thus, marveled and believed him; but others, as King Lot, laughed him and his words to scorn, and mocked him for a conjurer and wizard. But it was agreed with Merlin that Arthur should come forth and speak with the kings.

So he went forth to them to the city gate, and with him the archbishop and Merlin, and Sir Key, Sir Brastias, and a great company of others. And he spared them not in his speech, but spoke to them as king and chieftain, telling them plainly he would make them all bow to him if he lived, unless they choose to do him homage there and then; and so they parted in great wrath, and each side armed in haste.

"What will ye do?" said Merlin to the kings; "ye had best hold your hands, for were ye ten times as many ye should not prevail."

"Shall we be afraid of a dream-reader?" quoth King Lot in scorn.

With that Merlin vanished away and came to King Arthur.

Then Arthur said to Merlin, "I have need now of a sword that shall chastise

these rebels terribly."

"Come then with me," said Merlin, "for hard by there is a sword that I can gain for thee."

So they rode out that night till they came to a fair and broad lake, and in the midst of it King Arthur saw an arm thrust up, clothed in white samite, and holding a great sword in the hand.

"Lo! yonder is the sword I spoke of," said Merlin.

Then saw they a damsel floating on the lake in the moonlight. "What damsel is that?" said the king.

"The lady of the lake," said Merlin; "for upon this lake there is a rock, and on the rock a noble palace, where she abideth, and she will come towards thee presently, when thou shalt ask her courteously for the sword."

Therewith the damsel came to King Arthur, and saluted him, and he saluted her, and said, "Lady, what sword is that the arm holdeth above the water? I would that it were mine, for I have no sword."

"Sir King," said the lady of the lake, "that sword is mine, and if thou wilt give me in return a gift whenever I shall ask it of thee, thou shalt have it."

"By my faith," said he, "I will give thee any gift that thou shalt ask."

"Well," said the damsel, "go into yonder barge, and row thyself unto the sword, and take it and the scabbard with thee, and I will ask my gift of thee when I see my time."

So King Arthur and Merlin alighted, and tied their horses to two trees, and went into the barge; and when they came to the sword that the hand held, King Arthur took it by the handle and bore it with him, and the arm and hand went down under the water; and so they came back to land, and rode again to Caerleon.

On the morrow Merlin bade King Arthur to set fiercely on the enemy; and in the meanwhile three hundred good knights went over to King Arthur from the rebels' side. Then at the spring of day, when they had scarce left their tents, he fell on them with might and main, and Sir Badewaine, Sir Key, and Sir Brastias slew on the right and on the left marvelously; and ever in the thickest of the fight King Arthur raged like a young lion, and laid on with his sword, and did wondrous deeds of arms, to the joy and admiration of the knights and barons who beheld him.

Then King Lot, King Carados, and the King of the Hundred Knights—who also was with them—going round to the rear, set on King Arthur fiercely from behind; but King Arthur, turning to his knights, fought ever in the foremost press until his horse was slain beneath him. At that, King Lot rode furiously at him, and smote him down; but rising straightway, and being set again on horseback,

he drew his sword Excalibur that he had gained by Merlin from the lady of the lake, which, shining brightly as the light of thirty torches, dazzled the eyes of his enemies. And therewith falling on them afresh with all his knights, he drove them back and slew them in great numbers, and Merlin by his arts scattered among them fire and pitchy smoke, so that they broke and fled. Then all the common people of Caerleon, seeing them give way, rose up with one accord, and rushed at them with clubs and staves, and chased them far and wide, and slew many great knights and lords, and the remainder of them fled and were seen no more. Thus won King Arthur his first battle and put his enemies to shame.

But the six kings, though sorely routed, prepared for a new war, and joining to themselves five others swore together that, whether for weal or woe, they would keep steadfast alliance till they had destroyed King Arthur. Then, with a host of 50,000 men-at-arms on horseback, and 10,000 foot, they were soon ready, and sent forth their fore-riders, and drew from the northern country towards King Arthur, to the castle of Bedgraine.

But he by Merlin's counsel had sent over sea to King Ban of Benwick and King Bors of Gaul, praying them to come and help him in his wars, and promising to help them in return against King Claudas, their foe. To which those kings made answer that they would joyfully fulfil his wish, and shortly after came to London with 300 knights, well arrayed for both peace and war, leaving behind them a great army on the other side of the sea till they had consulted with King Arthur and his ministers how they might best dispose of it.

And Merlin being asked for his advice and help, agreed to go himself and fetch it over sea to England, which in one night he did; and brought with him 10,000 horsemen and led them northward privately to the forest of Bedgraine, and there lodged them in a valley secretly.

Then, by the counsel of Merlin, when they knew which way the eleven kings would ride and sleep, King Arthur with Kings Ban and Bors made themselves ready with their army for the fight, having yet but 30,000 men, counting the 10,000 who had come from Gaul.

"Now shall ye do my advice," said Merlin; "I would that King Ban and King Bors, with all their fellowship of 10,000 men, were led to ambush in this wood ere daylight, and stir not therefrom until the battle hath been long waged. And thou, Lord Arthur, at the spring of day draw forth thine army before the enemy, and dress the battle so that they may at once see all thy host, for they will be the more rash and hardy when they see you have but 20,000 men."

To this the three knights and the barons heartily consented, and it was done as Merlin had devised. So on the morrow when the hosts beheld each other, the host of the north was greatly cheered to find so few led out against them.

Then gave King Arthur the command to Sir Ulfius and Sir Brastias to take 3000 men-at-arms, and to open battle. They therefore setting fiercely on the enemy slew them on the right hand and the left till it was wonderful to see their slaughter.

When the eleven kings beheld so small a band doing such mighty deeds of arms they were ashamed, and charged them fiercely in return. Then was Sir Ulfius' horse slain under him; but he fought well and marvelously on foot against Duke Eustace and King Clarience, who set upon him grievously, till Sir Brastias, seeing his great peril, pricked towards them swiftly, and so smote the duke through with his spear that horse and man fell down and rolled over. Whereat King Clarience turned upon Sir Brastias, and rushing furiously together they each unhorsed the other and fell both to the ground, and there lay a long time stunned, their horses' knees being cut to the bone. Then came Sir Key the seneschal with six companions, and did wondrous well, till the eleven kings went out against them and overthrew Sir Griflet and Sir Lucas the butler. And when Sir Key saw Sir Griflet unhorsed and on foot, he rode against King Nanters hotly and smote him down, and led his horse to Griflet and horsed him again; with the same spear did Sir Key smite down King Lot and wounded him full sore.

But seeing that, the King of the Hundred Knights rushed at Sir Key and overthrew him in return, and took his horse and gave it to King Lot. And when Sir Griflet saw Sir Key's mischance, he set his spear in rest, and riding at a mighty man-at-arms, he cast him down headlong and caught his horse and led it straightway to Sir Key.

By now the battle was growing perilous and hard, and both sides fought with rage and fury. And Sir Ulfius and Sir Brastias were both afoot and in great danger of their death, and foully stained and trampled under horses' feet. Then King Arthur, putting spurs to his horse, rushed forward like a lion into the midst of all the *mÃlÃ`e*, and singling out King Cradlemont of North Wales, smote him through the left side and overthrew him, and taking his horse by the rein he brought it to Sir Ulfius in haste and said, "Take this horse, mine old friend, for thou hast great need of one, and charge by side of me." And even as he spoke he saw Sir Ector, Sir Key's father, smitten to the earth by the King of the Hundred Knights, and his horse taken to King Cradlemont.

But when King Arthur saw him ride upon Sir Ector's horse his wrath was very great, and with his sword he smote King Cradlemont upon the helm, and shore off the fourth part thereof and of the shield, and drave the sword onward to the horse's neck and slew the horse, and hurled the king upon the ground.

And now the battle waxed so great and furious that all the noise and sound

thereof rang out by water and by wood, so that Kings Ban and Bors, with all their knights and men-at-arms in ambush, hearing the tumult and the cries, trembled and shook for eagerness, and scarce could stay in secret, but made them ready for the fray and dressed their shields and harness.

But when King Arthur saw the fury of the enemy, he raged like a mad lion, and stirred and drove his horse now here, now there, to the right hand and to the left and stayed not in his wrath till he had slain full twenty knights. He wounded also King Lot so sorely in the shoulder that he left the field, and in great pain and dolor cried out to the other kings, "Do ye as I devise, or we shall be destroyed. I, with the King of the Hundred Knights, King Anguisant, King Yder, and the Duke of Cambinet, will take fifteen thousand men and make a circuit, meanwhile that ye do hold the battle with twelve thousand. Then coming suddenly we will fall fiercely on them from behind and put them to the rout, but else shall we never stand against them."

So Lot and four kings departed with their party to one side, and the six other kings dressed their ranks against King Arthur and fought long and stoutly.

But now Kings Ban and Bors, with all their army fresh and eager, broke from their ambush and met face to face the five kings and their host as they came round behind, and then began a frantic struggle with breaking of spears and clashing of swords and slaying of men and horses. Anon King Lot, espying in the midst King Bors, cried out in great dismay, "Our Lady now defend us from our death and fearful wounds; our peril groweth great, for yonder cometh one of the worshipfullest kings and best knights in all the world."

"Who is he?" said the King of the Hundred Knights.

"It is King Bors of Gaul," replied King Lot, "and much I marvel how he may have come with all his host into this land without our knowledge."

"Aha!" cried King Carados, "I will encounter with this king if ye will rescue me when there is need."

"Ride on," said they.

So King Carados and all his host rode softly till they came within a bow-shot of King Bors, and then both hosts, spurring their horses to their greatest swiftness, rushed at each other. And King Bors encountered in the onset with a knight, and struck him through with a spear, so that he fell dead upon the earth; then drawing his sword, he did such mighty feats of arms that all who saw him gazed with wonder. Anon King Ban came also forth upon the field with all his knights, and added yet more fury, sound, and slaughter, till at length both hosts of the eleven kings began to quake, and drawing all together into one body, they prepared to meet the worst, while a great multitude already fled.

Then said King Lot, "Lords, we must take yet other means, or worse loss still



awaits us. See ye not what people we have lost in waiting on the footmen, and that it costs ten horsemen to save one of them? Therefore it is my counsel to put away our footmen from us, for it is almost night, and King Arthur will not stay to slaughter them. So they can save their lives in this great wood hard by. Then let us gather into one band all the horsemen that remain, and whoso breaketh rank or leaveth us, let him be straightway slain by him that seeth him, for it is better that we slay a coward than through a coward be all slain. How say ye?" said King Lot; "answer me, all ye kings."

"It is well said," replied they all.

And swearing they would never fail each other, they mended and set right their armor and their shields, and took new spears and set them steadfastly against their thighs, waiting, and so stood still as a clump of trees stands on the plain; and no assaults could shake them, they held so hard together; which when King Arthur saw he marveled greatly, and was very wroth. "Yet," cried he, "I may not blame them, by my faith, for they do as brave men ought to do, and are the best fighting men and knights of most prowess that I ever saw or heard tell of." And so said also Kings Ban and Bors, and praised them greatly for their noble chivalry.

But now came forty noble knights out of King Arthur's host, and prayed that he would suffer them to break the enemy. And when they were allowed, they rode forth with their spears upon their thighs, and spurred their horses to their hottest. Then the eleven kings, with a party of their knights, rushed with set spears as fast and mightily to meet them; and when they were encountered, all the crash and splinter of their spears and armor rang with a mighty din, and so fierce and bloody was their onset that in all that day there had been no such cruel press, and rage, and smiting. At that same moment rode fiercely into the thickest of the struggle King Arthur and Kings Ban and Bors, and slew downright on both hands right and left, until their horses went in blood up to the fetlocks.

And while the slaughter and the noise and shouting were at their greatest, suddenly there came down through the battle Merlin the Wizard, upon a great black horse, and riding to King Arthur, he cried out, "Alas, my Lord! will ye have never done? Of sixty thousand have ye left but fifteen thousand men alive. Is it not time to stay this slaying? for God is ill pleased with ye that ye have never ended, and yonder kings shall not be altogether overthrown this time. But if ye fall upon them any more, the fortune of this day will turn, and go to them. Withdraw, Lord, therefore, to thy lodging, and there now take thy rest, for to-day thou hast won a great victory, and overcome the noblest chivalry of all the world. And now for many years those kings shall not disturb thee. Therefore, I tell thee, fear them no more, for now they are sore beaten, and have nothing left

them but their honor; and why shouldest thou slay them to take that?"

Then said King Arthur, "Thou sayest well, and I will take thy counsel." With that he cried out, "Ho!" for the battle to cease, and sent forth heralds through the field to stay more fighting. And gathering all the spoil, he gave it not amongst his own host, but to Kings Ban and Bors and all their knights and men-at-arms, that he might treat them with the greater courtesy as strangers.

Then Merlin took his leave of Arthur and the two other kings, and went to see his master, Blaise, a holy hermit, dwelling in Northumberland, who had nourished him through all his youth. And Blaise was passing glad to see him, for there was a great love ever between them; and Merlin told him how King Arthur had sped in the battle, and how it had ended; and told him the names of every king and knight of worship who was there. So Blaise wrote down the battle, word for word, as Merlin told him; and in the same way ever after, all the battles of King Arthur's days Merlin caused Blaise, his master, to record.

## CHAPTER III

# ARTHUR DRIVES THE SAXONS FROM HIS REALM

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Anon, thereafter, came word to King Arthur that Ryence, King of North Wales, was making war upon King Leodegrance of Camelgard; whereat he was passing wroth, for he loved Leodegrance well, and hated Ryence. So he departed with Kings Ban and Bors and twenty thousand men, and came to Camelgard, and rescued Leodegrance, and slew ten thousand of Ryence's men and put him to flight. Then Leodegrance made a great festival to the three kings, and treated them with every manner of mirth and pleasure which could be devised. And there had King Arthur the first sight of Guinevere, daughter of Leodegrance, whom in the end he married, as shall be told hereafter.

Then did Kings Ban and Bors take leave, and went to their own country, where King Claudas worked great mischief. And King Arthur would have gone with them, but they refused him, saying, "Nay, ye shall not at this time, for ye have yet much to do in these lands of your own; and we with the riches we have won here by your gifts shall hire many good knights, and, by the grace of God, withstand the malice of King Claudas; and if we have need we will send to ye for succor; and likewise ye, if ye have need, send for us, and we will not tarry, by the faith of our bodies."

When the two kings had left, King Arthur rode to Caerleon, and thither came to him his half-sister Belisent, wife to King Lot, sent as a messenger, but in truth to espy his power; and with her came a noble retinue, and also her four sons—Gowain, Gaheris, Agravaine, and Gareth. But when she saw King Arthur and his nobleness, and all the splendor of his knights and service, she forebore to spy upon him as a foe, and told him of her husband's plots against him and his throne. And the king, not knowing that she was his half-sister, made great court to her; and being full of admiration for her beauty, loved her out of measure, and kept her a long season at Caerleon. Wherefore her husband, King Lot, was more than ever King Arthur's enemy, and hated him till death with a passing great hatred.

At that time King Arthur had a marvelous dream, which gave him great

disquietness of heart. He dreamed that the whole land was full of many fiery griffins and serpents, which burnt and slew the people everywhere; and then that he himself fought with them, and that they did him mighty injuries, and wounded him nigh to death, but that at last he overcame and slew them all. When he woke, he sat in great heaviness of spirit and pensiveness, thinking what this dream might signify, but by-and-by, when he could by no means satisfy himself what it might mean, to rid himself of all his thoughts of it, he made ready with a great company to ride out hunting.

As soon as he was in the forest, the king saw a great hart before him, and spurred his horse, and rode long eagerly after it, and chased until his horse lost breath and fell down dead from under him. Then, seeing the hart escaped and his horse dead, he sat down by a fountain, and fell into deep thought again. And as he sat there alone, he thought he heard the noise of hounds, as it were some thirty couple in number, and looking up he saw coming towards him the strangest beast that ever he had seen or heard tell of, which ran towards the fountain and drank of the water. Its head was like a serpent's, with a leopard's body and a lion's tail, and it was footed like a stag; and the noise was in its belly, as it were the baying or questing of thirty couple of hounds. While it drank there was no noise within it; but presently, having finished, it departed with a greater sound than ever.

The king was amazed at all this; but being greatly wearied, he fell asleep, and was before long waked up by a knight on foot, who said, "Knight, full of thought and sleepy, tell me if thou sawest a strange beast pass this way?"

"Such a one I saw," said King Arthur to the knight, "but that is now two miles distant at the least. What would you with that beast?"

"Sir," said the knight, "I have followed it for a long time, and have killed my horse, and would to heaven I had another to pursue my quest withal."

At that moment came a yeoman with another horse for the king, which, when the knight saw, he earnestly prayed to be given him. "For I have followed this quest," said he, "twelve months, and either I shall achieve him or bleed of the best blood of my body."

It was King Pellinore who at that time followed the questing beast, but neither he nor King Arthur knew each other.

"Sir Knight," said King Arthur, "leave that quest and suffer me to have it, and I will follow it other twelve months."

"Ah, fool," said the knight, "thy desire is utterly in vain, for it shall never be achieved but by me, or by my next of kin."

Therewith he started to the king's horse, and mounted to the saddle, crying out, "Gramercy, this horse is mine!"

"Well," said the king, "thou mayest take my horse by force, and I will not say nay; but till we prove whether thou or I be best on horseback, I shall not rest content."

"Seek me here," said the knight, "whenever thou wilt, and here by this fountain thou shalt find me;" and so he passed forth on his way.

Then sat King Arthur in a deep fit of study, and bade his yeomen fetch him yet another horse as quickly as they could. And when they left him all alone came Merlin, disguised as a child of fourteen years of age, and saluted the king, and asked him why he was so pensive and heavy.

"I may well be pensive and heavy," he replied, "for here even now I have seen the strangest sight I ever saw."

"That know I well," said Merlin, "as well as thyself, and also all thy thoughts; but thou art foolish to take thought, for it will not amend thee. Also I know what thou art, and know thy father and thy mother."

"That is false," said King Arthur; "how shouldst thou know? thy years are not enough."

"Yea," said Merlin, "but I know better than thou how thou wast born, and better than any man living."

"I will not believe thee," said King Arthur, and was wroth with the child.

So Merlin departed, and came again in the likeness of an old man of fourscore years of age; and the king was glad at his coming, for he seemed wise and venerable. Then said the old man, "Why art thou so sad?"

"For divers reasons," said King Arthur; "for I have seen strange things to-day, and but this moment there was here a child who told me things beyond his years to know."

"Yea," said the old man, "but he told thee truth, and more he would have told thee hadst thou suffered him. But I will tell thee wherefore thou art sad, for thou hast done a thing of late for which God is displeased with thee, and what it is thou knowest in thy heart, though no man else may know."

"What are thou," said King Arthur, starting up all pale, "that tellest me these tidings?"

"I am Merlin," said he, "and I was he in the child's likeness, also."

"Ah," said King Arthur, "thou art a marvelous and right fearful man, and I would ask and tell thee many things this day."

As they talked came one with the king's horses, and so, King Arthur mounting one, and Merlin another, they rode together to Caerleon; and Merlin prophesied to Arthur of his death, and also foretold his own end.

And now King Arthur, having utterly dispersed and overwhelmed those kings who had so long delayed his coronation, turned all his mind to overthrow

the Saxon heathens who yet in many places spoiled the land. Calling together, therefore, his knights and men-at-arms, he rode with all his hosts to York, where Colgrin, the Saxon, lay with a great army; and there he fought a mighty battle, long and bloody, and drove him into the city, and besieged him. Then Baldulph, Colgrin's brother, came secretly with six thousand men to assail King Arthur and to raise the siege. But King Arthur was aware of him, and sent six hundred horsemen and three thousand foot to meet and fall on him instead. This therefore they did, encountering them at midnight, and utterly defeated them, till they fled away for life. But Baldulph, full of grief, resolved to share his brother's peril; wherefore he shaved his head and beard, and disguised himself as a jester, and so passed through King Arthur's camp, singing and playing on a harp, till by degrees he drew near to the city walls, where presently he made himself known, and was drawn up by ropes into the town.

Anon, while Arthur closely watched the city, came news that full six hundred ships had landed countless swarms of Saxons, under Cheldric, on the eastern coast. At that he raised the siege, and marched straight to London, and there increased his army, and took counsel with his barons how to drive the Saxons from the land for evermore.

Then with his nephew, Hoel, King of the Armorican Britons, who came with a great force to help him, King Arthur, with a mighty multitude of barons, knights, and fighting men, went swiftly up to Lincoln, which the Saxons lay besieging. And there he fought a passing fierce battle, and made grievous slaughter, killing above six thousand men, till the main body of them turned and fled. But he pursued them hotly into the wood of Celidon, where, sheltering themselves among the trees from his arrows, they made a stand, and for a long season bravely defended themselves. Anon, he ordered all the trees in that part of the forest to be cut down, leaving no shelter or ambush; and with their trunks and branches made a mighty barricade, which shut them in and hindered their escape. After three days, brought nigh to death by famine, they offered to give up their wealth of gold and silver spoils, and to depart forthwith in their empty ships; moreover, to pay tribute to King Arthur when they reached their home, and to leave him hostages till all was paid.

This offer, therefore, he accepted, and suffered them to depart. But when they had been a few hours at sea, they repented of their shameful flight, and turned their ships back again, and landing at Totnes, ravaged all the land as far as the Severn, and, burning and slaying on all sides, bent their steps towards Bath.

When King Arthur heard of their treachery and their return, he burned with anger till his eyes shone like two torches, and then he swore a mighty oath to rest

no more until he had utterly destroyed those enemies of God and man, and had rooted them forever out of the land of Britain. Then marching hotly with his armies on to Bath, he cried aloud to them, "Since these detestable and impious heathens disdain to keep their faith with me, I, to keep faith with God, to whom I swear to cherish and defend this realm, will now this day avenge on them the blood of all that they have slain in Britain!"

In like manner after him spoke the archbishop, standing upon a hill, and crying that to-day they should fight both for their country and for Paradise, "For whoso," he said, "shall in this holy war be slain, the angels shall forthwith receive him; for death in this cause shall be penance and absolution for all sins."

At these words every man in the whole army raged with hatred, and pressed eagerly to rush upon those savages.

Anon King Arthur, dressed in armor shining with gold and jewels, and wearing on his head a helmet with a golden dragon, took a shield painted with the likeness of the blessed Mary. Then girding on Excalibur and taking in his right hand his great lance Ron, he placed his men in order and led them out against the enemy, who stood for battle on the slope of Badon Hill, ranged in the form of a wedge, as their custom was. And they, resisting all the onslaughts of King Arthur and his host, made that day a stout defense, and at night lay down upon the hill.

But on the next day Arthur led his army once again to the attack, and with wounds and slaughter such as no man had ever seen before, he drove the heathen step by step before him, backwards and upwards, till he stood with all his noblest knights upon the summit of the hill.

And then men saw him, "red as the rising sun from spur to plume," lift up his sword, and, kneeling, kiss the cross of it; and after, rising to his feet, set might and main with all his fellowship upon the foe, till, as a troop of lions roaring for their prey, they drove them like a scattered herd along the plains, and cut them down till they could cut no more for weariness.

That day King Arthur by himself alone slew with his sword Excalibur four hundred and seventy heathens. Colgrin also, and his brother Baldulph, were slain.

Then the king bade Cador, Duke of Cornwall, follow Cheldric, the chief leader, and the remnant of his hosts, unto the uttermost. He, therefore, when he had first seized their fleet, and filled it with chosen men, to beat them back when they should fly to it at last, chased them and slew them without mercy so long as he could overtake them. And though they crept with trembling hearts for shelter to the coverts of the woods and dens of mountains, yet even so they found no safety, for Cador slew them, even one by one. Last of all he caught and slew

Cheldric himself, and slaughtering a great multitude took hostages for the surrender of the rest.

Meanwhile, King Arthur turned from Badon Hill, and freed his nephew Hoel from the Scots and Picts, who besieged him in Alculd. And when he had defeated them in three sore battles, he drove them before him to a lake, which was one of the most wondrous lakes in all the world, for it was fed by sixty rivers, and had sixty islands, and sixty rocks, and on every island sixty eagles' nests. But King Arthur with a great fleet sailed round the rivers and besieged them in the lake for fifteen days, so that many thousands died of hunger.

Anon the King of Ireland came with an army to relieve them; but Arthur, turning on him fiercely, routed him, and compelled him to retreat in terror to his land. Then he pursued his purpose, which was no less than to destroy the race of Picts and Scots, who, beyond memory, had been a ceaseless torment to the Britons by their barbarous malice.

So bitterly, therefore, did he treat them, giving quarter to none, that at length the bishops of that miserable country with the clergy met together, and, bearing all the holy relics, came barefooted to the king to pray his mercy for their people. As soon as they were led before him they fell down upon their knees, and piteously besought him to spare the few survivors of their countrymen, and grant them any corner of the land where they might live in peace. When he thus heard them, and knew that he had now fully punished them, he consented to their prayer, and withdrew his hosts from any further slaughter.

Then turned he back to his own realm, and came to York for Christmas, and there with high solemnity observed that holy tide; and being passing grieved to see the ruin of the churches and houses, which the rage of the pagans had destroyed, he rebuilt them, and restored the city to its ancient happy state.

And on a certain day, as the king sat with his barons, there came into the court a squire on horseback, carrying a knight before him wounded to the death, and told the king that hard by in the forest was a knight who had reared up a pavilion by the fountain, "and hath slain my master, a valiant knight, whose name was Nirlles; wherefore I beseech thee, Lord, my master may be buried, and that some good knight may avenge his death."

At that stepped forth a squire named Griflet, who was very young, being of the same age with King Arthur, and besought the king, for all the service he had done, to give him knighthood.

"Thou art full young and tender of age," said King Arthur, "to take so high an order upon thee."

"Sir," said Griflet, "I beseech thee make me a knight;" and Merlin also advising the king to grant his request, "Well," said Arthur, "be it then so," and



knighted him forthwith. Then said he to him, "Since I have granted thee this favor, thou must in turn grant me a gift."

"Whatsoever thou wilt, my lord," replied Sir Griflet.

"Promise me," said King Arthur, "by the faith of thy body, that when thou hast jousted with this knight at the fountain, thou wilt return to me straightway, unless he slay thee."

"I promise," said Sir Griflet; and taking his horse in haste, he dressed his shield, and took a spear in his hand and rode full gallop till he came to the fountain, by the side of which he saw a rich pavilion, and a great horse standing well saddled and bridled, and on a tree close by there hung a shield of many colors and a long lance.

Then Sir Griflet smote upon the shield with the butt of his spear until he cast it to the ground. At that a knight came out of the pavilion and said, "Fair knight, why smote ye down my shield?"

"Because," said Griflet, "I would joust with thee."

"It were better not," replied the knight; "for thou art young and but lately made a knight, and thy strength is small compared to mine."

"For all that," said Sir Griflet, "I will joust with ye."

"I am full loth," replied the knight; "but if I must I must."

Then did they wheel their horses far apart, and running them together, the strange knight shivered Sir Griflet's spear to fragments, and smote him through the shield and the left side, and broke his own spear into Sir Griflet's body, so that the truncheon stuck there, and Sir Griflet and his horse fell down. But when the strange knight saw him overthrown, he was sore grieved, and hastily alighted, for he thought that he had slain him. Then he unlaced his helm and gave him air, and tended him carefully till he come out of his swoon, and leaving the truncheon of his spear in his body, he set him upon horse, and commended him to God, and said he had a mighty heart, and if he lived would prove a passing good knight. And so Sir Griflet rode to the court, where, by aid of good physicians, he was healed in time and his life saved.

At that same time there came before the king twelve old men, ambassadors from Lucius Tiberius, Emperor of Rome, and demanded of Arthur tribute unto Cæsar for his realm, or else, said they, the emperor would destroy both him and his land. To whom King Arthur answered that he owed the emperor no tribute, nor would send him any; but said he, "On a fair field I will pay him his proper tribute—with a sharp spear and sword; and by my father's soul that tribute shall he take from me, whether he will or not." So the ambassadors departed passing wroth, and King Arthur was as wroth as they.

But on the morrow of Sir Griflet's hurt, the king commanded to take his

horse and armor secretly outside the city walls before sunrise of the next morning, and, rising a long while before dawn, he mounted up and took his shield and spear, and bade his chamberlain tarry till he came again; but he forbore to take Excalibur, for he had given it for safety into charge of his sister, Queen Morgan le Fay. And as the king rode at a soft pace he saw suddenly three villains chasing Merlin and making to attack and slay him. Clapping spurs to his horse, he rushed towards them, and cried out in a terrible voice, "Flee, churls, or take your deaths;" but they, as soon as they perceived a knight, fled away with the haste of hares.

"O Merlin," said the king; "here hadst thou been killed, despite thy many crafts, had I not chanced to pass."

"Not so," said Merlin, "for when I would, I could have saved myself; but thou art nearer to thy death than I, for without special help from heaven thou ridest now towards thy grave."

And as they were thus talking, they came to the fountain and the rich pavilion pitched beside it, and saw a knight sitting all armed on a chair in the opening of the tent. "Sir knight," said King Arthur, "for what cause abidest thou here? to joust with any knight that passeth by? If so, I caution thee to quit that custom."

"That custom," said the knight, "have I followed and will follow, let whosoever will say nay, and if any is aggrieved at it, let him who will amend it."

"I will amend it," said King Arthur.

"And I will defend it," answered the knight.

Then the knight mounted his horse and made himself ready, and charging at each other they met so hard that both their lances splintered into pieces. Then King Arthur drew his sword, but the knight cried out, "Not so; but let us run another tilt together with sharp spears."

"I would with a good will," said King Arthur; "but I have no more spears."

"I have enough of spears," replied the knight, and called a squire, who brought two good new lances.

Then spurring their horses, they rushed together with all their might, and broke each one his own spear short off in his hand. Then the king again put his hand to his sword, but the knight once more cried out, "Nay, yet abide awhile; ye are the best jouter that I ever met with; for the love of knighthood, let us joust yet once again."

So once again they tilted with their fullest force, and this time King Arthur's spear was shivered, but the knight's held whole, and drove so furiously against the king that both his horse and he were hurled to the ground.

At that, King Arthur was enraged and drew his sword and said, "I will attack

thee now, Sir knight, on foot, for on horseback I have lost the honor."

"I will be on horseback," said the knight. But when he saw him come on foot, he lighted from his horse, thinking it shame to have so great advantage.

And then began they a strong battle, with many great strokes and grievous blows, and so hewed with their swords that the fragments of their armor flew about the fields, and both so bled that all the ground around was like a marsh of blood. Thus they fought long and mightily, and anon, after brief rest fell to again, and so hurtled together like two wild boars that they both rolled to the ground. At last their swords clashed furiously together, and the knight's sword shivered the king's in two.

Then said the knight, "Now art thou in my power, to save thee or to slay. Yield therefore as defeated, and a recreant knight, or thou shalt surely die."

"As for death," replied King Arthur, "welcome be it when it cometh; but as for yielding me to thee as a recreant because of this poor accident upon my sword, I had far liefer die than be so shamed."

So saying, he sprang on the knight, and took him by the middle and threw him down, and tore off his helm. But the knight, being a huge man, wrestled and struggled in a frenzy with the king until he brought him under, and tore off his helm in turn, and would have smitten off his head.

At that came Merlin and said, "Knight, hold thy hand, for if thou slayest yonder knight, thou puttest all this realm to greater loss and damage than ever realm was in; for he is a man of greater worship than thou drest of."

"Who then is he?" cried the knight.

Then would he have slain him for dread of his wrath, but Merlin cast a spell upon the knight, so that he fell suddenly to the earth in a deep sleep. Then raising up the king, he took the knight's horse for himself and rode away.

"Alas," said King Arthur, "what hast thou done, Merlin? hast thou slain this good knight by thy crafts? There never lived a better knight; I had rather lose my kingdom for a year than have him dead."

"Be not afraid," said Merlin; "he is more whole and sound than thou art, and is but in a sleep, wherefrom in three hours' time he will awake. I told thee what a knight he was, and how near thou was to death. There liveth not a better knight than he in all the world, and hereafter he shall do thee good service. His name is King Pellinore, and he shall have two sons, who shall be passing valiant men, and, save one another, shall have no equal in prowess and in purity of life. The one shall be named Percival, and the other Lamoracke of Wales."

So they rode on to Caerleon, and all the knights grieved greatly when they heard of this adventure, that the king would jeopardize his person thus alone. Yet could they not hide their joy at serving under such a noble chief, who adventured

his own life as much as did the poorest knight among them all.

## CHAPTER IV

# THE KING'S MANY AND GREAT ADVENTURES

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The land of Britain being now in peace, and many great and valiant knights therein ready to take part in whatsoever battles or adventures might arise, King Arthur resolved to follow all his enemies to their own coasts. Anon he fitted out a great fleet, and sailing first to Ireland, in one battle he miserably routed the people of the country. The King of Ireland also he took prisoner, and forced all earls and barons to pay him homage.

Having conquered Ireland, he went next to Iceland and subdued it also, and the winter being then arrived, returned to Britain.

In the next year he set forth to Norway, whence many times the heathen had descended on the British coasts; for he was determined to give so terrible a lesson to those savages as should be told through all their tribes both far and near, and make his name fearful to them.

As soon as he was come, Riculf, the king, with all the power of that country, met and gave him battle; but, after mighty slaughter, the Britons had at length the advantage, and slew Riculf and a countless multitude besides.

Having thus defeated them, they set the cities on fire, dispersed the country people, and pursued the victory till they had reduced all Norway, as also Dacia, under the dominion of King Arthur.

Now, therefore, having thus chastised those pagans who so long had harassed Britain, and put his yoke upon them, he voyaged on to Gaul, being steadfastly set upon defeating the Roman governor of that province, and so beginning to make good the threats which he had sent the emperor by his ambassadors.

So soon as he was landed on the shores of Gaul, there came to him a countryman who told him of a fearful giant in the land of Brittany, who had slain, murdered, and devoured many people, and had lived for seven years upon young children only, "insomuch," said the man, "that all the children of the country are destroyed; and but the other day he seized upon our duchess, as she rode out with her men, and took her away to his lodging in a cave of a mountain, and though five hundred people followed her, yet could they give her no help or

rescue, but left her shrieking and crying lamentably in the giant's hands; and, Lord, she is thy cousin Hoel's wife, who is of thy near kindred; wherefore, as thou art a rightful king, have pity on this lady; and as thou art a valiant conqueror, avenge us and deliver us."

"Alas!" said King Arthur, "this is a great mischief that ye tell of. I had rather than the best realm I have, that I had rescued that lady ere the giant laid his hand on her; but tell me now, good fellow, canst thou bring me where this giant haunteth?"

"Yea, Lord!" replied the man; "lo, yonder, where thou seest two great fires, there shalt thou find him, and more treasure also than is in all Gaul besides."

Then the king returned to his tent, and, calling Sir Key and Sir Bedwin, desired them to get horses ready for himself and them, for that after evensong he would ride a pilgrimage with them alone to St. Michael's Mount. So in the evening they departed, and rode as fast as they could till they came near the mount, and there alighted; and the king commanded the two knights to await him at the hill foot, while he went up alone.

Then he ascended the mountain till he came to a great fire. And there he found a sorrowful widow wringing her hands and weeping miserably, sitting by a new-made grave. And saluting her, King Arthur prayed her wherefore she made such heavy lamentations.

"Sir knight," she said, "speak softly, for yonder is a devil, who, if he hear thy voice, will come and straightway slay thee. Alas! what dost thou here? Fifty such men as thou were powerless to resist him. Here lieth dead my lady, Duchess of Brittany, wife to Sir Hoel, who was the fairest lady in the world, foully and shamefully slaughtered by that fiend! Beware that thou go not too nigh, for he hath overcome and vanquished fifteen kings, and hath made himself a coat of precious stones, embroidered with their beards; but if thou art so hardy, and wilt speak with him, at yonder great fire he is at supper."

"Well," said King Arthur, "I will accomplish mine errand, for all thy fearful words;" and so went forth to the crest of the hill, and saw where the giant sat at supper, gnawing on a limb of a man, and baking his huge frame by the fire, while three damsels turned three spits, whereon were spitted, like larks, twelve young children lately born.

When King Arthur saw all that, his heart bled for sorrow, and he trembled for rage and indignation; then lifting up his voice he cried aloud—"God, that wieldeth all the world, give thee short life and shameful death, and may the devil have thy soul! Why hast thou slain those children and that fair lady! Wherefore arise, and prepare thee to perish, thou glutton and fiend, for this day thou shalt die by my hands."

Then the giant, mad with fury at these words, started up, and seizing a great club, smote the king, and struck his crown from off his head. But King Arthur smote him with his sword so mightily in return, that all his blood gushed forth in streams.

At that the giant, howling in great anguish, threw away his club of iron, and caught the king in both his arms and strove to crush his ribs together. But King Arthur struggled and writhed, and twisted him about so that the giant could not hold him tightly; and as they fiercely wrestled, they both fell, and rolling over one another, tumbled—wrestling, and struggling, and fighting frantically—from rock to rock, till they came to the sea.

And as they tore and strove and tumbled, the king ever and anon smote at the giant with his dagger, till his arms stiffened in death around King Arthur's body, and groaning horribly, he died. So presently the two knights came and found the king locked fast in the giant's arms, and very faint and weary, and loosed him from their hold.

Then the king bade Sir Key to "smite off the giant's head, and set it on the truncheon of a spear, and bear it to Sir Hoel, and tell him that his enemy is slain; and afterwards let it be fastened to the castle gate, that all the people may behold it. And go ye two up on the mountain and fetch me my shield and sword, and also the great club of iron ye will see there; and as for the treasure, ye shall find there wealth beyond counting, but take as much as ye will, for I have his kirtle and the club, I desire no more."

Then the knights fetched the club and kirtle, as the king had ordered, and took the treasure to themselves, as much as they could carry, and returned to the army. But when this deed was noised abroad, all the people came in multitudes to thank the king, who told them "to give thanks to God, and to divide the giant's spoils amongst them equally." And King Arthur desired Sir Hoel to build a church upon the mount, and dedicate it to the Archangel Michael.

On the morrow, all the host moved onwards into the country of Champagne, and Flollo, the Roman tribune, retired before them into Paris. But while he was preparing to collect more forces from the neighboring countries, King Arthur came upon him unawares; and besieged him in the town.

And when a month had passed, Flollo—full of grief at the starvation of his people, who died in hundreds day by day—sent to King Arthur, and desired that they two might fight together; for he was a man of mighty stature and courage, and thought himself sure of the victory. This challenge, King Arthur, full weary of the siege, accepted with great joy, and sent back word to Flollo that he would meet him whensoever he appointed.

And a truce being made on both sides, they met together the next day on the

island without the city, where all the people also were gathered to see the issue. And as the king and Frollo rode up to the lists, each was so nobly armed and horsed, and sat so mightily upon his saddle, that no man could tell which way the battle would end.

When they had saluted one another, and presented themselves against each other with their lances aloft, they put spurs to their horses and began a fierce encounter. But King Arthur, carrying his spear more warily, struck it on the upper part of Frollo's breast, and flung him from his saddle to the earth. Then drawing his sword, he cried to him to rise, and rushed upon him; but Frollo, starting up, met him with his spear couched, and pierced the breast of King Arthur's horse, and overthrew both horse and man.

The Britons, when they saw their king upon the ground, could scarcely keep themselves from breaking up the truce and falling on the Gauls. But as they were about to burst the barriers, and rush upon the lists, King Arthur hastily arose, and, guarding himself with his shield, ran with speed on Frollo. And now they renewed the assault with great rage, being sorely bent upon each other's death.

At length, Frollo, seizing his advantage, gave King Arthur a huge stroke upon the helm, which nigh overthrew him, and drew forth his blood in streams.

But when King Arthur saw his armor and shield all red with blood, he was inflamed with fury, and lifting up Excalibur on high, with all his might, he struck straight through the helmet into Frollo's head, and smote it into halves; and Frollo falling backwards, and tearing up the ground with his spurs, expired.

As soon as this news spread, the citizens all ran together, and, opening the gates, surrendered the city to the conqueror.

And when he had overrun the whole province with his arms, and reduced it everywhere to subjection, he returned again to Britain, and held his court at Caerleon, with greater state than ever.

Anon he invited thereto all the kings, dukes, earls, and barons, who owed him homage, that he might treat them royally, and reconcile them to each other, and to his rule.

And never was there a city more fit and pleasant for such festivals. For on one side it was washed by a noble river, so that the kings and princes from the countries beyond sea might conveniently sail up to it; and on the other side, the beauty of the groves and meadows, and the stateliness and magnificence of the royal palaces, with lofty gilded roofs, made it even rival the grandeur of Rome. It was famous also for two great and noble churches, whereof one was built in honor of the martyr Julius, and adorned with a choir of virgins who had devoted themselves wholly to the service of God; and the other, founded in memory of St. Aaron, his companion, maintained a convent of canons, and was the third



metropolitan church of Britain. Besides, there was a college of two hundred philosophers, learned in astronomy, and all the other sciences and arts.

In this place, therefore, full of such delights, King Arthur held his court, with many jousts and tournaments, and royal huntings, and rested for a season after all his wars.

And on a certain day there came into the court a messenger from Ryence, King of North Wales, bearing this message from his master: That King Ryence had discomfited eleven kings, and had compelled each one of them to cut off his beard; that he had trimmed a mantle with these beards, and lacked but one more beard to finish it; and that he therefore now sent for King Arthur's beard, which he required of him forthwith, or else he would enter his lands and burn and slay, and never leave them till he had taken by force not his beard only, but his head also.

When King Arthur heard these words he flushed all scarlet, and rising in great anger said, "Well it is for thee that thou speakest another man's words with thy lips, and not thine own. Thou hast said thy message, which is the most insolent and villainous that ever man heard sent to any king: now hear my reply. My beard is yet too young to trim that mantle of thy master's with; yet, young although I be, I owe no homage either to him or any man—nor will ever owe. But, young although I be, I will have thy master's homage upon both his knees before this year be past, or else he shall lose his head, by the faith of my body, for this message is the shamefullest I ever heard speak of. I see well thy king hath never yet met with a worshipful man; but tell him that King Arthur will have his head or his worship right soon."

Then the messenger departed, and Arthur, looking round upon his knights, demanded of them if any there knew this King Ryence. "Yea," answered Sir Noran, "I know him well, and there be few better or stronger knights upon a field than he; and he is passing proud and haughty in his heart; wherefore I doubt not, Lord, he will make war on thee with mighty power."

"Well," said King Arthur, "I shall be ready for him, and that shall he find."

While the king thus spoke, there came into the hall a damsel having on a mantle richly furred, which she let fall, and showed herself to be girded with a noble sword. The king being surprised at this, said, "Damsel, wherefore art thou girt with that sword, for it beseemeth thee not?" "Sir," said she, "I will tell thee. This sword wherewith I am thus girt gives me great sorrow and encumbrance, for I may not be delivered from it till I find a knight faithful and pure and true, strong of body and of valiant deeds, without guile or treachery, who shall be able to draw it from its scabbard, which no man else can do. And I have but just now come from the court of King Ryence, for there they told me many great and

good knights were to be ever found; but he and all his knights have tried to draw it forth in vain—for none of them can move it."

"This is a great marvel," said King Arthur; "I will myself try to draw forth this sword, not thinking in my heart that I am the best knight, but rather to begin and give example that all may try after me." Saying this, he took the sword and pulled at it with all his might, but could not shake or move it.

"Thou needest not strive so hard, Lord," said the damsel, "for whoever may be able to pull it forth shall do so very easily."

"Thou sayest well," replied the king, remembering how he had himself drawn forth the sword from the stone before St. Paul's. "Now try ye, all my barons; but beware ye be not stained with shame, or any treachery, or guile." And turning away his face from them, King Arthur mused full heavily on sins within his breast he knew of, and which his failure brought to mind right sadly.

Then all the barons present tried each after other, but could none of them succeed; whereat the damsel greatly wept, and said, "Alas, alas! I thought in this court to have found the best knight, without shame or treachery or treason."

Now by chance there was at that time a poor knight with King Arthur, who had been prisoner at his court for half a year or more, charged with slaying unawares a knight who was a cousin of the king's. He was named Balin le Savage, and had been by the good offices of the barons delivered from prison, for he was of good and valiant address and gentle blood. He being secretly present at the court saw this advantage, and felt his heart rise high within him, and longed to try the sword as did the others; but being poor and poorly clad, he was ashamed to come forward in the press of knights and nobles. But in his heart he felt assured that he could do better—if Heaven willed—than any knight among them all.

So as the damsel left the king, he called to her and said, "Damsel, I pray thee of thy courtesy, suffer me to try the sword as well as all these lords; for though I be but poorly clad, I feel assurance in my heart."

The damsel looked at him, saw in him a likely and an honest man, but because of his poor garments could not think him to be any knight of worship, and said, "Sir, there is no need to put me to any more pain or labor; why shouldst thou succeed where so many worthy ones have failed?"

"Ah, fair lady," answered Balin, "worthiness and brave deeds are not shown by fair raiment but manhood and truth lie hid within the heart. There be many worshipful knights unknown to all the people."

"By my faith, thou sayest truth," replied the damsel; "try therefore, if thou wilt, what thou canst do."

So Balin took the sword by the girdle and hilt, and drew it lightly out, and

looking on its workmanship and brightness, it pleased him greatly.

But the king and all the barons marveled at Sir Balin's fortune, and many knights were envious of him, for, "Truly," said the damsel, "this is a passing good knight, and the best man I have ever found, and the most worshipfully free from treason, treachery, or villainy, and many wonders shall he achieve.

"Now, gentle and courteous knight," continued she, turning to Balin, "give me the sword again."

"Nay," said Sir Balin, "save it be taken from me by force, I shall preserve this sword for evermore."

"Thou art not wise," replied the damsel, "to keep it from me; for if thou wilt do so, thou shall slay with it the best friend thou hast, and the sword shall be thine own destruction also."

"I will take whatever adventure God may send," said Balin; "but the sword will I keep, by the faith of my body."

"Thou will repent it shortly," said the damsel; "I would take the sword for thy sake rather than for mine, for I am passing grieved and heavy for thy sake, who wilt not believe the peril I foretell thee." With that she departed, making great lamentation.

Then Balin sent for his horse and armor, and took his leave of King Arthur, who urged him to stay at his court. "For," said he, "I believe that thou art displeased that I showed thee unkindness; blame me not overmuch, for I was misinformed against thee, and knew not truly what a knight of worship thou art. Abide in this court with my good knights, and I will so advance thee that thou shalt be well pleased."

"God thank thee, Lord," said Balin, "for no man can reward thy bounty and thy nobleness; but at this time I must needs depart, praying thee ever to hold me in thy favor."

"Truly," said King Arthur, "I am grieved for thy departure; but tarry not long, and thou shalt be right welcome to me and all my knights when thou returnest, and I will repair my neglect and all that I have done amiss against thee."

"God thank thee, Lord," again said Balin, and made ready to depart.

But meanwhile came into the court a lady upon horseback, full richly dressed, and saluted King Arthur, and asked him for the gift that he had promised her when she gave him his sword Excalibur, "for," said she, "I am the lady of the lake."

"Ask what thou wilt," said the king, "and thou shalt have it, if I have power to give."

"I ask," said she, "the head of that knight who hath just achieved the sword, or else the damsel's head who brought it, or else both; for the knight slew my

brother, and the lady caused my father's death."

"Truly," said King Arthur, "I cannot grant thee this desire; it were against my nature and against my name; but ask whatever else thou wilt, and I will do it."

"I will demand no other thing," said she.

And as she spake came Balin, on his way to leave the court, and saw her where she stood, and knew her straightway for his mother's murderess, whom he had sought in vain three years. And when they told him that she had asked King Arthur for his head, he went up straight to her and said, "May evil have thee! Thou desirest my head, therefore shalt thou lose thine"; and with his sword he lightly smote her head off, in the presence of the king and all the court.

"Alas, for shame!" cried out King Arthur, rising up in wrath; "why hast thou done this, shaming both me and my court? I am beholden greatly to this lady, and under my safe conduct came she here; thy deed is passing shameful; never shall I forgive thy villainy."

"Lord," cried Sir Balin, "hear me; this lady was the falsest living, and by her witchcraft hath destroyed many, and caused my mother also to be burnt to death by her false arts and treachery."

"What cause soever thou mightest have had," said the king, "thou shouldst have forborne her in my presence. Deceive not thyself, thou shalt repent this sin, for such a shame was never brought upon my court; depart now from my face with all the haste thou mayest."

Then Balin took up the head of the lady and carried it to his lodgings, and rode forth with his squire from out the town. Then said he, "Now must we part; take ye this head and bear it to my friends in Northumberland, and tell them how I speed, and that our worst foe is dead; also tell them that I am free from prison, and of the adventure of my sword."

"Alas!" said the squire, "ye are greatly to blame to have so displeased King Arthur."

"As for that," said Sir Balin, "I go now to find King Ryence, and destroy him or lose my life; for should I take him prisoner, and lead him to the court, perchance King Arthur would forgive me, and become my good and gracious lord."

"Where shall I meet thee again?" said the squire.

"In King Arthur's court," said Balin.

## CHAPTER V

# SIR BALIN FIGHTS WITH HIS BROTHER, SIR BALAN

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Now there was a knight at the court more envious than the others of Sir Balin, for he counted himself one of the best knights in Britain. His name was Lancear; and going to the king, he begged leave to follow after Sir Balin and avenge the insult he had put upon the court. "Do thy best," replied the king, "for I am passing wroth with Balin."

In the meantime came Merlin, and was told of this adventure of the sword and lady of the lake.

"Now hear me," said he, "when I tell ye that this lady who hath brought the sword is the falsest damsel living."

"Say not so," they answered, "for she hath a brother a good knight, who slew another knight this damsel loved; so she, to be revenged upon her brother, went to the Lady Lile, of Avilion, and besought her help. Then Lady Lile gave her the sword, and told her that no man should draw it forth but one, a valiant knight and strong, who should avenge her on her brother. This, therefore, was the reason why the damsel came here."

"I know it all as well as ye do," answered Merlin; "and would to God she had never come hither, for never came she into any company but to do harm; and that good knight who hath achieved the sword shall be himself slain by it, which shall be great harm and loss, for a better knight there liveth not; and he shall do unto my lord the king great honor and service."

Then Sir Lancear, having armed himself at all points, mounted, and rode after Sir Balin, as fast as he could go, and overtaking him, he cried aloud, "Abide, Sir knight! wait yet awhile, or I shall make thee do so."

Hearing him cry, Sir Balin fiercely turned his horse, and said, "Fair knight, what wilt thou with me? wilt thou joust?"

"Yea," said Sir Lancear, "it is for that I have pursued thee."

"Peradventure," answered Balin, "thou hadst best have stayed at home, for many a man who thinketh himself already victor, endeth by his own downfall. Of what court art thou?"

"Of King Arthur's court," cried Lancear, "and I am come to revenge the insult thou hast put on it this day."

"Well," said Sir Balin, "I see that I must fight thee, and I repent to be obliged to grieve King Arthur or his knights; and thy quarrel seemeth full foolish to me, for the damsel that is dead worked endless evils through the land, or else I had been loth as any knight that liveth to have slain a lady."

"Make thee ready," shouted Lancear, "for one of us shall rest forever in this field."

But at their first encounter Sir Lancear's spear flew into splinters from Sir Balin's shield, and Sir Balin's lance pierced with such might through Sir Lancear's shield, that it rove the hauberk also, and passed through the knight's body and the horse's crupper. And Sir Balin turning fiercely round again, drew out his sword, and knew not that he had already slain him; and then he saw him lie a corpse upon the ground.

At that same moment came a damsel riding towards him as fast as her horse could gallop, who, when she saw Sir Lancear dead, wept and sorrowed out of measure, crying, "O, Sir Balin, two bodies hast thou slain, and one heart; and two hearts in one body; and two souls also hast thou lost."

Therewith she took the sword from her dead lover's side—for she was Sir Lancear's lady-love—and setting the pommel of it on the ground, ran herself through the body with the blade.

When Sir Balin saw her dead he was sorely hurt and grieved in spirit, and repented the death of Lancear, which had also caused so fair a lady's death. And being unable to look on their bodies for sorrow, he turned aside into a forest, where presently as he rode, he saw the arms of his brother, Sir Balan. And when they were met they put off their helms, and embraced each other, kissing, and weeping for joy and pity. Then Sir Balin told Sir Balan all his late adventures, and that he was on his way to King Ryence, who at that time was besieging Castle Terrabil. "I will be with thee," answered Sir Balan, "and we will help each other, as brethren ought to do."

Anon by chance, as they were talking, came King Mark, of Cornwall, by that way, and when he saw the two dead bodies of Sir Lancear and his lady lying there, and heard the story of their death, he vowed to build a tomb to them before he left that place. So pitching his pavilion there, he sought through all the country round to find a monument, and found at last a rich and fair one in a church, which he took and raised above the dead knight and his damsel, writing on it—"Here lieth Lancear, son of the King of Ireland, who, at his own request, was slain by Balin; and here beside him also lieth his lady Colombe, who slew herself with her lover's sword for grief and sorrow."

Then as Sir Balin and Sir Balan rode away, Merlin met with them, and said to Balin, "Thou hast done thyself great harm not to have saved that lady's life who slew herself; and because of it, thou shalt strike the most Dolorous Stroke that ever man struck, save he that smote our Lord. For thou shalt smite the truest and most worshipful of living knights, who shall not be recovered from his wounds for many years, and through that stroke three kingdoms shall be overwhelmed in poverty and misery."

"If I believed," said Balin, "what thou sayest, I would slay myself to make thee a liar."

At that Merlin vanished suddenly away; but afterwards he met them in disguise towards night, and told them he could lead them to King Ryence, whom they sought. "For this night he is to ride with sixty lances only through a wood hard by."

So Sir Balin and Sir Balan hid themselves within the wood, and at midnight came out from their ambush among the leaves by the highway, and waited for the king, whom presently they heard approaching with his company. Then did they suddenly leap forth and smote at him and overthrew him and laid him on the ground, and turning on his company wounded and slew forty of them, and put the rest to flight. And returning to King Ryence they would have slain him there, but he craved mercy, and yielded to their grace, crying, "Knights full of prowess, slay me not; for by my life ye may win something—but my death can avail ye nought."

"Ye say truth," said the two knights, and put him in a horse-litter, and went swiftly through all the night, till at cock-crow they came to King Arthur's palace. There they delivered him to the warders and porters, to be brought before the king, with this message—"That he was sent to King Arthur by the knight of the two swords" (for so was Balin known by name, since his adventure with the damsel) "and by his brother." And so they rode away again ere sunrise.

Within a month or two thereafter, King Arthur being somewhat sick, went forth outside the town, and had his pavilion pitched in a meadow, and there abode, and laid him down on a pallet to sleep, but could get no rest. And as he lay he heard the sound of a great horse, and looking out of the tent door, saw a knight ride by, making great lamentation.

"Abide, fair sir," said King Arthur, "and tell me wherefore thou makest this sorrow."

"Ye may little amend it," said the knight, and so passed on.

Presently after Sir Balin, rode, by chance, past that meadow, and when he saw the king he alighted and came to him on foot, and kneeled and saluted him.

"By my head," said King Arthur, "ye be welcome, Sir Balin;" and then he

thanked him heartily for revenging him upon King Ryence, and for sending him so speedily a prisoner to his castle, and told him how King Nero, Ryence's brother, had attacked him afterwards to deliver Ryence from prison; and how he had defeated him and slain him, and also King Lot, of Orkney, who was joined with Nero, and whom King Pellinore had killed in the battle. Then when they had thus talked, King Arthur told Sir Balin of the sullen knight that had just passed his tent, and desired him to pursue him and to bring him back.

So Sir Balin rode and overtook the knight in a forest with a damsel, and said, "Sir knight, thou must come back with me unto my lord, King Arthur, to tell him the cause of thy sorrow, which thou hast refused even now to do."

"That will I not," replied the knight, "for it would harm me much, and do him no advantage."

"Sir," said Sir Balin, "I pray thee make ready, for thou must needs go with me—or else I must fight with thee and take thee by force."

"Wilt thou be warrant for safe conduct, if I go with thee?" inquired the knight.

"Yea, surely," answered Balin, "I will die else."

So the knight made ready to go with Sir Balin, and left the damsel in the wood.

But as they went, there came one invisible, and smote the knight through the body with a spear. "Alas," cried Sir Herleus (for so was he named), "I am slain under thy guard and conduct, by that traitor knight called Garlon, who through magic and witchcraft rideth invisibly. Take, therefore, my horse, which is better than thine, and ride to the damsel whom we left, and follow the quest I had in hand, as she will lead thee—and revenge my death when thou best mayest."

"That will I do," said Sir Balin, "by my knighthood, and so I swear to thee."

Then went Sir Balin to the damsel, and rode forth with her; she carrying ever with her the truncheon of the spear wherewith Sir Herleus had been slain. And as they went, a good knight, Perin de Mountbelgard, joined their company, and vowed to take adventure with them wheresoever they might go. But presently as they passed a hermitage fast by a churchyard, came the knight Garlon, again invisible, and smote Sir Perin through the body with a spear, and slew him as he had slain Sir Herleus. Whereat, Sir Balin greatly raged, and swore to have Sir Garlon's life, whenever next he might encounter and behold him in his bodily shape. Anon, he and the hermit buried the good knight Sir Perin, and rode on with the damsel till they came to a great castle, whereinto they were about to enter. But when Sir Balin had passed through the gateway, the portcullis fell behind him suddenly, leaving the damsel on the outer side, with men around her, drawing their swords as if to slay her.



When he saw that, Sir Balin climbed with eager haste by wall and tower, and leaped into the castle moat, and rushed towards the damsel and her enemies, with his sword drawn, to fight and slay them. But they cried out, "Put up thy sword, Sir knight, we will not fight thee in this quarrel, for we do nothing but an ancient custom of this castle."

Then they told him that the lady of the castle was passing sick, and had lain ill for many years, and might never more be cured, unless she had a silver dish full of the blood of a pure maid and a king's daughter. Wherefore the custom of the castle was, that never should a damsel pass that way but she must give a dish full of her blood. Then Sir Balin suffered them to bleed the damsel with her own consent, but her blood helped not the lady of the castle. So on the morrow they departed, after right good cheer and rest.

Then they rode three or four days without adventure, and came at last to the abode of a rich man, who sumptuously lodged and fed them. And while they sat at supper Sir Balin heard a voice of some one groaning grievously. "What noise is this?" said he.

"Forsooth," said the host, "I will tell you. I was lately at a tournament, and there I fought a knight who is brother to King Pelles, and overthrew him twice, for which he swore to be revenged on me through my best friend, and so he wounded my son, who cannot be recovered till I have that knight's blood, but he rideth through witchcraft always invisibly, and I know not his name."

"Ah," said Sir Balin, "but I know him; his name is Garlon, and he hath slain two knights, companions of mine own, in the same fashion, and I would rather than all the riches in this realm that I might meet him face to face."

"Well," said his host, "let me now tell thee that King Pelles hath proclaimed in all the country a great festival, to be held at Listeniss, in twenty days from now, whereto no knight may come without a lady. At that great feast we might perchance find out this Garlon, for many will be there; and if it please thee we will set forth together."

So on the morrow they rode all three towards Listeniss, and traveled fifteen days, and reached it on the day the feast began. Then they alighted and stabled their horses, and went up to the castle, and Sir Balin's host was denied entrance, having no lady with him. But Sir Balin was right heartily received, and taken to a chamber, where they unarmed him, and dressed him in rich robes, of any color that he chose, and told him he must lay aside his sword. This, however, he refused, and said, "It is the custom of my country for a knight to keep his sword ever with him; and if I may not keep it here, I will forthwith depart." Then they gave him leave to wear his sword. So he went to the great hall, and was set among knights of rank and worship, and his lady before him.

Soon he found means to ask one who sat near him, "Is there not here a knight whose name is Garlon?"

"Yonder he goeth," said his neighbor, "he with that black face; he is the most marvelous knight alive, for he rideth invisibly, and destroyeth whom he will."

"Ah, well," said Balin, drawing a long breath, "is that indeed the man? I have aforetime heard of him."

Then he mused long within himself, and thought, "If I shall slay him here and now, I shall not escape myself; but if I leave him, peradventure I shall never meet with him again at such advantage; and if he live, how much more harm and mischief will he do!"

But while he deeply thought, and cast his eyes from time to time upon Sir Garlon, that false knight saw that he watched him, and thinking that he could at such a time escape revenge, he came and smote Sir Balin on the face with the back of his hand, and said, "Knight, why dost thou so watch me? be ashamed, and eat thy meat, and do that which thou camest for."

"Thou sayest well," cried Sir Balin, rising fiercely; "now will I straightway do that which I came to do, as thou shalt find." With that he whirled his sword aloft and struck him downright on the head, and clove his skull asunder to the shoulder.

"Give me the truncheon," cried out Sir Balin to his lady, "wherewith he slew thy knight." And when she gave it him—for she had always carried it about with her, wherever she had gone—he smote him through the body with it, and said, "With that truncheon didst thou treacherously murder a good knight, and now it sticketh in thy felon body."

Then he called to the father of the wounded son, who had come with him to Listeniss, and said, "Now take as much blood as thou wilt, to heal thy son withal."

But now arose a terrible confusion, and all the knights leaped from the table to slay Balin, King Pelles himself the foremost, who cried out, "Knight, thou hast slain my brother at my board; die, therefore, die, for thou shalt never leave this castle."

"Slay me, thyself, then," shouted Balin.

"Yea," said the king, "that will I! for no other man shall touch thee, for the love I bear my brother."

Then King Pelles caught in his hand a grim weapon and smote eagerly at Balin, but Balin put his sword between his head and the king's stroke, and saved himself but lost his sword, which fell down smashed and shivered into pieces by the blow. So being weaponless he ran to the next room to find a sword, and so from room to room, with King Pelles after him, he in vain ever eagerly casting

his eyes round every place to find some weapon.

At last he ran into a chamber wondrous richly decked, where was a bed all dressed with cloth of gold, the richest that could be thought of, and one who lay quite still within the bed; and by the bedside stood a table of pure gold, borne on four silver pillars, and on the table stood a marvelous spear, strangely wrought.

When Sir Balin saw the spear he seized it in his hand, and turned upon King Pelles, and smote at him so fiercely and so sore that he dropped swooning to the ground.

But at that Dolorous and awful Stroke the castle rocked and rove throughout, and all the walls fell crashed and breaking to the earth, and Balin himself fell also in their midst, struck as it were to stone, and powerless to move a hand or foot. And so three days he lay amidst the ruins, until Merlin came and raised him up and brought him a good horse, and bade him ride out of that land as swiftly as he could.

"May I not take the damsel with me I brought hither?" said Sir Balin.

"Lo! where she lieth dead," said Merlin. "Ah, little knowest thou, Sir Balin, what thou hast done; for in this castle and that chamber which thou didst defile, was the blood of our Lord Christ! and also that most holy cup—the Sangreal—wherefrom the wine was drunk at the last supper of our Lord. Joseph of Arimathea brought it to this land, when first he came here to convert and save it. And on that bed of gold it was himself who lay, and the strange spear beside him was the spear wherewith the soldier Longus smote our Lord, which evermore had dripped with blood. King Pelles is the nearest kin to Joseph in direct descent, wherefore he held these holy things in trust; but now have they all gone at thy dolorous stroke, no man knoweth whither; and great is the damage to this land, which until now hath been the happiest of all lands, for by that stroke thou hast slain thousands, and by the loss and parting of the Sangreal, the safety of this realm is put in peril, and its great happiness is gone for evermore."

Then Balin departed from Merlin, struck to his soul with grief and sorrow, and said, "In this world shall we meet never more."

So he rode forth through the fair cities and the country, and found the people lying dead on every side. And all the living cried out on him as he passed, "O Balin, all this misery hast thou done! For the dolorous stroke thou gavest King Pelles, three countries are destroyed, and doubt not but revenge will fall on thee at last!"

When he had passed the boundary of those countries, he was somewhat comforted, and rode eight days without adventure. Anon he came to a cross, whereon was written in letters of gold, "It is not for a knight alone to ride towards this castle." Looking up, he saw a hoary ancient man come towards him,

who said, "Sir Balin le Savage, thou passest thy bounds this way; therefore turn back again, it will be best for thee;" and with these words he vanished.

Then did he hear a horn blow as it were the death-note of some hunted beast. "That blast," said Balin, "is blown for me, for I am the prey; though yet I be not dead." But as he spoke he saw a hundred ladies with a great troop of knights come forth to meet him with bright faces and great welcome, who led him to the castle and made a great feast, with dancing and minstrelsy and all manner of joy.

Then the chief lady of the castle said, "Knight with the two swords, thou must encounter and fight with a knight hard by, who dwelleth on an island, for no man may pass this way without encountering him."

"It is a grievous custom," answered Sir Balin.

"There is but one knight to defeat," replied the lady.

"Well," said Sir Balin, "be it as thou wilt. I am ready and quite willing, and though my horse and my body be full weary, yet is my heart not weary, save of life. And truly I were glad if I might meet my death."

"Sir," said one standing by, "methinketh your shield is not good; I will lend you a bigger."

"I thank thee, sir," said Balin, and took the unknown shield and left his own, and so rode forth, and put himself and horse into a boat and came to the island.

As soon as he had landed, he saw come riding towards him, a knight dressed all in red, upon a horse trapped in the same color. When the red knight saw Sir Balin, and the two swords he wore, he thought it must have been his brother (for the red knight was Sir Balan), but when he saw the strange arms on his shield, he forgot the thought, and came against him fiercely. At the first course they overthrew each other, and both lay swooning on the ground; but Sir Balin was the most hurt and bruised, for he was weary and spent with traveling. So Sir Balan rose up first to his feet and drew his sword, and Sir Balin painfully rose against him and raised his shield. Then Sir Balan smote him through the shield and brake his helmet; and Sir Balin, in return, smote at him with his fated sword, and had wellnigh slain his brother. And so they fought till their breaths failed.

Then Sir Balin, looking up, saw all the castle towers stand full of ladies. So they went again to battle, and wounded each other full sore, and paused, and breathed again, and then again began the fight; and this for many times they did, till all the ground was red with blood. And by now, each had full grievously wounded the other with seven great wounds, the least of which might have destroyed the mightiest giant in the world. But still they rose against each other, although their hauberks now were all unnailed, and they smiting at each other's naked bodies with their sharp swords. At the last, Sir Balan, the younger brother, withdrew a little space and laid him down.

Then said Sir Balin le Savage, "What knight art thou? for never before have I found a knight to match me thus."

"My name," said he, all faintly, "is Balan, brother to the good knight Sir Balin."

"Ah, God!" cried Balin, "that ever I should see this day!" and therewith fell down backwards in a swoon.

Then Sir Balan crept with pain upon his feet and hands, and put his brother's helmet off his head, but could not know him by his face, it was so hewed and bloody. But presently, when Sir Balin came to, he said, "Oh! Balan, mine own brother, thou hast slain me, and I thee! All the wide world saw never greater grief!"

"Alas!" said Sir Balan, "that I ever saw this day; and through mishap alone I knew thee not, for when I saw thy two swords, if it had not been for thy strange shield, I should have known thee for my brother."

"Alas!" said Balin, "all this sorrow lieth at the door of one unhappy knight within the castle, who made me change my shield. If I might live, I would destroy that castle and its evil customs."

"It were well done," said Balan, "for since I first came hither I have never been able to depart, for here they made me fight with one who kept this island, whom I slew, and by enchantment I might never quit it more; nor couldst thou, brother, hadst thou slain me, and escaped with thine own life."

Anon came the lady of the castle, and when she heard their talk, and saw their evil case, she wrung her hands and wept bitterly. So Sir Balan prayed the lady of her gentleness that, for his true service, she would bury them both together in that place. This she granted, weeping full sore, and said it should be done right solemnly and richly, and in the noblest manner possible. Then did they send for a priest, and received the holy sacrament at his hands. And Balin said, "Write over us upon our tomb, that here two brethren slew each other; then shall never good knight or pilgrim pass this way but he will pray for both our souls." And anon Sir Balan died, but Sir Balin died not till the midnight after; and then they both were buried.

On the morrow of their death came Merlin, and took Sir Balin's sword and fixed on it a new pommel, and set it in a mighty stone, which then, by magic, he made float upon the water. And so, for many years, it floated to and fro around the island, till it swam down the river to Camelot, where young Sir Galahad achieved it, as shall be told hereafter.

## CHAPTER VI

# THE MARRIAGE OF ARTHUR AND GUINEVERE AND THE FOUNDING OF THE ROUND TABLE

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It befell upon a certain day, that King Arthur said to Merlin, "My lords and knights do daily pray me now to take a wife; but I will have none without thy counsel, for thou hast ever helped me since I came first to this crown."

"It is well," said Merlin, "that thou shouldst take a wife, for no man of bounteous and noble nature should live without one; but is there any lady whom thou lovest better than another?"

"Yea," said King Arthur, "I love Guinevere, the daughter of King Leodegrance, of Camelgard, who also holdeth in his house the Round Table that he had from my father Uther; and as I think, that damsel is the gentlest and the fairest lady living."

"Sir," answered Merlin, "as for her beauty, she is one of the fairest that do live; but if ye had not loved her as ye do, I would fain have had ye choose some other who was both fair and good. But where a man's heart is set, he will be loth to leave." This Merlin said, knowing the misery that should hereafter happen from this marriage.

Then King Arthur sent word to King Leodegrance that he mightily desired to wed his daughter, and how that he had loved her since he saw her first, when with Kings Ban and Bors he rescued Leodegrance from King Ryence of North Wales.

When King Leodegrance heard the message, he cried out, "These be the best tidings I have heard in all my life—so great and worshipful a prince to seek my daughter for his wife! I would fain give him half my lands with her straightway, but that he needeth none—and better will it please him that I send him the Round Table of King Uther, his father, with a hundred good knights towards the furnishing of it with guests, for he will soon find means to gather more, and make the table full."

Then King Leodegrance delivered his daughter Guinevere to the messengers of King Arthur, and also the Round Table with the hundred knights.

So they rode royally and freshly, sometimes by water and sometimes by

land, towards Camelot. And as they rode along in the spring weather, they made full many sports and pastimes. And, in all those sports and games, a young knight lately come to Arthur's, court, Sir Lancelot by name, was passing strong, and won praise from all, being full of grace and hardihood; and Guinevere also ever looked on him with joy. And always in the eventide, when the tents were set beside some stream or forest, many minstrels came and sang before the knights and ladies as they sat in the tent-doors, and many knights would tell adventures; and still Sir Lancelot was foremost, and told the knightliest tales, and sang the goodliest songs, of all the company.

And when they came to Camelot, King Arthur made great joy, and all the city with him; and riding forth with a great retinue he met Guinevere and her company, and led her through the streets all filled with people, and in the midst of all their shoutings and the ringing of church bells, to a palace hard by his own.

Then, in all haste, the king commanded to prepare the marriage and the coronation with the stateliest and most honorable pomp that could be made. And when the day was come, the archbishops led the king to the cathedral, whereto he walked, clad in his royal robes, and having four kings, bearing four golden swords, before him; a choir of passing sweet music going also with him.

In another part, was the queen dressed in her richest ornaments, and led by archbishops and bishops to the Chapel of the Virgins, the four queens also of the four kings last mentioned walked before her, bearing four white doves, according to ancient custom; and after her there followed many damsels, singing and making every sign of joy.

And when the two processions were come to the churches, so wondrous was the music and the singing, that all the knights and barons who were there pressed on each other, as in the crowd of battle, to hear and see the most they might.

When the king was crowned, he called together all the knights that came with the Round Table from Camelgard, and twenty-eight others, great and valiant men, chosen by Merlin out of all the realm, towards making up the full number of the table. Then the Archbishop of Canterbury blessed the seats of all the knights, and when they rose again therefrom to pay their homage to King Arthur, there was found upon the back of each knight's seat his name, written in letters of gold. But upon one seat was found written, "This is the Siege Perilous, wherein if any man shall sit save him whom Heaven hath chosen, he shall be devoured by fire."

Anon came young Gawain, the king's nephew, praying to be made a knight, whom the king knighted then and there. Soon after came a poor man, leading with him a tall fair lad of eighteen years of age, riding on a lean mare. And falling at the king's feet, the poor man said, "Lord, it was told me, that at this

time of thy marriage thou wouldst give to any man the gift he asked for, so it were not unreasonable."

"That is the truth," replied King Arthur, "and I will make it good."

"Thou sayest graciously and nobly," said the poor man. "Lord, I ask nothing else but that thou wilt make my son here a knight."

"It is a great thing that thou askest," said the king. "What is thy name?"

"Aries, the cowherd," answered he.

"Cometh this prayer from thee or from thy son?" inquired King Arthur.

"Nay, lord, not from myself," said he, "but from him only, for I have thirteen other sons, and all of them will fall to any labor that I put them to. But this one will do no such work for anything that I or my wife may do, but is for ever shooting or fighting, and running to see knights and joustings, and torments me both night and day that he be made a knight."

"What is thy name?" said the king to the young man.

"My name is Tor," said he.

Then the king, looking at him steadfastly, was well pleased with his face and figure, and with his look of nobleness and strength.

"Fetch all thy other sons before me," said the king to Aries. But when he brought them, none of them resembled Tor in size or shape or feature.

Then the king knighted Tor, saying, "Be thou to thy life's end a good knight and a true, as I pray God thou mayest be; and if thou provest worthy, and of prowess, one day thou shalt be counted in the Round Table." Then turning to Merlin, Arthur said, "Prophecy now, O Merlin, shall Sir Tor become a worthy knight, or not?"

"Yea, lord," said Merlin, "so he ought to be, for he is the son of that King Pellinore whom thou hast met, and proved to be one of the best knights living. He is no cowherd's son."

Presently after came in King Pellinore, and when he saw Sir Tor he knew him for his son, and was more pleased than words can tell to find him knighted by the king. And Pellinore did homage to King Arthur, and was gladly and graciously accepted of the king; and then was led by Merlin to a high seat at the Table Round, near to the Perilous Seat.

But Sir Gawain was full of anger at the honor done King Pellinore, and said to his brother Gaheris, "He slew our father, King Lot, therefore will I slay him."

"Do it not yet," said he; "wait till I also be a knight, then will I help ye in it: it is best ye suffer him to go at this time, and not trouble this high feast with bloodshed."

"As ye will, be it," said Sir Gawain.

Then rose the king and spake to all the Table Round, and charged them to be



ever true and noble knights, to do neither outrage nor murder, nor any unjust violence, and always to flee treason; also by no means ever to be cruel, but give mercy unto him that asked for mercy, upon pain of forfeiting the liberty of his court forevermore. Moreover, at all times, on pain of death, to give all succor unto ladies and young damsels; and lastly, never to take part in any wrongful quarrel, for reward or payment. And to all this he swore them knight by knight.

Then he ordained that, every year at Pentecost, they should all come before him, wheresoever he might appoint a place, and give account of all their doings and adventures of the past twelve-month. And so, with prayer and blessing, and high words of cheer, he instituted the most noble order of the Round Table, whereto the best and bravest knights in all the world sought afterwards to find admission.

Then was the high feast made ready, and the king and queen sat side by side, before the whole assembly; and great and royal was the banquet and the pomp.

And as they sat, each man in his place, Merlin went round and said, "Sit still awhile, for ye shall see a strange and marvelous adventure."

So as they sat, there suddenly came running through the hall, a white hart, with a white hound next after him, and thirty couple of black running hounds, making full cry; and the hart made circuit of the Table Round, and past the other tables; and suddenly the white hound flew upon him and bit him fiercely, and tore out a piece from his haunch. Whereat the hart sprang suddenly with a great leap, and overthrew a knight sitting at the table, who rose forthwith, and, taking up the hound, mounted, and rode fast away.

But no sooner had he left, than there came in a lady, mounted on a white palfrey, who cried out to the king, "Lord, suffer me not to have this injury!—the hound is mine which that knight taketh." And as she spake, a knight rode in all armed, on a great horse, and suddenly took up the lady and rode away with her by force, although she greatly cried and moaned.

Then the king desired Sir Gawain, Sir Tor, and King Pellinore to mount and follow this adventure to the uttermost; and told Sir Gawain to bring back the hart, Sir Tor the hound and knight, and King Pellinore the knight and the lady.

So Sir Gawain rode forth at a swift pace, and with him Gaheris, his brother, for a squire. And as they went, they saw two knights fighting on horseback, and when they reached them they divided them and asked the reason of their quarrel. "We fight for a foolish matter," one replied, "for we be brethren; but there came by a white hart this way, chased by many hounds, and thinking it was an adventure for the high feast of King Arthur, I would have followed it to have gained worship; whereat my younger brother here declared he was the better knight and would go after it instead, and so we fight to prove which of us be the

better knight."

"This is a foolish thing," said Sir Gawain. "Fight with all strangers, if ye will, but not brother with brother. Take my advice, set on against me, and if ye yield to me, as I shall do my best to make ye, ye shall go to King Arthur and yield ye to his grace."

"Sir knight," replied the brothers, "we are weary, and will do thy wish without encountering thee; but by whom shall we tell the king that we were sent?"

"By the knight that followeth the quest of the white hart," said Sir Gawain. "And now tell me your names, and let us part."

"Surlous and Brian of the Forest," they replied; and so they went their way to the king's court.

Then Sir Gawain, still following his quest by the distant baying of the hounds, came to a great river, and saw the hart swimming over and near to the further bank. And as he was about to plunge in and swim after, he saw a knight upon the other side, who cried, "Come not over here, Sir knight, after that hart, save thou wilt joust with me."

"I will not fail for that," said Sir Gawain; and swam his horse across the stream.

Anon they got their spears, and ran against each other fiercely; and Sir Gawain smote the stranger off his horse, and turning, bade him yield.

"Nay," replied he, "not so; for though ye have the better of me on horseback, I pray thee, valiant knight, alight, and let us match together with our swords on foot."

"What is thy name?" quoth Gawain.

"Allardin of the Isles," replied the stranger.

Then they fell on each other; but soon Sir Gawain struck him through the helm, so deeply and so hard, that all his brains were scattered, and Sir Allardin fell dead. "Ah," said Gaheris, "that was a mighty stroke for a young knight!"

Then did they turn again to follow the white hart, and let slip three couple of greyhounds after him; and at the last they chased him to a castle, and there they overtook and slew him, in the chief courtyard.

At that there rushed a knight forth from a chamber, with a drawn sword in his hand, and slew two of the hounds before their eyes, and chased the others from the castle, crying, "Oh, my white hart! alas, that thou art dead! for thee my sovereign lady gave to me, and evil have I kept thee; but if I live, thy death shall be dear bought." Anon he went within and armed, and came out fiercely, and met Sir Gawain face to face.

"Why have ye slain my hounds?" said Sir Gawain; "they did but after their

nature: and ye had better have taken vengeance on me than on the poor dumb beasts."

"I will avenge me on thee, also," said the other, "ere thou depart this place."

Then did they fight with each other savagely and madly, till the blood ran down to their feet. But at last Sir Gawain had the better, and felled the knight of the castle to the ground. Then he cried out for mercy, and yielded to Sir Gawain, and besought him as he was a knight and gentleman to save his life. "Thou shalt die," said Sir Gawain, "for slaying my hounds."

"I will make thee all amends within my power," replied the knight.

But Sir Gawain would have no mercy, and unlaced his helm to strike his head off; and so blind was he with rage, that he saw not where a lady ran out from her chamber and fell down upon his enemy. And making a fierce blow at him, he smote off by mischance the lady's head.

"Alas!" cried Gaheris, "fouly and shamefully have ye done—the shame shall never leave ye! Why give ye not your mercy unto them that ask it? a knight without mercy is without worship also."

Then Sir Gawain was sore amazed at that fair lady's death, and knew not what to do, and said to the fallen knight, "Arise, for I will give thee mercy."

"Nay, nay," said he, "I care not for thy mercy now, for thou hast slain my lady and my love—that of all earthly things I loved the best."

"I repent me sorely of it," said Sir Gawain, "for I meant to have struck thee: but now shalt thou go to King Arthur and tell him this adventure, and how thou hast been overcome by the knight that followeth the quest of the white hart."

"I care not whether I live or die, or where I go," replied the knight.

So Sir Gawain sent him to the court to Camelot, making him bear one dead greyhound before and one behind him on his horse. "Tell me thy name before we part," said he.

"My name is Athmore of the Marsh," he answered.

Then went Sir Gawain into the castle, and prepared to sleep there and began to unarm; but Gaheris upbraided him, saying, "Will ye disarm in this strange country? bethink ye, ye must needs have many enemies about."

No sooner had he spoken than there came out suddenly four knights, well armed, and assailed them hard, saying to Sir Gawain, "Thou new-made knight, how hast thou shamed thy knighthood! a knight without mercy is dishonored! Slayer of fair ladies, shame to thee evermore! Doubt not thou shalt thyself have need of mercy ere we leave thee."

Then were the brothers in great jeopardy, and feared for their lives, for they were but two to four, and weary with traveling; and one of the four knights shot Sir Gawain with a bolt, and hit him through the arm, so that he could fight no

more. But when there was nothing left for them but death, there came four ladies forth and prayed the four knights' mercy for the strangers. So they gave Sir Gawain and Gaheris their lives, and made them yield themselves prisoners.

On the morrow, came one of the ladies to Sir Gawain, and talked with him, saying, "Sir knight, what cheer?"

"Not good," said he.

"It is your own default, sir," said the lady, "for ye have done a passing foul deed in slaying that fair damsel yesterday—and ever shall it be great shame to you. But ye be not of King Arthur's kin."

"Yea, truly am I," said he; "my name is Gawain, son of King Lot of Orkney, whom King Pellinore slew—and my mother, Belisent, is half-sister to the king."

When the lady heard that, she went and presently got leave for him to quit the castle; and they gave him the head of the white hart to take with him, because it was in his quest; but made him also carry the dead lady with him—her head hung round his neck and her body lay before him on his horse's neck.

So in that fashion he rode back to Camelot; and when the king and queen saw him, and heard tell of his adventures, they were heavily displeased, and, by order of the queen, he was put upon his trial before a court of ladies—who judged him to be evermore, for all his life, the knight of ladies' quarrels, and to fight always on their side, and never against any, except he fought for one lady and his adversary for another; also they charged him never to refuse mercy to him that asked it, and swore him to it on the Holy Gospels. Thus ended the adventure of the white hart.

Meanwhile, Sir Tor had made him ready, and followed the knight who rode away with the hound. And as he went, there suddenly met him in the road a dwarf, who struck his horse so viciously upon the head with a great staff, that he leaped backwards a spear's length.

"Wherefore so smitest thou my horse, foul dwarf?" shouted Sir Tor.

"Because thou shalt not pass this way," replied the dwarf, "unless thou fight for it with yonder knights in those pavilions," pointing to two tents, where two great spears stood out, and two shields hung upon two trees hard by.

"I may not tarry, for I am on a quest I needs must follow," said Sir Tor.

"Thou shalt not pass," replied the dwarf, and therewith blew his horn. Then rode out quickly at Sir Tor one armed on horseback, but Sir Tor was quick as he, and riding at him bore him from his horse, and made him yield. Directly after came another still more fiercely, but with a few great strokes and buffets Sir Tor unhorsed him also, and sent them both to Camelot to King Arthur. Then came the dwarf and begged Sir Tor to take him in his service, "for," said he, "I will serve no more recreant knights."

"Take then a horse, and come with me," said Tor.

"Ride ye after the knight with the white hound?" said the dwarf; "I can soon bring ye where he is."

So they rode through the forest till they came to two more tents. And Sir Tor alighting, went into the first, and saw three damsels lie there, sleeping. Then went he to the other, and found another lady also sleeping, and at her feet the white hound he sought for, which instantly began to bay and bark so loudly, that the lady woke. But Sir Tor had seized the hound and given it to the dwarf's charge.

"What will ye do, Sir knight?" cried out the lady; "will ye take away my hound from me by force?"

"Yea, lady," said Sir Tor; "for so I must, having the king's command; and I have followed it from King Arthur's court, at Camelot, to this place."

"Well," said the lady, "ye will not go far before ye be ill handled, and will repent ye of the quest."

"I shall cheerfully abide whatsoever adventure cometh, by the grace of God," said Sir Tor; and so mounted his horse and began to ride back on his way. But night coming on, he turned aside to a hermitage that was in the forest, and there abode till the next day, making but sorrowful cheer of such poor food as the hermit had to give him, and hearing a Mass devoutly before he left on the morrow.

And in the early morning, as he rode forth with the dwarf towards Camelot, he heard a knight call loudly after him, "Turn, turn! Abide, Sir knight, and yield me up the hound thou tookest from my lady." At which he turned, and saw a great and strong knight, armed full splendidly, riding down upon him fiercely through a glade of the forest.

Now Sir Tor was very ill provided, for he had but an old courser, which was as weak as himself, because of the hermit's scanty fare. He waited, nevertheless, for the strange knight to come, and at the first onset with their spears, each unhorsed the other, and then fell to with their swords like two mad lions. Then did they smite through one another's shields and helmets till the fragments flew on all sides, and their blood ran out in streams; but yet they carved and rove through the thick armor of the hauberks, and gave each other great and ghastly wounds. But in the end, Sir Tor, finding the strange knight faint, doubled his strokes until he beat him to the earth. Then did he bid him yield to his mercy.

"That will I not," replied Abellius, "while my life lasteth and my soul is in my body, unless thou give me first the hound."

"I cannot," said Sir Tor, "and will not, for it was my quest to bring again that hound and thee unto King Arthur, or otherwise to slay thee."

With that there came a damsel riding on a palfrey, as fast as she could drive, and cried out to Sir Tor with a loud voice, "I pray thee, for King Arthur's love, give me a gift."

"Ask," said Sir Tor, "and I will give thee."

"Gramercy," said the lady, "I ask the head of this false knight Abellius, the most outrageous murderer that liveth."

"I repent me of the gift I promised," said Sir Tor. "Let him make thee amends for all his trespasses against thee."

"He cannot make amends," replied the damsel, "for he hath slain my brother, a far better knight than he, and scorned to give him mercy, though I kneeled for half an hour before him in the mire, to beg it, and though it was but by a chance they fought, and for no former injury or quarrel. I require my gift of thee as a true knight, or else will I shame thee in King Arthur's court; for this Abellius is the falsest knight alive, and a murderer of many."

When Abellius heard this, he trembled greatly, and was sore afraid, and yielded to Sir Tor, and prayed his mercy.

"I cannot now, Sir knight," said he, "lest I be false to my promise. Ye would not take my mercy when I offered it; and now it is too late."

Therewith he unlaced his helmet, and took it off; but Abellius, in dismal fear, struggled to his feet, and fled, until Sir Tor overtook him, and smote off his head entirely with one blow.

"Now, sir," said the damsel, "it is near night, I pray ye come and lodge at my castle hard by."

"I will, with a good will," said he, for both his horse and he had fared but poorly since they left Camelot.

So he went to the lady's castle and fared sumptuously, and saw her husband, an old knight, who greatly thanked him for his service, and urged him oftentimes to come again.

On the morrow he departed, and reached Camelot by noon, where the king and queen rejoiced to see him, and the king made him Earl; and Merlin prophesied that these adventures were but little to the things he should achieve hereafter.

Now while Sir Gawain and Sir Tor had fulfilled their quests, King Pellinore pursued the lady whom the knight had seized away from the wedding-feast. And as he rode through the woods, he saw in a valley a fair young damsel sitting by a well-side, and a wounded knight lying in her arms, and King Pellinore saluted her as he passed by.

As soon as she perceived him she cried out, "Help, help me, knight, for our Lord's sake!" But Pellinore was far too eager in his quest to stay or turn,

although she cried a hundred times to him for help; at which she prayed to heaven he might have such sore need before he died as she had now. And presently thereafter her knight died in her arms; and she, for grief and love, slew herself with his sword.

But King Pellinore rode on till he met a poor man, and asked him had he seen a knight pass by that way, leading by force a lady with him.

"Yea, surely," said the man, "and greatly did she moan and cry; but even now another knight is fighting with him to deliver the lady; ride on and thou shalt find them fighting still."

At that King Pellinore rode swiftly on, and came to where he saw the two knights fighting, hard by where two pavilions stood. And when he looked in one of them, he saw the lady that was his quest, and with her the two squires of the two knights who fought.

"Fair lady," said he, "ye must come with me unto King Arthur's court."

"Sir knight," said the two squires, "yonder be two knights fighting for this lady; go part them, and get their consent to take her, ere thou touch her."

"Ye say well," said King Pellinore, and rode between the combatants, and asked them why they fought.

"Sir knight," said the one, "yon lady is my cousin, mine aunt's daughter, whom I met borne away against her will, by this knight here, with whom I therefore fight to free her."

"Sir knight," replied the other, whose name was Hantzlake of Wentland, "this lady got I, by my arms and prowess, at King Arthur's court to-day."

"That is false," said King Pellinore; "ye stole the lady suddenly, and fled away with her, before any knight could arm to stay thee. But it is my service to take her back again. Neither of ye shall therefore have her; but if ye will fight for her, fight with me now and here."

"Well," said the knights, "make ready, and we will assail thee with all our might."

Then Sir Hantzlake ran King Pellinore's horse through with his sword, so that they might be all alike on foot. But King Pellinore at that was passing wroth, and ran upon Sir Hantzlake, with a cry, "Keep well thy head!" and gave him such a stroke upon the helm as clove him to the chin, so that he fell dead to the ground. When he saw that, the other knight refused to fight, and kneeling down said, "Take my cousin the lady with thee, as thy quest is; but as thou art a true knight, suffer her to come to neither shame nor harm."

So the next day King Pellinore departed for Camelot, and took the lady with him; and as they rode in a valley full of rough stones, the damsel's horse stumbled and threw her, so that her arms were sorely bruised and hurt. And as

they rested in the forest for the pain to lessen, night came on, and there they were compelled to make their lodging. A little before midnight they heard the trotting of a horse. "Be ye still," said King Pellinore, "for now we may hear of some adventure," and therewith he armed her. Then he heard two knights meet and salute each other, in the dark; one riding from Camelot, the other from the north.

"What tidings at Camelot?" said one.

"By my head," said the other, "I have but just left there, and have espied King Arthur's court, and such a fellowship is there as never may be broke or overcome; for wellnigh all the chivalry of the world is there, and all full loyal to the king, and now I ride back homewards to the north to tell our chiefs, that they waste not their strength in wars against him."

"As for all that," replied the other knight, "I am but now from the north, and bear with me a remedy, the deadliest poison that ever was heard tell of, and to Camelot will I with it; for there we have a friend close to the king, and greatly cherished of him, who hath received gifts from us to poison him, as he hath promised soon to do."

"Beware," said the first knight, "of Merlin, for he knoweth all things, by the devil's craft."

"I will not fear for that," replied the other, and so rode on his way.

Anon King Pellinore and the lady passed on again; and when they came to the well at which the lady with the wounded knight had sat, they found both knight and damsel utterly devoured by lions and wild beasts, all save the lady's head.

When King Pellinore saw that, he wept bitterly, saying, "Alas! I might have saved her life had I but tarried a few moments in my quest."

"Wherefore make so much sorrow now?" said the lady.

"I know not," answered he, "but my heart grieveth greatly for this poor lady's death, so fair she was and young."

Then he required a hermit to bury the remains of the bodies, and bare the lady's head with him to Camelot, to the court.

When he was arrived, he was sworn to tell the truth of his quest before the King and Queen, and when he had entered the Queen somewhat upbraided him, saying, "Ye were much to blame that ye saved not that lady's life."

"Madam," said he, "I shall repent it all my life."

"Ay, king," quoth Merlin, who suddenly came in, "and so ye ought to do, for that lady was your daughter, not seen since infancy by thee. And she was on her way to court, with a right good young knight, who would have been her husband, but was slain by treachery of a felon knight, Lorraine le Savage, as they came; and because thou wouldst not abide and help her, thy best friend shall



fail thee in thine hour of greatest need, for such is the penance ordained thee for that deed."

Then did King Pellinore tell Merlin secretly of the treason he had heard in the forest, and Merlin by his craft so ordered that the knight who bare the poison was himself soon after slain by it, and so King Arthur's life was saved.

## CHAPTER VII

# THE ADVENTURE OF ARTHUR AND SIR ACCOLON OF GAUL

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Being now happily married, King Arthur for a season took his pleasure, with great tournaments, and jousts, and huntings. So once upon a time the king and many of his knights rode hunting in a forest, and Arthur, King Urience, and Sir Accolon of Gaul, followed after a great hart, and being all three well mounted, they chased so fast that they outsped their company, and left them many miles behind; but riding still as rapidly as they could go, at length their horses fell dead under them. Then being all three on foot, and seeing the stag not far before them, very weary and nigh spent—"What shall we do," said King Arthur, "for we are hard bested?" "Let us go on afoot," said King Urience, "till we can find some lodging." At that they saw the stag lying upon the bank of a great lake, with a hound springing at his throat, and many other hounds trooping towards him. So, running forward, Arthur blew the death-note on his horn, and slew the hart. Then lifting up his eyes he saw before him on the lake a barge, all draped down to the water's edge, with silken folds and curtains, which swiftly came towards him, and touched upon the sands; but when he went up close and looked in, he saw no earthly creature. Then he cried out to his companions, "Sirs, come ye hither, and let us see what there is in this ship." So they all three went in, and found it everywhere throughout furnished, and hung with rich draperies of silk and gold.

By this time eventide had come, when suddenly a hundred torches were set up on all sides of the barge, and gave a dazzling light, and at the same time came forth twelve fair damsels, and saluted King Arthur by his name, kneeling on their knees, and telling him that he was welcome, and should have their noblest cheer, for which the king thanked them courteously. Then did they lead him and his fellows to a splendid chamber, where was a table spread with all the richest furniture, and costliest wines and viands; and there they served them with all kinds of wines and meats, till Arthur wondered at the splendor of the feast, declaring he had never in his life supped better, or more royally. After supper they led him to another chamber, than which he had never beheld a richer, where he was left to rest. King Urience, also, and Sir Accolon were each conducted

into rooms of like magnificence. And so they all three fell asleep, and being very weary slept deeply all that night.

But when the morning broke, King Urience found himself in his own house in Camelot, he knew not how; and Arthur awaking found himself in a dark dungeon, and heard around him nothing but the groans of woeful knights, prisoners like himself. Then said King Arthur, "Who are ye, thus groaning and complaining?" And some one answered him, "Alas, we be all prisoners, even twenty good knights, and some of us have lain here seven years—some more—nor seen the light of day for all that time." "For what cause?" said King Arthur. "Know ye not then yourself?" they answered—"we will soon tell you. The lord of this strong castle is Sir Damas, and is the falsest and most traitorous knight that liveth; and he hath a younger brother, a good and noble knight, whose name is Outzlake. This traitor Damas, although passing rich, will give his brother nothing of his wealth, and save what Outzlake keepeth to himself by force, he hath no share of the inheritance. He owneth, nevertheless, one fair rich manor, whereupon he liveth, loved of all men far and near. But Damas is as altogether hated as his brother is beloved, for he is merciless and cowardly: and now for many years there hath been war between these brothers, and Sir Outzlake evermore defieth Damas to come forth and fight with him, body to body, for the inheritance; and if he be too cowardly, to find some champion knight that will fight for him. And Damas hath agreed to find some champion, but never yet hath found a knight to take his evil cause in hand, or wager battle for him. So with a strong band of men-at-arms he lieth ever in ambush, and taketh captive every passing knight who may unwarily go near and bringeth him into this castle, and desireth him either to fight Sir Outzlake, or to lie for evermore indurance. And thus hath he dealt with all of us, for we all scorned to take up such a cause for such a false foul knight—but rather one by one came here, where many a good knight hath died of hunger and disease. But if one of us would fight, Sir Damas would deliver all the rest."

"God of his mercy send you deliverance," said King Arthur, and sat turning in his mind how all these things should end, and how he might himself gain freedom for so many noble hearts.

Anon there came a damsel to the king, saying, "Sir, if thou wilt fight for my lord thou shalt be delivered out of prison, but else nevermore shalt thou escape with thy life." "Nay," said King Arthur, "that is but a hard choice, yet had I rather fight than die in prison, and if I may deliver not myself alone, but all these others, I will do the battle." "Yea," said the damsel, "it shall be even so." "Then," said King Arthur, "I am ready now, if but I had a horse and armor." "Fear not," said she, "that shalt thou have presently, and shalt lack nothing proper for the

fight." "Have I not seen thee," said the king, "at King Arthur's court? for it seemeth that thy face is known to me." "Nay," said the damsel, "I was never there; I am Sir Damas' daughter, and have never been but a day's journey from this castle." But she spoke falsely, for she was one of the damsels of Morgan le Fay, the great enchantress, who was King Arthur's half-sister.

When Sir Damas knew that there had been at length a knight found who would fight for him, he sent for Arthur, and finding him a man so tall and strong, and straight of limb, he was passingly well pleased, and made a covenant with him, that he should fight unto the uttermost for his cause, and that all the other knights should be delivered. And when they were sworn to each other on the Holy Gospels, all those imprisoned knights were straightway led forth and delivered, but abode there one and all to see the battle.

In the meanwhile there had happened to Sir Accolon of Gaul a strange adventure; for when he awoke from his deep sleep upon the silken barge, he found himself upon the edge of a deep well, and in instant peril of falling thereinto. Whereat, leaping up in great affright, he crossed himself and cried aloud, "May God preserve my lord King Arthur and King Urience, for those damsels in the ship have betrayed us, and were doubtless devils and no women; and if I may escape this misadventure, I will certainly destroy them wheresoever I may find them." With that there came to him a dwarf with a great mouth, and a flat nose, and saluted him, saying that he came from Queen Morgan le Fay. "And she greeteth you well," said he, "and biddeth you be strong of heart, for to-morrow you shall do battle with a strange knight, and therefore she hath sent you here Excalibur, King Arthur's sword, and the scabbard likewise. And she desireth you as you do love her to fight this battle to the uttermost, and without any mercy, as you have promised her you would fight when she should require it of you; and she will make a rich queen forever of any damsel that shall bring her that knight's head with whom you are to fight."

"Well," said Sir Accolon, "tell you my lady Queen Morgan, that I shall hold to that I promised her, now that I have this sword—and," said he, "I suppose it was to bring about this battle that she made all these enchantments by her craft." "You have guessed rightly," said the dwarf, and therewithal he left him.

Then came a knight and lady, and six squires, to Sir Accolon, and took him to a manor house hard by, and gave him noble cheer; and the house belonged to Sir Outzlake, the brother of Sir Damas, for so had Morgan le Fay contrived with her enchantments. Now Sir Outzlake himself was at that time sorely wounded and disabled, having been pierced through both his thighs by a spear-thrust. When, therefore, Sir Damas sent down messengers to his brother, bidding him make ready by to-morrow morning, and be in the field to fight with a good

knight, for that he had found a champion ready to do battle at all points, Sir Outlake was sorely annoyed and distressed, for he knew he had small chance of victory, while yet he was disabled by his wounds; notwithstanding, he determined to take the battle in hand, although he was so weak that he must needs be lifted to his saddle. But when Sir Accolon of Gaul heard this, he sent a message to Sir Outlake offering to take the battle in his stead, which cheered Sir Outlake mightily, who thanked Sir Accolon with all his heart, and joyfully accepted him.

So, on the morrow, King Arthur was armed and well horsed, and asked Sir Damas, "When shall we go to the field?" "Sir," said Sir Damas, "you shall first hear mass." And when mass was done, there came a squire on a great horse, and asked Sir Damas if his knight were ready, "for our knight is already in the field." Then King Arthur mounted on horseback, and there around were all the knights, and barons, and people of the country; and twelve of them were chosen to wait upon the two knights who were about to fight. And as King Arthur sat on horseback, there came a damsel from Morgan le Fay, and brought to him a sword, made like Excalibur, and a scabbard also, and said to him, "Morgan le Fay sendeth you here your sword for her great love's sake." And the king thanked her, and believed it to be as she said; but she traitorously deceived him, for both sword and scabbard were counterfeit, brittle, and false, and the true sword Excalibur was in the hands of Sir Accolon. Then, at the sound of a trumpet, the champions set themselves on opposite side of the field, and giving rein and spur to their horses urged them to so great a speed that each smiting the other in the middle of the shield, rolled his opponent to the ground, both horse and man. Then starting up immediately, both drew their swords and rushed swiftly together. And so they fell to eagerly, and gave each other many great and mighty strokes.

And as they were thus fighting, the damsel Vivien, lady of the lake, who loved King Arthur, came upon the ground, for she knew by her enchantments how Morgan le Fay had craftily devised to have King Arthur slain by his own sword that day, and therefore came to save his life. And Arthur and Sir Accolon were now grown hot against each other, and spared not strength nor fury in their fierce assaults; but the king's sword gave way continually before Sir Accolon's, so that at every stroke he was sore wounded, and his blood ran from him so fast that it was a marvel he could stand. When King Arthur saw the ground so sore be-blooded, he bethought him in dismay that there was magic treason worked upon him, and that his own true sword was changed, for it seemed to him that the sword in Sir Accolon's hand was Excalibur, for fearfully it drew his blood at every blow, while what he held himself kept no sharp edge, nor fell with any

force upon his foe.

"Now, knight, look to thyself, and keep thee well from me," cried out Sir Accolon. But King Arthur answered not, and gave him such a buffet on the helm as made him stagger and nigh fall upon the ground. Then Sir Accolon withdrew a little, and came on with Excalibur on high, and smote King Arthur in return with such a mighty stroke as almost felled him; and both being now in hottest wrath, they gave each other grievous and savage blows. But Arthur all the time was losing so much blood that scarcely could he keep upon his feet, yet so full was he of knighthood, that knightly he endured the pain, and still sustained himself, though now he was so feeble that he thought himself about to die. Sir Accolon, as yet, had lost no drop of blood, and being very bold and confident in Excalibur, even grew more vigorous and hasty in his assaults. But all men who beheld them said they never saw a knight fight half so well as did King Arthur, and all the people were so grieved for him that they besought Sir Damas and Sir Outzlake to make up their quarrel and so stay the fight; but they would not.

So still the battle raged, till Arthur drew a little back for breath and a few moments' rest; but Accolon came on after him, following fiercely and crying loud, "It is no time for me to suffer thee to rest," and therewith set upon him. Then Arthur, full of scorn and rage, lifted up his sword and struck Sir Accolon upon the helm so mightily that he drove him to his knees; but with the force of that great stroke his brittle, treacherous sword broke short off at the hilt, and fell down in the grass among the blood, leaving the pommel only in his hand. At that, King Arthur thought within himself that all was over, and secretly prepared his mind for death, yet kept himself so knightly sheltered by his shield that he lost no ground, and made as though he yet had hope and cheer. Then said Sir Accolon, "Sir knight, thou now art overcome and canst endure no longer, seeing thou art weaponless, and hast lost already so much blood. Yet am I fully loth to slay thee; yield, then, therefore, to me as recreant." "Nay," said King Arthur, "that may I not, for I have promised to do battle to the uttermost by the faith of my body while my life lasteth; and I had rather die with honor than live with shame; and if it were possible for me to die an hundred times, I had rather die as often than yield me to thee, for though I lack weapons, I shall lack no worship, and it shall be to thy shame to slay me weaponless." "Aha," shouted then Sir Accolon, "as for the shame, I will not spare; look to thyself, sir knight, for thou art even now but a dead man." Therewith he drove at him with pitiless force, and struck him nearly down; but Arthur evermore waxing in valor as he waned in blood, pressed on Sir Accolon with his shield, and hit at him so fiercely with the pommel in his hand, as hurled him three strides backward.

This, therefore, so confused Sir Accolon, that rushing up, all dizzy, to deliver

once again a furious blow, even as he struck, Excalibur, by Vivien's magic, fell from out his hands upon the earth. Beholding which, King Arthur lightly sprang to it, and grasped it, and forthwith felt it was his own good sword, and said to it, "Thou hast been from me all too long, and done me too much damage." Then spying the scabbard hanging by Sir Accolon's side, he sprang and pulled it from him, and cast it away as far as he could throw it; for so long as he had worn it, Arthur knew his life would have been kept secure. "Oh, knight!" then said the king, "thou hast this day wrought me much damage by this sword, but now art thou come to thy death, for I shall not warrant thee but that thou shalt suffer, ere we part, somewhat of that thou hast made me suffer." And therewithal King Arthur flew at him with all his might, and pulled him to the earth, and then struck off his helm, and gave him on the head a fearful buffet, till the blood leaped forth. "Now will I slay thee!" cried King Arthur; for his heart was hardened, and his body all on fire with fever, till for a moment he forgot his knightly mercy. "Slay me thou mayest," said Sir Accolon, "for thou art the best knight I ever found, and I see well that God is with thee; and I, as thou hast, have promised to fight this battle to the uttermost, and never to be recreant while I live; therefore shall I never yield me with my mouth, and God must do with my body what he will." And as Sir Accolon spoke, King Arthur thought he knew his voice; and parting all his blood-stained hair from out his eyes, and leaning down towards him, saw, indeed, it was his friend and own true knight. Then said he—keeping his own visor down—"I pray thee tell me of what country art thou, and what court?" "Sir knight," he answered, "I am of King Arthur's court, and my name is Sir Accolon of Gaul." Then said the king, "Oh, sir knight! I pray thee tell me who gave thee this sword? and from whom thou hadst it?"

Then said Sir Accolon, "Woe worth this sword, for by it I have gotten my death. This sword hath been in my keeping now for almost twelve months, and yesterday Queen Morgan le Fay, wife of King Urience, sent it to me by a dwarf, that therewith I might in some way slay her brother, King Arthur; for thou must understand that King Arthur is the man she hateth most in all the world, being full of envy and jealousy because he is of greater worship and renown than any other of her blood. She loveth me also as much as she doth hate him; and if she might contrive to slay King Arthur by her craft and magic, then would she straightway kill her husband also, and make me the king of all this land, and herself my queen, to reign with me; but now," said he, "all that is over, for this day I am come to my death."

"It would have been sore treason of thee to destroy thy lord," said Arthur. "Thou sayest truly," answered he; "but now that I have told thee, and openly confessed to thee all that foul treason whereof I now do bitterly repent, tell me, I

pray thee, whence art thou, and of what court?" "O, Sir Accolon!" said King Arthur, "learn that I am myself King Arthur." When Sir Accolon heard this he cried aloud, "Alas, my gracious lord! have mercy on me, for I knew thee not." "Thou shalt have mercy," said he, "for thou knewest not my person at this time; and though by thine own confession thou art a traitor, yet do I blame thee less, because thou hast been blinded by the false crafts of my sister Morgan le Fay, whom I have trusted more than all others of my kin, and whom I now shall know well how to punish." Then did Sir Accolon cry loudly, "O, lords, and all good people! this noble knight that I have fought with is the noblest and most worshipful in all the world; for it is King Arthur, our liege lord and sovereign king; and full sorely I repent that I have ever lifted lance against him, though in ignorance I did it."

Then all the people fell down on their knees and prayed the pardon of the king for suffering him to come to such a strait. But he replied, "Pardon ye cannot have, for, truly, ye have nothing sinned; but here ye see what ill adventure may oftentimes befall knights-errant, for to my own hurt, and his danger also, I have fought with one of my own knights."

Then the king commanded Sir Damas to surrender to his brother the whole manor, Sir Outzlake only yielding him a palfrey every year; "for," said he scornfully, "it would become thee better to ride on than a courser;" and ordered Damas, upon pain of death, never again to touch or to distress knights-errant riding on their adventures; and also to make full compensation and satisfaction to the twenty knights whom he had held in prison. "And if any of them," said the king, "come to my court complaining that he hath not had full satisfaction of thee for his injuries, by my head, thou shalt die therefor."

Afterwards, King Arthur asked Sir Outzlake to come with him to his court, where he should become a knight of his, and, if his deeds were noble, be advanced to all he might desire.

So then he took his leave of all the people and mounted upon horseback, and Sir Accolon went with him to an abbey hard by, where both their wounds were dressed. But Sir Accolon died within four days after. And when he was dead, the king sent his body to Queen Morgan, to Camelot, saying that he sent her a present in return for the sword Excalibur which she had sent him by the damsel.

So, on the morrow, there came a damsel from Queen Morgan to the king, and brought with her the richest mantle that ever was seen, for it was set as full of precious stones as they could stand against each other, and they were the richest stones that ever the king saw. And the damsel said, "Your sister sendeth you this mantle, and prayeth you to take her gift, and in whatsoever thing she hath offended you, she will amend it at your pleasure." To this the king replied



not, although the mantle pleased him much. With that came in the lady of the lake, and said, "Sir, put not on this mantle till thou hast seen more; and in nowise let it be put upon thee, or any of thy knights, till ye have made the bringer of it first put it on her." "It shall be done as thou dost counsel," said the king. Then said he to the damsel that came from his sister, "Damsel, I would see this mantle ye have brought me upon yourself." "Sir," said she, "it will not beseem me to wear a knight's garment." "By my head," said King Arthur, "thou shalt wear it ere it go on any other person's back!" And so they put it on her by force, and forthwith the garment burst into a flame and burned the damsel into cinders. When the king saw that, he hated that false witch Morgan le Fay with all his heart, and evermore was deadly quarrel between her and Arthur to their lives' end.

## CHAPTER VIII

# ARTHUR IS CROWNED EMPEROR AT ROME

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And now again the second time there came ambassadors from Lucius Tiberius, Emperor of Rome, demanding, under pain of war, tribute and homage from King Arthur, and the restoration of all Gaul, which he had conquered from the tribune Follo.

When they had delivered their message, the king bade them withdraw while he consulted with his knights and barons what reply to send. Then some of the younger knights would have slain the ambassadors, saying that their speech was a rebuke to all who heard the king insulted by it. But when King Arthur heard that, he ordered none to touch them upon pain of death; and sending officers, he had them taken to a noble lodging, and there entertained with the best cheer. "And," said he, "let no dainty be spared, for the Romans are great lords; and though their message please me not, yet must I remember mine honor."

Then the lords and knights of the Round Table were called on to declare their counsel—what should be done upon this matter; and Sir Cador of Cornwall speaking first, said, "Sir, this message is the best news I have heard for a long time, for we have been now idle and at rest for many days, and I trust that thou wilt make sharp war upon the Romans, wherein, I doubt not, we shall all gain honor."

"I believe well," said Arthur, "that thou art pleased, Sir Cador; but that is scarce an answer to the Emperor of Rome, and his demand doth grieve me sorely, for truly I will never pay him tribute; wherefore, lords, I pray ye counsel me. Now, I have understood that Belinus and Brennius, knights of Britain, held the Roman Empire in their hands for many days, and also Constantine, the son of Helen, which is open evidence, not only that we owe Rome no tribute, but that I, being descended from them, may, of right, myself claim the empire."

Then said King Anguish of Scotland, "Sir, thou oughtest of right to be above all other kings, for in all Christendom is there not thine equal; and I counsel thee never to obey the Romans. For when they reigned here they grievously distressed us, and put the land to great and heavy burdens; and here, for my part, I swear to avenge me on them when I may, and will furnish thee with twenty

thousand men-at-arms, whom I will pay and keep, and who shall wait on thee with me, when it shall please thee."

Then the King of Little Britain rose and promised King Arthur thirty thousand men; and likewise many other kings, and dukes, and barons, promised aid—as the lord of West Wales thirty thousand men, Sir Ewaine and his cousin thirty thousand men, and so forth; Sir Lancelot also, and every other knight of the Round Table, promised each man a great host.

So the king, passing joyful at their courage and good will, thanked them all heartily, and sent for the ambassadors again, to hear his answer. "I will," said he, "that ye now go back straightway unto the Emperor your master, and tell him that I give no heed to his words, for I have conquered all my kingdoms by the will of God and by my own right arm, and I am strong enough to keep them, without paying tribute to any earthly creature. But, on the other hand, I claim both tribute and submission from himself, and also claim the sovereignty of all his empire, whereto I am entitled by the right of my own ancestors—sometime kings of this land. And say to him that I will shortly come to Rome, and by God's grace will take possession of my empire and subdue all rebels. Wherefore, lastly, I command him and all the lords of Rome that they forthwith pay me their homage, under pain of my chastisement and wrath."

Then he commanded his treasurers to give the ambassadors great gifts, and defray all their charges, and appointed Sir Cadur to convey them worshipfully out of the land.

So when they returned to Rome and came before Lucius, he was sore angry at their words, and said, "I thought this Arthur would have instantly obeyed my orders and have served me as humbly as any other king; but because of his fortune in Gaul, he hath grown insolent."

"Ah, lord," said one of the ambassadors, "refrain from such vain words, for truly I and all with me were fearful at his royal majesty and angry countenance. I fear me thou hast made a rod for thee more sharp than thou hast counted on. He meaneth to be master of this empire; and is another kind of man than thou supposest, and holdeth the most noble court of all the world. We saw him on the new year's day, served at his table by nine kings, and the noblest company of other princes, lords, and knights that ever was in all the world; and in his person he is the most manly-seeming man that liveth, and looketh like to conquer all the earth."

Then Lucius sent messengers to all the subject countries of Rome, and brought together a mighty army, and assembled sixteen kings, and many dukes, princes, lords, and admirals, and a wondrous great multitude of people. Fifty giants also, born of fiends, were set around him for a body-guard. With all that

host he straightway went from Rome, and passed beyond the mountains into Gaul, and burned the towns and ravaged all the country of that province, in rage for its submission to King Arthur. Then he moved on towards Little Britain.

Meanwhile, King Arthur having held a parliament at York, left the realm in charge of Sir Badewine and Sir Constantine, and crossed the sea from Sandwich to meet Lucius. And so soon as he was landed, he sent Sir Gawain, Sir Bors, Sir Lionel, and Sir Bedivere to the Emperor, commanding him "to move swiftly and in haste out of his land, and, if not, to make himself ready for battle, and not continue ravaging the country and slaying harmless people." Anon, those noble knights attired themselves and set forth on horseback to where they saw, in a meadow, many silken tents of divers colors, and the Emperor's pavilion in the midst, with a golden eagle set above it.

Then Sir Gawain and Sir Bors rode forward, leaving the other two behind in ambush, and gave King Arthur's message. To which the Emperor replied, "Return, and tell your lord that I am come to conquer him and all his land."

At this, Sir Gawain burned with anger, and cried out, "I had rather than all France that I might fight with thee alone!"

"And I also," said Sir Bors.

Then a knight named Ganius, a near cousin of the Emperor, laughed out aloud, and said, "Lo! how these Britons boast and are full of pride, bragging as though they bare up all the world!"

At these words, Sir Gawain could refrain no longer, but drew forth his sword and with one blow shore off Ganius' head; then with Sir Bors, he turned his horse and rode over waters and through woods, back to the ambush, where Sir Lionel and Sir Bedivere were waiting. The Romans followed fast behind them till the knights turned and stood, and then Sir Bors smote the foremost of them through the body with a spear, and slew him on the spot. Then came on Calibere, a huge Pavian, but Sir Bors overthrew him also. And then the company of Sir Lionel and Sir Bedivere brake forth from their ambush and fell on the Romans, and slew and hewed them down, and forced them to return and flee, chasing them to their tents.

But as they neared the camp, a great host more rushed forth, and turned the battle backwards, and in the turmoil, Sir Bors and Sir Berel fell into the Romans' hands. When Sir Gawain saw that, he drew his good sword Galotine, and swore to see King Arthur's face no more if those two knights were not delivered; and then, with good Sir Idrus, made so sore an onslaught that the Romans fled and left Sir Bors and Sir Berel to their friends. So the Britons returned in triumph to King Arthur, having slain more than ten thousand Romans, and lost no man of worship from amongst themselves.

When the Emperor Lucius heard of that discomfiture he arose, with all his army, to crush King Arthur, and met him in the vale of Soissons. Then speaking to all his host, he said, "Sirs, I admonish you that this day ye fight and acquit yourselves as men; and remembering how Rome is chief of all the earth, and mistress of the universal world, suffer not these barbarous and savage Britons to abide our onset." At that, the trumpets blew so loud, that the ground trembled and shook.

Then did the rival hosts draw near each other with great shoutings; and when they closed, no tongue can tell the fury of their smiting, and the sore struggling, wounds, and slaughter. Then King Arthur, with his mightiest knights, rode down into the thickest of the fight, and drew Excalibur, and slew as lightning slays for swiftness and for force. And in the midmost crowd he met a giant, Galapas by name, and struck off both his legs at the knee-joints; then saying, "Now art thou a better size to deal with!" smote his head off at a second blow: and the body killed six men in falling down.

Anon, King Arthur spied where Lucius fought and worked great deeds of prowess with his own hands. Forthwith he rode at him, and each attacked the other passing fiercely; till at the last, Lucius struck King Arthur with a fearful wound across the face, and Arthur, in return, lifting up Excalibur on high, drove it with all his force upon the Emperor's head, shivering his helmet, crashing his head in halves, and splitting his body to the breast. And when the Romans saw their Emperor dead, they fled in hosts of thousands; and King Arthur and his knights, and all his army followed them, and slew one hundred thousand men.

Then returning to the field, King Arthur rode to the place where Lucius lay dead, and round him the kings of Egypt and Ethiopia, and seventeen other kings, with sixty Roman senators, all noble men. All these he ordered to be carefully embalmed with aromatic gums, and laid in leaden coffins, covered with their shields and arms and banners. Then calling for three senators who were taken prisoners, he said to them, "As the ransom of your lives, I will that ye take these dead bodies and carry them to Rome, and there present them for me, with these letters saying I will myself be shortly there. And I suppose the Romans will beware how they again ask tribute of me; for tell them, these dead bodies that I send them are for the tribute they have dared to ask of me; and if they wish for more, when I come I will pay them the rest."

So, with that charge, the three senators departed with the dead bodies, and went to Rome; the body of the Emperor being carried in a chariot blazoned with the arms of the empire, all alone, and the bodies of the kings two and two in chariots following.

After the battle, King Arthur entered Lorraine, Brabant, and Flanders, and

thence, subduing all the countries as he went, passed into Germany, and so beyond the mountains into Lombardy and Tuscany. At length he came before a city which refused to obey him, wherefore he sat down before it to besiege it. And after a long time thus spent, King Arthur called Sir Florence, and told him they began to lack food for his hosts—"And not far from hence," said he, "are great forests full of cattle belonging to my enemies. Go then, and bring by force all that thou canst find; and take with thee Sir Gawain, my nephew, and Sir Clegis, Sir Claremond, the Captain of Cardiff, and a strong band."

Anon, those knights made ready, and rode over holts and hills, and through forests and woods, till they came to a great meadow full of fair flowers and grass, and there they rested themselves and their horses that night. And at the dawn of the next day, Sir Gawain took his horse and rode away from his fellows to seek some adventure. Soon he saw an armed knight walking his horse by a wood's side, with his shield laced to his shoulder, and no attendant with him save a page, bearing a mighty spear; and on his shield were blazoned three gold griffins. When Sir Gawain spied him, he put his spear in rest, and riding straight to him, asked who he was. "A Tuscan," said he; "and thou mayest prove me when thou wilt, for thou shalt be my prisoner ere we part."

Then said Sir Gawain, "Thou vauntest thee greatly, and speakest proud words; yet I counsel thee, for all thy boastings, look to thyself the best thou canst."

At that they took their spears and ran at each other with all the might they had, and smote each other through their shields into their shoulders; and then drawing swords smote with great strokes, till the fire sprang out of their helms. Then was Sir Gawain enraged, and with his good sword Galotine struck his enemy through shield and hauberk, and splintered into piece all the precious stones of it, and made so huge a wound that men might see both lungs and liver. At that the Tuscan, groaning loudly, rushed on to Sir Gawain, and gave him a deep slanting stroke, and made a mighty wound and cut a great vein asunder, so that he bled fast. Then he cried out, "Bind thy wound quickly up, Sir knight, for thou be-blooded all thy horse and thy fair armor, and all the surgeons of the world shall never staunch thy blood; for so shall it be to whomsoever is hurt with this good sword."

Then answered Sir Gawain, "It grieveth me but little, and thy boastful words give me no fear, for thou shalt suffer greater grief and sorrow ere we part; but tell me quickly who can staunch this blood."

"That can I do," said the strange knight, "and will, if thou wilt aid and succor me to become christened, and to believe in God, which now I do require of thee upon thy manhood."

"I am content," said Sir Gawain; "and may God help me to grant all thy wishes. But tell me first, what soughtest thou thus here alone, and of what land art thou?"

"Sir," said the knight, "my name is Prianius, and my father is a great prince, who hath rebelled against Rome. He is descended from Alexander and Hector, and of our lineage also were Joshua and Maccabæus. I am of right the king of Alexandria, and Africa, and all the outer isles, yet I would believe in the Lord thou worshippest, and for thy labor I will give thee treasure enough. I was so proud in heart that I thought none my equal, but now have I encountered with thee, who hast given me my fill of fighting; wherefore, I pray thee, Sir knight, tell me of thyself."

"I am no knight," said Sir Gawain; "I have been brought up many years in the wardrobe of the noble prince King Arthur, to mind his armor and array."

"Ah," said Prianius, "if his varlets be so keen and fierce, his knights must be passing good! Now, for the love of heaven, whether thou be knight or knave, tell me thy name."

"By heaven!" said Gawain, "now will I tell thee the truth. My name is Sir Gawain, and I am a knight of the Round Table."

"Now am I better pleased," said Prianius, "than if thou hadst given me all the province of Paris the rich. I had rather have been torn by wild horses than that any varlet should have won such victory over me as thou hast done. But now, Sir knight, I warn thee that close by is the Duke of Lorraine, with sixty thousand good men of war; and we had both best flee at once, for he will find us else, and we be sorely wounded and never likely to recover. And let my page be careful that he blow no horn, for hard by are a hundred knights, my servants; and if they seize thee, no ransom of gold or silver would acquit thee."

Then Sir Gawain rode over a river to save himself, and Sir Prianius after him, and so they both fled till they came to his companions who were in the meadow, where they spent the night. When Sir Wishard saw Sir Gawain so hurt, he ran to him weeping, and asked him who it was had wounded him; and Sir Gawain told him how he had fought with that man—pointing to Prianius—who had salves to heal them both. "But I can tell ye other tidings," said he—"that soon we must encounter many enemies, for a great army is close to us in our front."

Then Prianius and Sir Gawain alighted and let their horses graze while they unarmed, and when they took this armor and their clothing off, the hot blood ran down freshly from their wounds till it was piteous to see. But Prianius took from his page a vial filled from the four rivers that flow out of Paradise, and anointed both their wounds with a certain balm, and washed them with that water, and

within an hour afterwards they were both as sound and whole as ever they had been. Then, at the sound of a trumpet, all the knights were assembled to council; and after much talking, Prianius said, "Cease your words, for I warn you in yonder wood ye shall find knights out of number, who will put out cattle for a decoy to lead you on; and ye are not seven hundred!"

"Nevertheless," said Sir Gawain, "let us at once encounter them, and see what they can do; and may the best have the victory."

Then they saw suddenly an earl named Sir Ethelwold, and the Duke of Duchmen come leaping out of ambush of the woods in front, with many a thousand after them, and all rode straight down to the battle. And Sir Gawain, full of ardor and courage, comforted his knights, saying, "They all are ours." Then the seven hundred knights, in one close company, set spurs to their horses and began to gallop, and fiercely met their enemies. And then were men and horses slain and overthrown on every side, and in and out amidst them all, the knights of the Round Table pressed and thrust, and smote down to the earth all who withstood them, till at length the whole of them turned back and fled.

"By heaven!" said Sir Gawain, "this gladdeneth well my heart, for now behold them as they flee! they are full seventy thousand less in number than they were an hour ago!"

Thus was the battle quickly ended, and a great host of high lords and knights of Lombardy and Saracens left dead upon the field. Then Sir Gawain and his company collected a great plenty of cattle, and of gold and silver, and all kind of treasure, and returned to King Arthur, where he still kept the siege.

"Now God be thanked," cried he; "but who is he that standeth yonder by himself, and seemeth not a prisoner?"

"Sir," said Sir Gawain, "he is a good man with his weapons, and hath matched me; but cometh hither to be made a Christian. Had it not been for his warnings, we none of us should have been here this day. I pray thee, therefore, let him be baptized, for there can be few nobler men, or better knights."

So Prianius was christened, and made a duke and knight of the Round Table.

Presently afterwards, they made a last attack upon the city, and entered by the walls on every side; and as the men were rushing to the pillage, came the Duchess forth, with many ladies and damsels, and kneeled before King Arthur; and besought him to receive their submission. To whom the king made answer, with a noble countenance, "Madam, be well assured that none shall harm ye, or your ladies; neither shall any that belong to thee be hurt; but the Duke must abide my judgment." Then he commanded to stay the assault and took the keys from the Duke's eldest son, who brought them kneeling. Anon the Duke was sent a prisoner to Dover for his life, and rents and taxes were assigned for dowry of



the Duchess and her children.

Then went he on with all his hosts, winning all towns and castles, and wasting them that refused obedience, till he came to Viterbo. From thence he sent to Rome, to ask the senators whether they would receive him for their lord and governor. In answer, came out to him all the Senate who remained alive, and the Cardinals, with a majestic retinue and procession; and laying great treasures at his feet, they prayed him to come in at once to Rome, and there be peaceably crowned as Emperor. "At this next Christmas," said King Arthur, "will I be crowned, and hold my Round Table in your city."

Anon he entered Rome, in mighty pomp and state; and after him came all his hosts, and his knights, and princes, and great lords, arrayed in gold and jewels, such as never were beheld before. And then was he crowned Emperor by the Pope's hands, with all the highest solemnity that could be made.

Then after his coronation, he abode in Rome for a season, settling his lands and giving kingdoms to his knights and servants, to each one after his deserving, and in such wise fashion that no man among them all complained. Also he made many dukes and earls, and loaded all his men-at-arms with riches and great treasures.

When all this was done, the lords and knights, and all the men of great estate, came together before him, and said, "Noble Emperor! by the blessing of Eternal God, thy mortal warfare is all finished, and thy conquests all achieved; for now in all the world is none so great and mighty as to dare make war with thee. Wherefore we beseech and heartily pray thee of thy noble grace, to turn thee homeward, and give us also leave to see our wives and homes again, for now we have been from them a long season, and all thy journey is completed with great honor and worship."

"Ye say well," replied he, "and to tempt God is no wisdom; therefore make ready in all haste, and turn we home to England."

So King Arthur returned with his knights and lords and armies, in great triumph and joy, through all the countries he had conquered, and commanded that no man, upon pain of death, should rob or do any violence by the way. And crossing the sea, he came at length to Sandwich, where Queen Guinevere received him, and made great joy at his arrival. And through all the realm of Britain was there such rejoicing as no tongue can tell.

## CHAPTER IX

# SIR GAWAIN AND THE MAID WITH THE NARROW SLEEVES

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Now it happened that as Sir Gawain was riding one day through the country he encountered a troop of knights, followed by a squire, who led a Spanish charger, and about whose neck was hung a shield. Gawain rode up to the squire and said, "Tell me, what is yonder troop that hath ridden by?"

The squire answered, "Sir, Meliance of Lis, a brave and hardy knight."

"Is it to him you belong?" Sir Gawain asked.

"Nay, sir," said the squire, "my master is Teudaves, a knight as worthy as this one."

"Teudaves I know," said Gawain. "Whither fareth he? Tell me the truth."

"He proceedeth to a tourney, sir, which this Meliance of Lis hath undertaken against ThiÃ©bault of Tintagel. If you will take my advice you will throw yourself into the castle, and take part against the outsiders."

"Was it not," cried Gawain, "in the house of this ThiÃ©bault that Meliance of Lis was nurtured?"

"Aye, sir, so God save me!" said the squire. "His father loved ThiÃ©bault and trusted him so much that on his death-bed he committed to his care his little son, whom ThiÃ©bault cherished and protected, until the time came when the youth petitioned his daughter to give him her love; but she replied that she would never do that until he should be made a knight. The youth, being ardent, forthwith had himself knighted, and then returned to the maiden. 'Nay,' answered the girl to his renewed suit, 'it shall never be, until in my presence you shall have achieved such feats of arms that I will know my love hath cost you somewhat; for those things which come suddenly are not so sweet as those we earn. If you wish my love, take a tournament of my father. I desire to be certain that my love would be well placed in case I were to grant it.' What she suggested he performed, for love hath such lordship over lovers that those who are under his power would never dare refuse whatever it pleased him to enjoin. And you, sir, sluggish will you be if you do not enter the castle, for they will need you greatly, if you might help them."

To which Sir Gawain answered, "Brother, go thy way, it would be wise of you, and let my affairs be." So the squire departed, and Gawain rode towards Tintagel, for there was no other way by which he could pass.

Now ThiÃ©bault had summoned all his kith and kin, who had come, high and low, old and young; but he could not get the permission of his council to joust with his master, for the councillors feared lest he should utterly ruin their castle. Therefore the gates had been walled up with stones and mortar, leaving as the only approach one small postern, which had a gate made of copper, as much as a cart could haul. Sir Gawain rode to the gate, behind the troop that bore his harness, for there was no other road within seven leagues. He found the postern shut and so he turned into a close below the tower, that was fenced with a palisade. He dismounted under an oak and hung up his shields. Thither came the folk from the castle, most of them sorry that the tourney had been abandoned; in the fortress was an aged nobleman, great in land and lineage, whose word no one disputed. A long way off the troop had been pointed out to him, and before they rode into the close he went to ThiÃ©bault, and said, "Sir, so God save me, I have seen two companions of King Arthur, worthy men, who ride this way; I advise you to tourney with good hope, for we have brave knights, and servants, and archers, who will slay their horses, and I am certain they will joust before this gate; if their pride shall bring them the gain will be ours, and theirs will be the loss and the shame."

As a result of this counsel ThiÃ©bault allowed those who wished to take their arms and sally forth. The knights were right glad, and their squires ran after their horses, while the dames and the damsels climbed high places to see the tourney. Below, in the meadow, they saw the arms of Sir Gawain, and at first thought that there were two knights, because two shields hung from the tree. They cried out that they were fortunate to see two such knights arm. So some thought; but others exclaimed, "Fair Lord God, this knight hath arms and steeds sufficient for two; if he hath no companion, what will he do with two shields? Never was seen a knight who carried two shields at one and the same time. It is very strange if one man means to bear two shields."

While the ladies talked and the knights went forth from the castle the elder daughter of ThiÃ©bault mounted to the tower, she on account of whom the tournament had been undertaken, and with her younger sister, whose sleeves were so quaint that she was called the Maid with the Narrow Sleeves, for she wore them tight. Dames and damsels climbed the tower with them, and the tourney was joined in front of the castle. None bore himself so well as Meliance of Lis, by the testimony of his fair friend, who said to those about her, "Ladies, never did I see a knight who delighted me as doth Meliance of Lis. Is it not a

pleasure to see such a knight? That man must have a good seat and be skillful in the use of lance and shield who beareth himself so excellently."

Thereupon her sister, who sat by her side, said that she saw a fairer knight. The elder maiden was angry and rose to strike her sister. But the ladies interfered, and held her back, so that she missed her blow, which greatly incensed her.

In the tournament many lances were shivered, shields pierced, and knights unhorsed; and it went hard with the knight who met Meliance of Lis, for there was none he did not throw on the hard ground. If his lance broke, he dealt great blows with his sword; and he bore himself better than any other knight on either side, to the great joy of his fair friend, who could not resist exclaiming, "Ladies, it is wonderful! Behold the best bachelor knight of whom minstrel hath ever sung or whom eyes have ever seen, the fairest and bravest of all those in the tourney!"

Then the little girl cried, "I see a handsomer one, and 'tis like, a better!"

The elder sister grew hot. "Ha, girl, you were malapert when you were so unlucky as to blame one whom I praised! Take that, to teach you better another time!" So saying, she slapped her sister, so hard that she left on the little girl's cheek the print of her five fingers. But the ladies who sat near scolded her and took her away.

After that they fell to talking of Sir Gawain. One of the damsels said, "The knight beneath yonder tree, why doth he delay to take arms?" A second damsel, who was ruder, exclaimed, "He hath sworn to keep the peace." And a third added, "He is a merchant. Don't tell me that he desireth to joust; he bringeth horses to market." "He is a money-changer," said a fourth. "The goods he hath he meaneth to sell to poor bachelors. Trust me, he hath money or raiment in those chests."

"You have wicked tongues!" cried the little girl. "And you lie! Do you think a merchant would bear such huge lances? You tire me to death, talking such nonsense! By the faith that I owe the Holy Spirit, he seemeth to me a knight rather than a merchant or a money-changer. He is a knight, and he looketh like one!"

The ladies all cried with one voice, "Fair sweet friend, if he looketh so, it doth not follow that he is so. He putteth it on because he wisheth to cheat the tariff. But in spite of all his cleverness he is a fool, for he will be taken up and hung for a cheat."

Now Gawain heard all that the ladies said about him, and he was ashamed and annoyed. But he thought, and thought rightly, that he lay under an accusation of treason, and that it was his duty to keep his pledge or forever

disgrace himself and his line. It was for this reason that he took no part in the tourney, lest, if he fought, he should be wounded or taken prisoner.

Meliance of Lis called for great lances, to strike harder blows. Until night fell the tourney continued before the gate; the man who took any booty carried it to some place where he thought it would be safe. Then the ladies saw a squire, tall and strong, who held a piece of a lance and bore on his neck a steel cap. One of the ladies, who was foolish, called to him, saying, "Sir squire, so God help me, it is foolish of you to make prize of that tester, those arms and croup-piece. If you do a squire's duty you deserve a squire's wage. Below, in yonder meadow, is a man who hath riches he cannot defend. Unwise is he who misseth his gain while he hath the power to take it. He seemeth the most debonair of knights, and yet he would not stir if one plucked his beard. If you are wise, take the armor and the treasure, none will hinder you."

The squire went into the meadow and struck one of Gawain's horses, crying, "Vassal, are you sick that all day long you gape here and have done nothing, neither pierced shield nor shivered lance?"

Sir Gawain answered, "Pray, what is it to you why I tarry? You shall know, but not now. Get you gone about your business."

The squire withdrew, for Gawain was not the type of man to whom he would dare say anything unpleasant.

The tourney ended, after many knights had been killed and many horses captured. The outsiders had had the best, and the people of the castle gained by the intermission. At parting they all agreed that on the morrow with songs they would meet again and continue the encounter. So for that night they separated and those who had sallied forth returned to the castle, followed by Sir Gawain. At the gate he met the nobleman who had advised his lord to engage in the tourney. This man accosted him pleasantly, and said, "Fair sir, in this castle your hostel is ready. If it pleaseth you, remain here, for if you should go on it would be long before you arrived at a lodging; therefore I urge you to stay."

"I will tarry, your mercy!" said Gawain. "I have heard worse words."

The man led the guest to his house, talking of this and that, and asked him why on that day he had not borne arms. Sir Gawain explained how he had been accused of treason and was bound to be on his guard against prison and wounds until he could free himself from the reproach that was cast upon him, for it would be to the dishonor of himself and his friends if he should fail to appear at the time appointed.

The nobleman praised him, and said that if this was the reason he had done right. With that he led Gawain to his house, where they dismounted. The people of the castle blamed him, wondering how his lord would take it; while the elder

daughter of ThiÃ©bault did her best to make trouble for Gawain, on account of her sister, with whom she was angry. "Sir," she said to her father, "on this day you have suffered no loss, but made a gain, greater than you think; you have only to go and take it. The man who hath brought it will not dare to defend it, for he is wily. Lances and shields he bringeth, with palfreys and chargers, and maketh himself resemble a knight to cheat the customs, so that he may pass free when he cometh to sell his wares. Render him his deserts. He is with Garin, the son of Bertan, who hath taken him to lodge at his house. I just saw him pass."

ThiÃ©bault took his horse, for he himself wished to go there. The little girl, who saw him leave, went out secretly by a back gate and straight down the hill to the house of Garin, who had two fair daughters. When these saw their little lady they should have been glad, and glad they were, each took her by a hand and led her into the house, kissing her eyes and lips.

In the meantime Garin and his son Herman had left the house and were going up to the castle to speak to their lord. Midway there they met ThiÃ©bault and saluted him. He asked whither Garin was going and said he had intended to pay him a visit. "By my faith," said the nobleman, "that will not displease me, and at my house you shall see the fairest of knights."

"It is even he whom I seek," said ThiÃ©bault, "to arrest him. He is a merchant who selleth horses and pretendeth to be a knight."

"Alas," said Garin, "'tis a churlish speech I hear you make! I am your man and you are my master, but on the spot I renounce your homage, and in the name of all my line now defy you, rather than suffer you to disgrace my house."

"Indeed," answered ThiÃ©bault, "I have no wish to do any such thing. Neither you nor your house shall ever receive aught but honor from me; not but what I have been counseled so to proceed."

"Your great mercy!" exclaimed the nobleman. "It will be my honor if you will visit my guest."

So side by side they went on until they reached the house. When Sir Gawain saw them, he rose out of courtesy, and said, "Welcome!" The two saluted him and took their seats beside him. Then the nobleman, who was the lord of that country, asked why he had taken no part in the tourney, and Gawain narrated how a knight had accused him of treason and how he was on his way to defend himself in a royal court. "Doubtless," answered the lord, "that is sufficient excuse. But where is the battle to be held?"

"Sir, before the king of Cavalon, whither I am journeying."

"And I," said the nobleman, "will guide you. Since you must needs pass through a poor country, I will provide you with food and packbeasts to carry it."

Gawain answered that he had no need to accept anything, for if it could be

bought he would have food and lodging wherever he went.

With these words ThiŃbault took leave. As he departed, from the opposite direction he saw come his little daughter, who embraced Gawain's leg, and said, "Fair sir, listen! I have come to complain of my sister, who hath beaten me. So please you, do me justice!"

Gawain made no answer, for he did not know what she meant. He put his hand on her head, while the girl pulled him, saying, "To you, fair sir, I complain of my sister. I do not love her, since to-day she hath done me great shame for your sake."

"Fair one, what have I to do with that? How can I do you justice against your sister?"

ThiŃbault, who had taken leave, heard his child's entreaty, and said, "Girl, who bade you come here and complain to this knight?"

Gawain asked, "Fair sweet sir, is this maid your daughter?"

"Aye; but never mind what she says. A girl is a silly creature."

"Certes," said Gawain, "I should be churlish if I did not do what she desires. Tell me, my sweet child and fair, in what manner I can justify you against your sister."

"If it pleaseth you, for love of me, bear arms in the tourney."

"Tell me, dear friend," said Gawain, "have you ever before made petition to any knight?"

"No, sir."

"Never mind her," exclaimed her father. "Pay no heed to her folly."

Sir Gawain answered, "Sir, so aid me the Lord God, for so little a girl, she hath spoken very well, and I will not refuse her. To-morrow, if she wisheth, I will be her knight."

"Your mercy, fair sweet sir!" cried the child, who was overjoyed, and bowed down to his feet.

Without more words they parted. ThiŃbault carried his daughter back on the neck of his palfrey. As they rode up the hill he asked her what the quarrel had been about, and she told him the story from beginning to end, saying, "Sir, I was vexed with my sister, who declared that Meliance of Lis was the best of all the knights; and I, who had seen this knight in the meadow, could not help saying that I had seen a fairer, whereupon my sister called me a silly girl and beat me. Fie on me, if I take it from her! I would cut off both my braids close to my head, which would be a great loss, if to-morrow in the tourney this knight would conquer Meliance of Lis, and put an end to the fuss of madam, my sister! She talked so much that she tired all the ladies; but a little rain will hush a great wind."

"Fair child," said her father, "I command and allow you, in courtesy, to send him some love-token, a sleeve or a wimple."

The child, who was simple, answered, "With pleasure since you bid me. But my sleeves are so small, I should not like to send them. Most likely he would not care for them."

"Daughter, say no more," said ThiÃ©bault. "I will think about it. I am very glad." So saying, he took her in his arms, and had great joy of embracing and kissing her, until he came in front of his palace. But when his elder daughter saw him approach, with the child before him, she was vexed, and exclaimed, "Sir, whence cometh my sister, the Maid with the Narrow Sleeves? She is full of her tricks; she hath been quick about it; where did you find her?"

"And you," he answered, "what is it to you? Hush, for she is better than you are. You pulled her hair and beat her, which grieveth me. You acted rudely; you were discourteous."

When she heard her father's rebuke, the maid was greatly abashed.

ThiÃ©bault had brought from his chests a piece of red samite, and he bade his people cut out and make a sleeve, wide and long. Then he called his daughter and said, "Child, to-morrow rise betimes and visit the knight before he leaveth his hostel. For love's sake you will give him this new sleeve, which he will wear in the tourney when he goeth thither."

The girl answered that so soon as ever she saw the clear dawn she would dress herself and go. With that her father went his way, while she, in great glee, charged her companions that they should not let her oversleep but should wake her when day broke, if they would have her love them. They did as she wished, and when it dawned caused her to wake and dress. All alone she went to the house where Sir Gawain lodged, but, early though it was, the knights had risen and gone to the monastery to hear mass sung. She waited until they had offered long orisons and listened to the service, as much as was right. When they returned the child rose to greet Sir Gawain, and cried, "Sir, on this day may God save and honor you! For love of me, wear the sleeve which I carry in my hand."

"With pleasure," he answered; "friend, your mercy!"

After that the knights were not slow to take arms, and came pouring out of the town, while the damsels again went up to the walls and the dames of the castle saw the troops of brave and hardy knights approach.

They rode with loose rein, and in front was Meliance of Lis, who went so fast that he left the rest in the rear, two rods and more. When his maiden saw her friend she could not keep quiet, but cried, "Ladies, yonder comes the man who hath the lordship of chivalry!"

As swiftly as his horse would carry him Sir Gawain charged Meliance of Lis,



who did not evade the blow, but met it boldly, and shivered his lance. On his part Sir Gawain smote so hard that he grieved Meliance, whom he flung on the field; the steed he grasped by the rein and gave to a varlet, bidding him take it to the lady on whose account he had entered the tourney, and say that his master had sent her the first spoil he had made that day. The youth took the charger, saddled as it was, and led it towards the girl, who was sitting at the window of the tower, whence she had watched the joust, and when she saw the encounter she cried to her sister, "Sister, there lies Meliance of Lis, whom you praised so highly! A wise man ought to give praise where it is due. You see, I was right yesterday when I said I saw a better knight."

Thus she teased her sister, who grew angry, and cried, "Child, hold your tongue! If you say another word, I will slap you so that you will not have a foot to stand on!" "Oh, sister," answered the little girl, "remember God! You ought not to beat me because I told you the truth. I saw him tumble as well as you; I think he will not be able to get up. Be as cross as you please, I must say that there is not a lady here who did not see him fall flat on the ground."

Her sister would have struck her, had she been able, but the ladies around would not allow it.

With that came the squire, who held the rein in his right hand. He saw the girl sitting at the window and presented the steed. She thanked him a hundred times, and bade the steed be taken in charge. The squire returned to tell his master, who seemed the lord of the tournament, for there was no knight so gallant that he did not cast from the saddle, if he reached him with the lance. On that day he captured four steeds. The first he sent to the little girl, the second to the wife of the nobleman who had been so kind, and the third and fourth to his own daughters.

The tourney was over and the knights entered the city. On both sides the honor belonged to Sir Gawain. It was not yet noon when he returned from the encounter; the city was full of knights, who ran after him, asking who he was and of what land. At the gate of his hostel he was met by the damsel, who did naught but grasp his stirrup, salute him, and cry, "A thousand mercies, fair sweet sir!" He answered frankly, "Friend, before I am recreant to your service, may I be aged and bald! I shall never be so remote, but a message will bring me. If I know your need, I shall come at the first summons, whatever business be mine!"

While they talked her father came and wished Sir Gawain to stay with him for that night; but first he begged, that if his guest pleased, he would tell his name. Sir Gawain answered, "Sir, I am called Gawain. My name was never concealed, nor have I ever told it before it hath been asked."

When ThiÃ©bault knew that the knight was Sir Gawain his heart was full of

joy, and he exclaimed, "Sir, be pleased to lodge with me, and accept my service. Hitherto I have done you little worship, and never did I set eyes on a knight whom so much I longed to honor."

In spite of urging, Sir Gawain refused to stay. The little girl, who was good and clever, clasped his foot and kissed it, commending him to God. Sir Gawain asked why she had done that, and the girl replied that she had kissed his foot in order that he should remember her wherever he went. He answered, "Doubt it not, fair sweet friend! I shall never forget you, after I have parted hence."

With that Sir Gawain took leave of his host and the others, who one and all commended him to God. That night he slept in an abbey, and had all that was necessary.

## CHAPTER X

# THE ADVENTURES OF SIR LANCELOT

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Then, at the following Pentecost, was held a feast of the Round Table at Caerleon, with high splendor; and all the knights thereof resorted to the court, and held many games and jousts. And therein Sir Lancelot increased in fame and worship above all men, for he overthrew all comers, and never was unhorsed or worsted, save by treason and enchantment.

When Queen Guinevere had seen his wondrous feats, she held him in great favor, and smiled more on him than on any other knight. And ever since he first had gone to bring her to King Arthur, had Lancelot thought on her as fairest of all ladies, and done his best to win her grace. So the queen often sent for him, and bade him tell of his birth and strange adventures: how he was only son of great King Ban of Brittany, and how, one night, his father, with his mother Helen and himself, fled from his burning castle; how his father, groaning deeply, fell to the ground and died of grief and wounds, and how his mother, running to her husband, left himself alone; how, as he thus lay wailing, came the lady of the lake, and took him in her arms and went with him into the midst of the waters, where, with his cousins Lionel and Bors, he had been cherished all his childhood until he came to King Arthur's court; and how this was the reason why men called him Lancelot du Lake.

Anon it was ordained by King Arthur, that in every year at Pentecost there should be held a festival of all the knights of the Round Table at Caerleon, or such other place as he should choose. And at those festivals should be told publicly the most famous adventures of any knight during the past year.

So, when Sir Lancelot saw Queen Guinevere rejoiced to hear his wanderings and adventures, he resolved to set forth yet again, and win more worship still, that he might more increase her favor. Then he bade his cousin Sir Lionel make ready, "for," said he, "we two will seek adventure." So they mounted their horses—armed at all points—and rode into a vast forest; and when they had passed through it, they came to a great plain, and the weather being very hot about noontide, Sir Lancelot greatly longed to sleep. Then Sir Lionel espied a great apple-tree standing by a hedge, and said, "Brother, yonder is a fair shadow where

we may rest ourselves and horses."

"I am full glad of it," said Sir Lancelot, "for all these seven years I have not been so sleepy."

So they alighted there, and tied their horses up to sundry trees; and Sir Lionel waked and watched while Sir Lancelot fell asleep, and slept passing fast.

In the meanwhile came three knights, riding as fast flying as ever they could ride, and after them followed a single knight; but when Sir Lionel looked at him, he thought he had never seen so great and strong a man, or so well furnished and appareled. Anon he saw him overtake the last of those who fled, and smite him to the ground; then came he to the second, and smote him such a stroke that horse and man went to the earth; then rode he to the third, likewise, and struck him off his horse more than a spear's length. With that he lighted from his horse, and bound all three knights fast with the reins of their own bridles.

When Sir Lionel saw this he thought the time was come to prove himself against him, so quietly and cautiously, lest he should wake Sir Lancelot, he took his horse and mounted and rode after him. Presently overtaking him, he cried aloud to him to turn, which instantly he did, and smote Sir Lionel so hard that horse and man went down forthwith. Then took he up Sir Lionel, and threw him bound over his own horse's back; and so he served the three other knights, and rode them away to his own castle. There they were disarmed, stripped naked, and beaten with thorns, and afterwards thrust into a deep prison, where many more knights, also, made great moans and lamentations, saying, "Alas, alas! there is no man can help us but Sir Lancelot, for no other knight can match this tyrant Turquine, our conqueror."

But all this while, Sir Lancelot lay sleeping soundly under the apple-tree. And, as it chanced, there passed that way four queens, of high estate, riding upon four white mules, under four canopies of green silk borne on spears, to keep them from the sun. As they rode thus, they heard a great horse grimly neigh, and, turning them about, soon saw a sleeping knight that lay all armed under an apple-tree; and when they saw his face, they knew it was Sir Lancelot of the Lake.

Then they began to strive which of them should have the care of him. But Queen Morgan le Fay, King Arthur's half sister, the great sorceress, was one of them, and said, "We need not strive for him, I have enchanted him, so that for six hours more he shall not wake. Let us take him to my castle, and, when he wakes, himself shall choose which one of us he would rather serve." So Sir Lancelot was laid upon his shield and borne on horseback between two knights, to the castle, and there laid in a cold chamber, till the spell should pass.

Anon, they sent him a fair damsel, bearing his supper, who asked him, "What

cheer?"

"I cannot tell, fair damsel," said he, "for I know not how I came into this castle, if it were not by enchantment."

"Sir," said she, "be of good heart, and to-morrow at dawn of day, ye shall know more."

And so she left him alone, and there he lay all night. In the morning early came the four queens to him, passing richly dressed; and said, "Sir knight, thou must understand that thou art our prisoner, and that we know thee well for King Ban's son, Sir Lancelot du Lake. And though we know full well there is one lady only in this world may have thy love, and she Queen Guinevere—King Arthur's wife—yet now are we resolved to have thee to serve one of us; choose, therefore, of us four which thou wilt serve. I am Queen Morgan le Fay, Queen of the land of Gore, and here also is the Queen of Northgales, and the Queen of Eastland, and the Queen of the Out Isles. Choose, then, at once, for else shalt thou abide here, in this prison, till thy death."

"It is a hard case," said Sir Lancelot, "that either I must die, or choose one of you for my mistress! Yet had I rather die in this prison than serve any living creature against my will. So take this for my answer. I will serve none of ye, for ye be false enchantresses. And as for my lady, Queen Guinevere, whom lightly ye have spoken of, were I at liberty I would prove it upon you or upon yours she is the truest lady living to her lord the king."

"Well," said the queen, "is this your answer, that ye refuse us all?"

"Yea, on my life," said Lancelot, "refused ye be of me."

So they departed from him in great wrath, and left him sorrowfully grieving in his dungeon.

At noon the damsel came to him and brought his dinner, and asked him as before, "What cheer?"

"Truly, fair damsel," said Sir Lancelot, "in all my life never so ill."

"Sir," replied she, "I grieve to see ye so, but if ye do as I advise, I can help ye out of this distress, and will do so if you promise me a boon."

"Fair damsel," said Sir Lancelot, "right willingly will I grant it thee, for sorely do I dread these four witch-queens, who have destroyed and slain many a good knight with their enchantments."

Then said the damsel, "Sir, wilt thou promise me to help my father on next Tuesday, for he hath a tournament with the King of Northgales, and last Tuesday lost the field through three knights of King Arthur's court, who came against him. And if next Tuesday thou wilt aid him, to-morrow, before daylight, by God's grace, I will deliver thee."

"Fair maiden," said Sir Lancelot, "tell me thy father's name and I will answer

thee."

"My father is King Bagdemagus," said she.

"I know him well," replied Sir Lancelot, "for a noble king and a good knight; and by the faith of my body I will do him all the service I am able on that day."

"Gramercy to thee, Sir knight," said the damsel. "To-morrow, when thou art delivered from this place, ride ten miles hence unto an abbey of white monks, and there abide until I bring my father to thee."

"So be it," said Sir Lancelot, "as I am a true knight."

So she departed, and on the morrow, early, came again, and let him out of twelve gates, differently locked, and brought him to his armor; and when he was all armed, she brought him his horse also, and lightly he saddled him, and took a great spear in his hand, and mounted and rode forth, saying, as he went, "Fair damsel, I shall not fail thee, by the grace of God."

And all that day he rode in a great forest, and could find no highway, and spent the night in the wood; but the next morning found his road, and came to the abbey of white monks. And there he saw King Bagdemagus and his daughter waiting for him. So when they were together in a chamber, Sir Lancelot told the king how he had been betrayed by an enchantment, and how his brother Lionel was gone he knew not where, and how the damsel had delivered him from the castle of Queen Morgan le Fay. "Wherefore while I live," said he, "I shall do service to herself and all her kindred."

"Then am I sure of thy aid," said the king, "on Tuesday now next coming?"

"Yea, sir, I shall not fail thee," said Sir Lancelot; "but what knights were they who last week defeated thee, and took part with the King of Northgales?"

"Sir Mador de la Port, Sir Modred, and Sir Gahalatine," replied the king.

"Sir," said Sir Lancelot, "as I understand, the tournament shall take place but three miles from this abbey; send then to me here, three knights of thine, the best thou hast, and let them all have plain white shields, such as I also will; then will we four come suddenly into the midst between both parties, and fall upon thy enemies, and grieve them all we can, and none will know us who we are."

So, on the Tuesday, Sir Lancelot and the three knights lodged themselves in a small grove hard by the lists. Then came into the field the King of Northgales, with one hundred and sixty helms, and the three knights of King Arthur's court, who stood apart by themselves. And when King Bagdemagus had arrived, with eighty helms, both companies set all their spears in rest and came together with a mighty clash, wherein were slain twelve knights of King Bagdemagus, and six of the King of Northgales; and the party of King Bagdemagus was driven back.

With that, came Sir Lancelot, and thrust into the thickest of the press, and smote down with one spear five knights, and brake the backs of four, and cast

down the King of Northgales, and brake his thigh by the fall. When the three knights of Arthur's court saw this, they rode at Sir Lancelot, and each after other attacked him; but he overthrew them all, and smote them nigh to death. Then, taking a new spear, he bore down to the ground sixteen more knights, and hurt them all so sorely, that they could carry arms no more that day. And when his spear at length was broken, he took yet another, and smote down twelve knights more, the most of whom he wounded mortally, till in the end the party of the King of Northgales would joust no more, and the victory was cried to King Bagdemagus.

Then Sir Lancelot rode forth with King Bagdemagus to his castle, and there he feasted with great cheer and welcome, and received many royal gifts. And on the morrow he took leave and went to find his brother Lionel.

Anon, by chance, he came to the same forest where the four queens had found him sleeping, and there he met a damsel riding on a white palfrey. When they had saluted each other, Sir Lancelot said, "Fair damsel, knowest thou where any adventures may be had in this country?"

"Sir knight," said she, "there are adventures great enough close by if thou darest prove them."

"Why should I not," said he, "since for that cause I came here?"

"Sir," said the damsel, "hard by this place there dwelleth a knight that cannot be defeated by any man, so great and perilously strong he is. His name is Sir Turquine, and in the prisons of his castle lie three score knights and four, mostly from King Arthur's court, whom he hath taken with his own hands. But promise me, ere thou undertakest their deliverance, to go and help me afterwards, and free me and many other ladies that are distressed by a false knight."

"Bring me but to this felon Turquine," quoth Sir Lancelot, "and I will afterwards fulfill all your wishes."

So the damsel went before, and brought him to a ford, and a tree whereon a great brass basin hung; and Sir Lancelot beat with his spear-end upon the basin, long and hard, until he beat the bottom of it out, but he saw nothing. Then he rode to and fro before the castle gates for wellnigh half an hour, and anon saw a great knight riding from the distance, driving a horse before him, across which hung an armed man bound. And when they came near, Sir Lancelot knew the prisoner for a knight of the Round Table. By that time, the great knight who drove the prisoner saw Sir Lancelot, and each of them began to settle his spear, and to make ready.

"Fair sir," then said Sir Lancelot, "put off that wounded knight, I pray thee, from his horse, and let him rest while thou and I shall prove our strength upon each other; for, as I am told, thou doest, and hast done, great shame and injury to

knights of the Round Table. Wherefore, I warn thee now, defend thyself."

"If thou mayest be of the Round Table," answered Turquine, "I defy thee, and all thy fellows."

"That is saying overmuch," said Sir Lancelot.

Then, setting their lances in rest, they spurred their horses towards each other, as fast as they could go, and smote so fearfully upon each other's shields, that both their horses' backs brake under them. As soon as they could clear their saddles, they took their shields before them, and drew their swords, and came together eagerly, and fought with great and grievous strokes; and soon they both had many grim and fearful wounds, and bled in streams. Thus they fought two hours and more, thrusting and smiting at each other, wherever they could hit.

Anon, they both were breathless, and stood leaning on their swords.

"Now, comrade," said Sir Turquine, "let us wait awhile, and answer me what I shall ask thee."

"Say on," said Lancelot.

"Thou art," said Turquine, "the best man I ever met, and seemest like one that I hate above all other knights that live; but if thou be not he, I will make peace with thee, and for sake of thy great valor, will deliver all the three score prisoners and four who lie within my dungeons, and thou and I will be companions evermore. Tell me, then, thy name."

"Thou sayest well," replied Sir Lancelot; "but who is he thou hatest so above all others?"

"His name," said Turquine, "is Sir Lancelot of the Lake; and he slew my brother Sir Carados, at the dolorous tower; wherefore, if ever I shall meet with him, one of us two shall slay the other; and thereto I have sworn by a great oath. And to discover and destroy him I have slain a hundred knights, and crippled utterly as many more, and many have died in my prisons; and now, as I have told thee, I have many more therein, who all shall be delivered, if thou tell me thy name, and it be not Sir Lancelot."

"Well," said Lancelot, "I am that knight, son of King Ban of Benwick, and Knight of the Round Table; so now I defy thee to do thy best!"

"Aha!" said Turquine, with a shout, "is it then so at last! Thou art more welcome to my sword than ever knight or lady was to feast, for never shall we part till one of us be dead."

Then did they hurtle together like two wild bulls, slashing and lashing with their shields and swords, and sometimes falling both on to the ground. For two more hours they fought so, and at the last Sir Turquine grew very faint, and gave a little back, and bare his shield full low for weariness. When Sir Lancelot saw him thus, he leaped upon him fiercely as a lion, and took him by the crest of his



helmet, and dragged him to his knees; and then he tore his helmet off and smote his neck asunder.

Then he arose, and went to the damsel who had brought him to Sir Turquine, and said, "I am ready, fair lady, to go with thee upon thy service, but I have no horse."

"Fair sir," said she, "take ye this horse of the wounded knight whom Turquine but just now was carrying to his prisons, and send that knight on to deliver all the prisoners."

So Sir Lancelot went to the knight and prayed him for the loan of his horse.

"Fair lord," said he, "ye are right welcome, for to-day ye have saved both me and my horse; and I see that ye are the best knight in all the world, for in my sight have ye slain the mightiest man and the best knight, except thyself, I ever saw."

"Sir," said Sir Lancelot, "I thank thee well; and now go into yonder castle, where thou shalt find many noble knights of the Round Table, for I have seen their shields hung on the trees around. On yonder tree alone there are Sir Key's, Sir Brandel's, Sir Marhaus', Sir Galind's, and Sir Aliduke's, and many more; and also my two kinsmen's shields, Sir Ector de Maris' and Sir Lionel's. And I pray you greet them all from me, Sir Lancelot of the Lake, and tell them that I bid them help themselves to any treasures they can find within the castle; and that I pray my brethren, Lionel and Ector, to go to King Arthur's court and stay there till I come. And by the high feast at Pentecost I must be there; but now I must ride forth with this damsel to fulfill my promise."

So, as they went, the damsel told him, "Sir, we are now near the place where the foul knight haunteth, who robbeth and distresseth all ladies and gentlewomen traveling past this way, against whom I have sought thy aid."

Then they arranged that she should ride on foremost, and Sir Lancelot should follow under cover of the trees by the roadside, and if he saw her come to any mishap, he should ride forth and deal with him that troubled her. And as the damsel rode on at a soft ambling pace, a knight and page burst forth from the roadside and forced the damsel from her horse, till she cried out for help.

Then came Sir Lancelot rushing through the wood as fast as he might fly, and all the branches of the trees crackled and waved around him. "O thou false knight and traitor to all knighthood!" shouted he, "who taught thee to distress fair ladies thus?"

The foul knight answered nothing, but drew out his sword and rode at Sir Lancelot, who threw his spear away and drew his own sword likewise, and struck him such a mighty blow as clave his head down to the throat. "Now hast thou the wages thou long hast earned!" said he; and so departed from the damsel.

Then for two days he rode in a great forest, and had but scanty food and lodging, and on the third day he rode over a long bridge, when suddenly there started up a passing foul churl, and smote his horse across the nose, so that he started and turned back, rearing with pain. "Why ridest thou over here without my leave?" said he.

"Why should I not?" said Sir Lancelot; "there is no other way to ride."

"Thou shalt not pass by here," cried out the churl, and dashed at him with a great club full of iron spikes, till Sir Lancelot was fain to draw his sword and smite him dead upon the earth.

At the end of the bridge was a fair village, and all the people came and cried, "Ah, sir! a worse deed for thyself thou never didst, for thou hast slain the chief porter of the castle yonder!" But he let them talk as they pleased, and rode straight forward to the castle.

There he alighted, and tied his horse to a ring in the wall; and going in, he saw a wide green court, and thought it seemed a noble place to fight in. And as he looked about, he saw many people watching him from doors and windows, making signs of warning, and saying, "Fair knight, thou art unhappy." In the next moment came upon him two great giants, well armed save their heads, and with two horrible clubs in their hands. Then he put his shield before him, and with it warded off one giant's stroke, and clove the other with his sword from the head downward to the chest. When the first giant saw that, he ran away mad with fear; but Sir Lancelot ran after him, and smote him through the shoulder, and shore him down his back, so that he fell dead.

Then he walked onward to the castle hall, and saw a band of sixty ladies and young damsels coming forth, who knelt to him, and thanked him for their freedom. "For, sir," said they, "the most of us have been prisoners here these seven years; and have been kept at all manner of work to earn our meat, though we be all great gentlewomen born. Blessed be the time that thou wast born, for never did a knight a deed of greater worship than thou hast this day, and thereto will we all bear witness in all times and places! Tell us, therefore, noble knight, thy name and court, that we may tell them to our friends!" And when they heard it, they all cried aloud, "Well may it be so, for we knew that no knight save thou shouldst ever overcome those giants; and many a long day have we sighed for thee; for the giants feared no other name among all knights but thine."

Then he told them to take the treasures of the castle as a reward for their grievances; and to return to their homes, and so rode away into many strange and wild countries. And at last, after many days, by chance he came, near the night time, to a fair mansion, wherein he found an old gentlewoman, who gave him and his horse good cheer. And when bed time was come, his host brought him to

a chamber over a gate, and there he unarmed, and went to bed and fell asleep.

But soon thereafter came one riding in great haste, and knocking vehemently at the gate below, which when Sir Lancelot heard, he rose and looked out of the window, and, by the moonlight, saw three knights come riding fiercely after one man, and lashing on him all at once with their swords, while the one knight nobly fought them all.

Then Sir Lancelot quickly armed himself, and getting through the window, let himself down by a sheet into the midst of them, crying out, "Turn ye on me, ye cowards, and leave fighting with that knight!" Then they all left Sir Key, for the first knight was he, and began to fall upon Sir Lancelot furiously. And when Sir Key would have come forward to assist him, Sir Lancelot refused, and cried, "Leave me alone to deal with them." And presently, with six great strokes, he felled them all.

Then they cried out, "Sir knight, we yield us unto thee, as to a man of might!"

"I will not take your yielding!" said he; "yield ye to Sir Key, the seneschal, or I will have your lives."

"Fair knight," said they, "excuse us in that thing, for we have chased Sir Key thus far, and should have overcome him but for thee."

"Well," said Sir Lancelot, "do as ye will, for ye may live or die; but, if ye live, ye shall be holden to Sir Key."

Then they yielded to him; and Sir Lancelot commanded them to go unto King Arthur's court at the next Pentecost, and say, Sir Key had sent them prisoners to Queen Guinevere. And this they sware to do upon their swords.

Then Sir Lancelot knocked at the gate with his sword-hilt till his hostess came and let him in again, and Sir Key also. And when the light came, Sir Key knew Sir Lancelot, and knelt and thanked him for his courtesy, and gentleness, and kindness. "Sir," said he, "I have done no more than what I ought to do, and ye are welcome; therefore let us now take rest."

So when Sir Key had supped, they went to sleep, and Sir Lancelot and he slept in the same bed. On the morrow, Sir Lancelot rose early, and took Sir Key's shield and armor and set forth. When Sir Key awoke, he found Sir Lancelot's armor by his bedside, and his own arms gone. "Now, by my faith," thought he, "I know that he will grieve some knights of our king's court; for those who meet him will be bold to joust with him, mistaking him for me, while I, dressed in his shield and armor, shall surely ride in peace."

Then Sir Lancelot, dressed in Sir Key's apparel, rode long in a great forest, and came at last to a low country, full of rivers and fair meadows, and saw a bridge before him, whereon were three silk tents of divers colors, and to each

tent was hung a white shield, and by each shield stood a knight. So Sir Lancelot went by without speaking a word. And when he had passed, the three knights said it was the proud Sir Key, "who thinketh no knight equal to himself, although the contrary is full often proved upon him."

"By my faith!" said one of them, named Gaunter, "I will ride after and attack him for all his pride, and ye shall watch my speed."

Then, taking shield and spear, he mounted and rode after Sir Lancelot, and cried, "Abide, proud knight, and turn, for thou shalt not pass free!"

So Sir Lancelot turned, and each one put his spear in rest and came with all his might against the other. And Sir Gaunter's spear brake short, but Sir Lancelot smote him down, both horse and man.

When the other knights saw this, they said, "Yonder is not Sir Key, but a bigger man."

"I dare wager my head," said Sir Gilmere, "yonder knight hath slain Sir Key, and taken his horse and harness."

"Be it so, or not," said Sir Reynold, the third brother; "let us now go to our brother Gaunter's rescue; we shall have enough to do to match that knight, for, by his stature, I believe it is Sir Lancelot or Sir Tristram."

Anon, they took their horses and galloped after Sir Lancelot; and Sir Gilmere first assailed him, but was smitten down forthwith, and lay stunned on the earth. Then said Sir Reynold, "Sir knight, thou art a strong man, and, I believe, hast slain my two brothers, wherefore my heart is sore against thee; yet, if I might with honor, I would avoid thee. Nevertheless, that cannot be, so keep thyself." And so they hurtled together with all their might, and each man shivered his spear to pieces; and then they drew their swords and lashed out eagerly.

And as they fought, Sir Gaunter and Sir Gilmere presently arose and mounted once again, and came down at full tilt upon Sir Lancelot. But, when he saw them coming, he put forth all his strength, and struck Sir Reynold off his horse. Then, with two other strokes, he served the others likewise.

Anon, Sir Reynold crept along the ground, with his head all bloody, and came towards Sir Lancelot. "It is enough," said Lancelot, "I was not far from thee when thou wast made a knight, Sir Reynold, and know thee for a good and valiant man, and was full loth to slay thee."

"Gramercy for thy gentleness!" said Sir Reynold. "I and my brethren will straightway yield to thee when we know thy name, for well we know that thou art not Sir Key."

"As for that," said Sir Lancelot, "be it as it may, but ye shall yield to Queen Guinevere at the next Feast of Pentecost as prisoners, and say that Sir Key sent ye."

Then they swore to him it should be done as he commanded. And so Sir Lancelot passed on, and the three brethren helped each other's wounds as best they might.

Then rode Sir Lancelot forward into a deep forest, and came upon four knights of King Arthur's court, under an oak tree—Sir Sagramour, Sir Ector, Sir Gawain, and Sir Ewaine. And when they spied him, they thought he was Sir Key. "Now by my faith," said Sir Sagramour, "I will prove Sir Key's might!" and taking his spear he rode towards Sir Lancelot.

But Sir Lancelot was aware of him, and, setting his spear in rest, smote him so sorely, that horse and man fell to the earth.

"Lo!" cried Sir Ector, "I see by the buffet that knight hath given our fellow he is stronger than Sir Key. Now will I try what I can do against him!" So Sir Ector took his spear, and galloped at Sir Lancelot; and Sir Lancelot met him as he came, and smote him through shield and shoulder, so that he fell, but his own spear was not broken.

"By my faith," cried Sir Ewaine, "yonder is a strong knight, and must have slain Sir Key, and taken his armor! By his strength, I see it will be hard to match him." So saying he rode towards Sir Lancelot, who met him halfway and struck him so fiercely, that at one blow he overthrew him also.

"Now," said Sir Gawain, "will I encounter him." So he took a good spear in his hand, and guarded himself with his shield. And he and Sir Lancelot rode against each other, with their horses at full speed, and furiously smote each other on the middle of their shields; but Sir Gawain's spear broke short asunder, and Sir Lancelot charged so mightily upon him, that his horse and he both fell, and rolled upon the ground.

"Ah," said Sir Lancelot, smiling, as he rode away from the four knights, "heaven give joy to him who made this spear, for never held I better in my hand."

But the four knights said to each other, "Truly one spear hath felled us all."

"I dare lay my life," said Sir Gawain, "it is Sir Lancelot. I know him by his riding."

So they all departed for the court.

And as Sir Lancelot rode still in the forest, he saw a black bloodhound, running with its head towards the ground, as if it tracked a deer. And following after it, he came to a great pool of blood. But the hound, ever and anon looking behind, ran through a great marsh, and over a bridge, towards an old manor house. So Sir Lancelot followed, and went into the hall, and saw a dead knight lying there, whose wounds the hound licked. And a lady stood behind him, weeping and wringing her hands, who cried, "O knight! too great is the sorrow

which thou hast brought me!"

"Why say ye so?" replied Sir Lancelot; "for I never harmed this knight, and am full sorely grieved to see thy sorrow."

"Nay, sir," said the lady, "I see it is not thou hast slain my husband, for he that truly did that deed is deeply wounded, and shall never more recover."

"What is thy husband's name?" said Sir Lancelot.

"His name," she answered, "was Sir Gilbert—one of the best knights in all the world; but I know not his name who hath slain him."

"God send thee comfort," said Sir Lancelot, and departed again into the forest.

And as he rode, he met with a damsel who knew him, who cried out, "Well found, my lord! I pray ye of your knighthood help my brother, who is sore wounded and ceases not to bleed, for he fought this day with Sir Gilbert, and slew him, but was himself well nigh slain. And there is a sorceress, who dwelleth in a castle hard by, and she this day hath told me that my brother's wound shall never be made whole until I find a knight to go into the Chapel Perilous, and bring from thence a sword and the bloody cloth in which the wounded knight was wrapped."

"This is a marvelous thing!" said Sir Lancelot; "but what is your brother's name?"

"His name, sir," she replied, "is Sir Meliot de Logres."

"He is a Fellow of the Round Table," said Sir Lancelot, "and truly will I do my best to help him."

"Then, sir," said she, "follow this way, and it will bring ye to the Chapel Perilous. I will abide here till God send ye hither again; for if ye speed not, there is no living knight who may achieve that adventure."

So Sir Lancelot departed, and when he came to the Chapel Perilous he alighted, and tied his horse to the gate. And as soon as he was within the churchyard, he saw on the front of the chapel many shields of knights whom he had known, turned upside down. Then saw he in the pathway thirty mighty knights, taller than any men whom he had ever seen, all armed in black armor, with their swords drawn; and they gnashed their teeth upon him as he came. But he put his shield before him, and took his sword in hand, ready to do battle with them. And when he would have cut his way through them, they scattered on every side and let him pass. Then he went into the chapel, and saw therein no light but of a dim lamp burning. Then he was aware of a corpse in the midst of the chapel, covered with a silken cloth, and so stooped down and cut off a piece of the cloth, whereat the earth beneath him trembled. Then saw he a sword lying by the dead knight, and taking it in his hand, he hied him from the chapel. As

soon as he was in the churchyard again, all the thirty knights cried out to him with fierce voices, "Sir Lancelot! lay that sword from thee, or thou diest!"

"Whether I live or die," said he, "ye shall fight for it ere ye take it from me."

With that they let him pass.

And further on, beyond the chapel, he met a fair damsel, who said, "Sir Lancelot, leave that sword behind thee, or thou diest."

"I will not leave it," said Sir Lancelot, "for any asking."

"Then, gentle knight," said the damsel, "I pray thee kiss me once."

"Nay," said Sir Lancelot, "that God forbid!"

"Alas!" cried she, "I have lost all my labor! but hadst thou kissed me, thy life's days had been all done!"

"Heaven save me from thy subtle crafts!" said Sir Lancelot; and therewith took his horse and galloped forth.

And when he was departed, the damsel sorrowed greatly, and died in fifteen days. Her name was Ellawes, the sorceress.

Then came Sir Lancelot to Sir Meliot's sister, who, when she saw him, clapped her hands and wept for joy, and took him to the castle hard by, where Sir Meliot was. And when Sir Lancelot saw Sir Meliot, he knew him, though he was pale as ashes for loss of blood. And Sir Meliot, when he saw Sir Lancelot, kneeled to him and cried aloud, "O lord, Sir Lancelot! help me!"

And thereupon, Sir Lancelot went to him and touched his wounds with the sword, and wiped them with the piece of bloody cloth. And immediately he was as whole as though he had been never wounded. Then was there great joy between him and Sir Meliot; and his sister made Sir Lancelot good cheer. So on the morrow, he took his leave, that he might go to King Arthur's court, "for," said he, "it draweth nigh the Feast of Pentecost, and there, by God's grace, shall ye then find me."

And riding through many strange countries, over marshes and valleys, he came at length before a castle. As he passed by he heard two little bells ringing, and looking up, he saw a falcon flying overhead, with bells tied to her feet, and long strings dangling from them. And as the falcon flew past an elm-tree, the strings caught in the boughs, so that she could fly no further.

In the meanwhile, came a lady from the castle, and cried, "Oh, Sir Lancelot! as thou art the flower of all knights in the world, help me to get my hawk, for she hath slipped away from me, and if she be lost, my lord my husband is so hasty, he will surely slay me!"

"What is thy lord's name?" said Sir Lancelot.

"His name," said she, "is Sir Phelot, a knight of the King of Northgales."

"Fair lady," said Sir Lancelot, "since you know my name, and require me, on

my knighthood, to help you, I will do what I can to get your hawk."

And thereupon alighting, he tied his horse to the same tree, and prayed the lady to unarm him. So when he was unarmed, he climbed up and reached the falcon, and threw it to the lady.

Then suddenly came down, out of the wood, her husband, Sir Phelot, all armed, with a drawn sword in his hand, and said, "Oh, Sir Lancelot! now have I found thee as I would have thee!" and stood at the trunk of the tree to slay him.

"Ah, lady!" cried Sir Lancelot, "why have ye betrayed me?"

"She hath done as I commanded her," said Sir Phelot, "and thine hour is come that thou must die."

"It were shame," said Lancelot, "for an armed to slay an unarmed man."

"Thou hast no other favor from me," said Sir Phelot.

"Alas!" cried Sir Lancelot, "that ever any knight should die weaponless!" And looking overhead, he saw a great bough without leaves, and wrenched it off the tree, and suddenly leaped down. Then Sir Phelot struck at him eagerly, thinking to have slain him, but Sir Lancelot put aside the stroke with the bough, and therewith smote him on the side of the head, till he fell swooning to the ground. And tearing his sword from out his hands, he shore his neck through from the body. Then did the lady shriek dismally, and swooned as though she would die. But Sir Lancelot put on his armor, and with haste took his horse and departed thence, thanking God he had escaped that peril.

And as he rode through a valley, among many wild ways, he saw a knight, with a drawn sword, chasing a lady to slay her. And seeing Sir Lancelot, she cried and prayed to him to come and rescue her.

At that he went up, saying, "Fie on thee, knight! why wilt thou slay this lady? Thou doest shame to thyself and all knights."

"What hast thou to do between me and my wife?" replied the knight. "I will slay her in spite of thee."

"Thou shalt not harm her," said Lancelot, "till we have first fought together."

"Sir," answered the knight, "thou doest ill, for this lady hath betrayed me."

"He speaketh falsely," said the lady, "for he is jealous of me without cause, as I shall answer before Heaven; but as thou art named the most worshipful knight in the world, I pray thee of thy true knighthood to save me, for he is without mercy."

"Be of good cheer," said Sir Lancelot; "it shall not lie within his power to harm thee."

"Sir," said the knight, "I will be ruled as ye will have me."

So Sir Lancelot rode between the knight and the lady. And when they had ridden awhile, the knight cried out suddenly to Sir Lancelot to turn and see what



men they were who came riding after them; and while Sir Lancelot, thinking not of treason, turned to look, the knight, with one great stroke, smote off the lady's head.

Then was Sir Lancelot passing wroth, and cried, "Thou traitor! Thou hast shamed me forever!" and, alighting from his horse, he drew his sword to have slain him instantly; but the knight fell on the ground and clasped Sir Lancelot's knees, and cried out for mercy. "Thou shameful knight," answered Lancelot, "thou mayest have no mercy, for thou showedst none, therefore arise and fight with me."

"Nay," said the knight, "I will not rise till thou dost grant me mercy."

"Now will I deal fairly by thee," said Sir Lancelot; "I will unarm me to my shirt, and have my sword only in my hand, and if thou canst slay me thou shalt be quit forever."

"That will I never do," said the knight.

"Then," answered Sir Lancelot, "take this lady and the head, and bear it with thee, and swear to me upon thy sword never to rest until thou comest to Queen Guinevere."

"That will I do," said he.

"Now," said Sir Lancelot, "tell me thy name."

"It is Pedivere," answered the knight.

"In a shameful hour wert thou born," said Sir Lancelot.

So Sir Pedivere departed, bearing with him the dead lady and her head. And when he came to Winchester, where the Queen was with King Arthur, he told them all the truth; and afterwards did great and heavy penance many years, and became an holy hermit.

So, two days before the Feast of Pentecost, Sir Lancelot returned to the court, and King Arthur was full glad of his coming. And when Sir Gawain, Sir Ewaine, Sir Sagramour, and Sir Ector, saw him in Sir Key's armor, they knew well it was he who had smitten them all down with one spear. Anon, came all the knights Sir Turquine had taken prisoners, and gave worship and honor to Sir Lancelot. Then Sir Key told the King how Sir Lancelot had rescued him when he was in near danger of his death; "and," said Sir Key, "he made the knights yield, not to himself, but me. And by Heaven! because Sir Lancelot took my armor and left me his, I rode in peace, and no man would have aught to do with me." Then came the knights who fought with Sir Lancelot at the long bridge and yielded themselves also to Sir Key, but he said nay, he had not fought with them. "It is Sir Lancelot," said he, "that overcame ye." Next came Sir Meliot de Logres, and told King Arthur how Sir Lancelot had saved him from death.

And so all Sir Lancelot's deeds and great adventures were made known; how

the four sorceress-queens had him in prison; how he was delivered by the daughter of King Bagdemagus, and what deeds of arms he did at the tournament between the King of North Wales and King Bagdemagus. And so, at that festival, Sir Lancelot had the greatest name of any knight in all the world, and by high and low was he the most honored of all men.

# CHAPTER XI

## THE ADVENTURES OF SIR BEAUMAINS OR SIR GARETH

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Again King Arthur held the Feast of Pentecost, with all the Table Round, and after his custom sat in the banquet hall, before beginning meat, waiting for some adventure. Then came there to the king a squire and said, "Lord, now may ye go to meat, for here a damsel cometh with some strange adventure." So the king was glad, and sat down to meat.

Anon the damsel came in and saluted him, praying him for succor. "What wilt thou?" said the king. "Lord," answered she, "my mistress is a lady of great renown, but is at this time besieged by a tyrant, who will not suffer her to go out of her castle; and because here in thy court the knights are called the noblest in the world, I come to pray thee for thy succor." "Where dwelleth your lady?" answered the king. "What is her name, and who is he that hath besieged her?" "For her name," replied the damsel, "as yet I may not tell it; but she is a lady of worship and great lands. The tyrant that besiegeth her and wasteth her lands is called the Red Knight of the Redlands." "I know him not," said Arthur. "But I know him, lord," said Sir Gawain, "and he is one of the most perilous knights in all the world. Men say he hath the strength of seven; and from him I myself once hardly escaped with life." "Fair damsel," said the king, "there be here many knights that would gladly do their uttermost to rescue your lady, but unless ye tell me her name, and where she dwelleth, none of my knights shall go with you by my leave."

Now, there was a stripling at the court called Beaumains, who served in the king's kitchen, a fair youth and of great stature. Twelve months before this time he had come to the king as he sat at meat, at Whitsuntide, and prayed three gifts of him. And being asked what gifts, he answered, "As for the first gift I will ask it now, but the other two gifts I will ask on this day twelve months, wheresoever ye hold your high feast." Then said King Arthur, "What is thy first request?" "This, lord," said he, "that thou wilt give me meat and drink enough for twelve months from this time, and then will I ask my other two gifts." And the king seeing that he was a goodly youth, and deeming that he was come of honorable

blood, had granted his desire, and given him into the charge of Sir Key, the steward. But Sir Key scorned and mocked the youth, calling Beaumains, because his hands were large and fair, and putting him into the kitchen, where he had served for twelve months as a scullion, and, in spite of all his churlish treatment, had faithfully obeyed Sir Key. But Sir Lancelot and Sir Gawain were angered when they saw Sir Key so churlish to a youth that had so worshipful a bearing, and oftentimes had they given him gold and clothing.

And now at this time came young Beaumains to the king, while the damsel was there, and said, "Lord, now I thank thee well and heartily that I have been twelve months kept in thy kitchen, and have had full sustenance. Now will I ask my two remaining gifts." "Ask," said King Arthur, "on my good faith." "These, lord," said he, "shall be my two gifts—the one, that thou wilt grant me this adventure of the damsel, for to me of right it belongeth; and the other, that thou wilt bid Sir Lancelot make me a knight, for of him only will I have that honor; and I pray that he may ride after me and make me a knight when I require him." "Be it as thou wilt," replied the king. But thereupon the damsel was full wroth, and said, "Shall I have a kitchen page for this adventure?" and so she took horse and departed.

Then came one to Beaumains, and told him that a dwarf with a horse and armor were waiting for him. And all men marveled whence these things came. But when he was on horseback and armed, scarce any one at the court was a goodlier man than he. And coming into the hall, he took his leave of the king and Sir Gawain, and prayed Sir Lancelot to follow him. So he rode after the damsel, and many of the court went out to see him, so richly arrayed and horsed; yet he had neither shield nor spear. Then Sir Key cried, "I also will ride after the kitchen boy, and see whether he will obey me now." And taking his horse, he rode after him, and said, "Know ye not me, Beaumains?" "Yea," said he, "I know thee for an ungentle knight, therefore beware of me." Then Sir Key put his spear in rest and ran at him, but Beaumains rushed upon him with his sword in his hand, and therewith, putting aside the spear, struck Sir Key so sorely in the side, that he fell down, as if dead. Then he alighted, and took his shield and spear, and bade his dwarf ride upon Sir Key's horse.

By this time, Sir Lancelot had come up, and Beaumains offering to tilt with him, they both made ready. And their horses came together so fiercely that both fell to the earth, full sorely bruised. Then they arose, and Beaumains, putting up his shield before him, offered to fight Sir Lancelot, on foot. So they rushed upon each other, striking, and thrusting, and parrying, for the space of an hour. And Lancelot marveled at the strength of Beaumains, for he fought more like a giant than a man, and his fighting was passing fierce and terrible. So, at the last, he

said, "Fight not so sorely, Beaumains; our quarrel is not such that we may not now cease." "True," answered Beaumains; "yet it doth me good to feel thy might, though I have not yet proved my uttermost." "By my faith," said Lancelot, "I had as much as I could do to save myself from you unshamed, therefore be in no doubt of any earthly knight." "May I, then, stand as a proved knight?" said Beaumains. "For that will I be thy warrant," answered Lancelot. "Then, I pray thee," said he, "give me the order of knighthood." "First, then, must thou tell me of thy name and kindred," said Sir Lancelot. "If thou wilt tell them to no other, I will tell thee," answered he. "My name is Gareth of Orkney, and I am own brother to Sir Gawain." "Ah!" said Sir Lancelot, "at that am I full glad; for, truly, I deemed thee to be of gentle blood." So then he knighted Beaumains, and, after that, they parted company, and Sir Lancelot, returning to the court, took up Sir Key on his shield. And hardly did Sir Key escape with his life, from the wound Beaumains had given him; but all men blamed him for his ungentle treatment of so brave a knight.

Then Sir Beaumains rode forward, and soon overtook the damsel; but she said to him, in scorn, "Return again, base kitchen page! What art thou, but a washer-up of dishes!" "Damsel," said he, "say to me what thou wilt, I will not leave thee; for I have undertaken to King Arthur to relieve thy adventure, and I will finish it to the end, or die." "Thou finish my adventure!" said she—"anon, thou shalt meet one, whose face thou wilt not even dare to look at." "I shall attempt it," answered he. So, as they rode thus, into a wood, there met them a man, fleeing, as for his life. "Whither fleest thou?" said Sir Beaumains. "O lord!" he answered, "help me; for, in a valley hard by, there are six thieves, who have taken my lord, and bound him, and I fear will slay him." "Bring me thither," said Sir Beaumains. So they rode to the place, and Sir Beaumains rushed after the thieves, and smote one, at the first stroke, so that he died; and then, with two other blows, slew a second and third. Then fled the other three, and Sir Beaumains rode after them, and overtook and slew them all. Then he returned and unbound the knight. And the knight thanked him, and prayed him to ride to his castle, where he would reward him. "Sir," answered Sir Beaumains, "I will have no reward of thee, for but this day was I made knight by the most noble Sir Lancelot; and besides, I must go with this damsel." Then the knight begged the damsel to rest that night at his castle. So they all rode thither, and ever the damsel scoffed at Sir Beaumains as a kitchen boy, and laughed at him before the knight their host, so that he set his meat before him at a lower table, as though he were not of their company.

And on the morrow, the damsel and Sir Beaumains took their leave of the knight, and thanking him departed. Then they rode on their way till they came to

a great forest, through which flowed a river, and there was but one passage over it, whereat stood two knights armed to hinder the way. "Wilt thou match those two knights," said the damsel to Sir Beaumains, "or return again?" "I would not return," said he, "though they were six." Therewith he galloped into the water, and swam his horse into the middle of the stream. And there, in the river, one of the knights met him, and they brake their spears together, and then drew their swords, and smote fiercely at each other. And at the last, Sir Beaumains struck the other mightily upon the helm, so that he fell down stunned into the water, and was drowned. Then Sir Beaumains spurred his horse on to the land, where instantly the other knight fell on him. And they also brake their spears upon each other, and then drew their swords, and fought savagely and long together. And after many blows, Sir Beaumains clove through the knight's skull down to the shoulders. Then rode Sir Beaumains to the damsel, but ever she still scoffed at him, and said, "Alas! that a kitchen page should chance to slay two such brave knights! Thou deemest now that thou hast done a mighty deed, but it is not so; for the first knight's horse stumbled, and thus was he drowned—not by thy strength; and as for the second knight, thou wentest by chance behind him, and didst kill him shamefully." "Damsel," said Sir Beaumains, "say what ye list, I care not so I may win your lady; and wouldst thou give me but fair language, all my care were past; for whatsoever knights I meet, I fear them not." "Thou shalt see knights that shall abate thy boast, base kitchen knave," replied she; "yet say I this for thine advantage, for if thou followest me thou wilt be surely slain, since I see all thou doest is but by chance, and not by thy own prowess." "Well, damsel," said he, "say what ye will, wherever ye go I will follow."

So they rode on until the eventide, and still the damsel evermore kept chiding Sir Beaumains. Then came they to a black space of land, whereon was a black hawthorn tree, and on the tree there hung a black banner, and on the other side was a black shield and spear, and by them a great black horse, covered with silk; and hard by sat a knight armed in black armor, whose name was the Knight of the Blacklands. When the damsel saw him, she cried out to Beaumains, "Flee down the valley, for thy horse is not saddled!" "Wilt thou forever deem me coward?" answered he. With that came the Black Knight to the damsel, and said, "Fair damsel, hast thou brought this knight from Arthur's court to be thy champion?" "Not so, fair knight," said she; "he is but a kitchen knave." "Then wherefore cometh he in such array?" said he; "it is a shame that he should bear thee company." "I cannot be delivered from him," answered she: "for in spite of me he rideth with me; and would to Heaven you would put him from me, or now slay him, for he hath slain two knights at the river passage yonder, and done many marvelous deeds through pure mischance." "I marvel," said the Black

Knight, "that any man of worship will fight with him." "They know him not," said the damsel, "and think, because he rideth with me, that he is well born." "Truly, he hath a goodly person, and is likely to be a strong man," replied the knight; "but since he is no man of worship, he shall leave his horse and armor with me, for it were a shame for me to do him more harm."

When Sir Beaumains heard him speak thus, he said, "Horse or armor gettest thou none of me, Sir knight, save thou winnest them with thy hands; therefore defend thyself, and let me see what thou canst do." "How sayest thou?" answered the Black Knight. "Now quit this lady also, for it beseemeth not a kitchen knave like thee to ride with such a lady." "I am of higher lineage than thou," said Sir Beaumains, "and will straightway prove it on thy body." Then furiously they drove their horses at each other, and came together as it had been thunder. But the Black Knight's spear brake short, and Sir Beaumains thrust him through the side, and his spear breaking at the head, left its point sticking fast in the Black Knight's body. Yet did the Black Knight draw his sword, and smite at Sir Beaumains with many fierce and bitter blows; but after they had fought an hour and more, he fell down from his horse in a swoon, and forthwith died. Then Sir Beaumains lighted down and armed himself in the Black Knight's armor, and rode on after the damsel. But notwithstanding all his valor, still she scoffed at him, and said, "Away! for thou savorest ever of the kitchen. Alas! that such a knave should by mishap destroy so good a knight; yet once again I counsel thee to flee, for hard by is a knight who shall repay thee!" "It may chance that I am beaten or slain," answered Sir Beaumains, "but I warn thee, fair damsel, that I will not flee away, nor leave thy company, or my quest, for all that ye can say."

Anon, as they rode, they saw a knight come swiftly towards them, dressed all in green, who, calling to the damsel said, "Is that my brother, the Black Knight, that ye have brought with you?" "Nay, and alas!" said she, "this kitchen knave hath slain thy brother through mischance." "Alas!" said the Green Knight, "that such a noble knight as he was should be slain by a knave's hand. Traitor!" cried he to Sir Beaumains, "thou shalt die for this! Sir Pereard was my brother, and a full noble knight." "I defy thee," said Sir Beaumains, "for I slew him knightly and not shamefully." Then the Green Knight rode to a thorn whereon hung a green horn, and, when he blew three notes, there came three damsels forth, who quickly armed him, and brought him a great horse and a green shield and spear. Then did they run at one another with their fullest might, and break their spears asunder; and, drawing their swords, they closed in fight, and sorely smote and wounded each other with many grievous blows.

At last, Sir Beaumains' horse jostled against the Green Knight's horse, and overthrew him. Then both alighted, and, hurtling together like mad lions, fought

a great while on foot. But the damsel cheered the Green Knight, and said, "My lord, why wilt thou let a kitchen knave so long stand up against thee?" Hearing these words, he was ashamed, and gave Sir Beaumains such a mighty stroke as clave his shield asunder. When Sir Beaumains heard the damsel's words, and felt that blow, he waxed passing wroth, and gave the Green Knight such a buffet on the helm that he fell on his knees, and with another blow Sir Beaumains threw him on the ground. Then the Green Knight yielded, and prayed him to spare his life. "All thy prayers are vain," said he, "unless this damsel who came with me pray for thee." "That will I never do, base kitchen knave," said she. "Then shall he die," said Beaumains. "Alas! fair lady," said the Green Knight, "suffer me not to die for a word! O, Sir knight," cried he to Beaumains, "give me my life, and I will ever do thee homage; and thirty knights, who owe me service, shall give allegiance to thee." "All availeth not," answered Sir Beaumains, "unless the damsel ask me for thy life"; and thereupon he made as though he would have slain him. Then cried the damsel, "Slay him not; for if thou do thou shalt repent it." "Damsel," said Sir Beaumains, "at thy command, he shall obtain his life. Arise, Sir knight of the green armor, I release thee!" Then the Green Knight knelt at his feet, and did him homage with his words. "Lodge with me this night," said he, "and to-morrow will I guide ye through the forest." So, taking their horses, they rode to his castle, which was hard by.

Yet still did the damsel rebuke and scoff at Sir Beaumains, and would not suffer him to sit at her table. "I marvel," said the Green Knight to her, "that ye thus chide so noble a knight, for truly I know none to match him; and be sure, that whatsoever he appeareth now, he will prove, at the end, of noble blood and royal lineage." But of all this would the damsel take no heed, and ceased not to mock at Sir Beaumains. On the morrow, they arose and heard mass; and when they had broken their fast, took their horses and rode on their way, the Green Knight conveying them through the forest. Then, when he had led them for a while, he said to Sir Beaumains, "My lord, my thirty knights and I shall always be at thy command whensoever thou shalt send for us." "It is well said," replied he; "and when I call upon you, you shall yield yourself and all your knights unto King Arthur." "That will we gladly do," said the Green Knight, and so departed.

And the damsel rode on before Sir Beaumains, and said to him, "Why dost thou follow me, thou kitchen boy? I counsel thee to throw aside thy spear and shield, and flee betimes, for wert thou as mighty as Sir Lancelot or Sir Tristram, thou shouldest not pass a valley near this place, called the Pass Perilous." "Damsel," answered he, "let him that feareth flee; as for me, it were indeed a shameful thing to turn after so long a journey." As he spake, they came upon a tower as white as snow, with mighty battlements, and double moats round it, and



over the tower-gate hung fifty shields of divers colors. Before the tower walls, they saw a fair meadow, wherein were many knights and squires in pavilions, for on the morrow there was a tournament at that castle.

Then the lord of the castle, seeing a knight armed at all points, with a damsel and a page, riding towards the tower, came forth to meet them; and his horse and harness, with his shield and spear, were all of a red color. When he came near Sir Beaumains, and saw his armor all of black, he thought him his own brother, the Black Knight, and so cried aloud, "Brother! what do ye here, within these borders?" "Nay!" said the damsel, "it is not thy brother, but a kitchen knave of Arthur's court, who hath slain thy brother, and overcome thy other brother also, the Green Knight." "Now do I defy thee!" cried the Red Knight to Sir Beaumains, and put his spear in rest and spurred his horse. Then both knights turned back a little space, and ran together with all their might, till their horses fell to the earth. Then, with their swords, they fought fiercely for the space of three hours. And at last, Sir Beaumains overcame his foe, and smote him to the ground. Then the Red Knight prayed his mercy, and said, "Slay me not, noble knight, and I will yield to thee with sixty knights that do my bidding." "All avails not," answered Sir Beaumains, "save this damsel pray me to release thee." Then did he lift his sword to slay him; but the damsel cried aloud, "Slay him not, Beaumains, for he is a noble knight." Then Sir Beaumains bade him rise up and thank the damsel, which straightway he did, and afterwards invited them to his castle, and made them goodly cheer.

But notwithstanding all Sir Beaumains' mighty deeds, the damsel ceased not to revile and chide him, at which the Red Knight marveled much; and caused his sixty knights to watch Sir Beaumains, that no villainy might happen to him. And on the morrow, they heard mass and broke their fast, and the Red Knight came before Sir Beaumains, with his sixty knights, and proffered him homage and fealty. "I thank thee," answered he; "and when I call upon thee thou shalt come before my lord King Arthur at his court, and yield yourselves to him." "That will we surely do," said the Red Knight. So Sir Beaumains and the damsel departed.

And as she constantly reviled him and tormented him, he said to her, "Damsel, ye are discourteous thus always to rebuke me, for I have done you service; and for all your threats of knights that shall destroy me, all they who come lie in the dust before me. Now, therefore, I pray you rebuke me no more till you see me beaten or a recreant, and then bid me go from you." "There shall soon meet thee a knight who shall repay thee all thy deeds, thou boaster," answered she, "for, save King Arthur, he is the man of most worship in the world." "It will be the greater honor to encounter him," said Sir Beaumains.

Soon after, they saw before them a city passing fair, and between them and

the city was a meadow newly mown, wherein were many goodly tents. "Seest thou yonder blue pavilion?" said the damsel to Sir Beaumains; "it is Sir Perseant's, the lord of that great city, whose custom is, in all fair weather, to lie in this meadow, and joust with his knights."

And as she spake, Sir Perseant, who had espied them coming, sent a messenger to meet Sir Beaumains, and to ask him if he came in war or peace. "Say to thy lord," he answered, "that I care not whether of the twain it be." So when the messenger gave this reply, Sir Perseant came out to fight with Sir Beaumains. And making ready, they rode their steeds against each other; and when their spears were shivered asunder, they fought with their swords. And for more than two hours did they hack and hew at each other, till their shields and hauberks were all dented with many blows, and they themselves were sorely wounded. And at the last, Sir Beaumains smote Sir Perseant on the helm, so that he fell groveling on the earth. And when he unlaced his helm to slay him, the damsel prayed for his life. "That will I grant gladly," answered Sir Beaumains, "for it were pity such a noble knight should die." "Gramercy!" said Sir Perseant, "for now I certainly know that it was thou who slewest my brother, the Black Knight, Sir Pereard; and overcame my brothers, the Green Knight, Sir Pertolope, and the Red Knight, Sir Perimones; and since thou hast overcome me also, I will do thee homage and fealty, and place at thy command one hundred knights to do thy bidding."

But when the damsel saw Sir Perseant overthrown, she marveled greatly at the might of Sir Beaumains, and said, "What manner of man may ye be, for now am I sure that ye be come of noble blood? And truly, never did woman revile knight as I have done thee, and yet ye have ever courteously borne with me, which surely never had been were ye not of gentle blood and lineage."

"Lady," replied Sir Beaumains, "a knight is little worth who may not bear with a damsel; and so whatsoever ye said to me I took no heed, save only that at times when your scorn angered me, it made me all the stronger against those with whom I fought, and thus have ye furthered me in my battles. But whether I be born of gentle blood or no, I have done you gentle service, and peradventure will do better still, ere I depart from you."

"Alas!" said she, weeping at his courtesy, "forgive me, fair Sir Beaumains, all that I have missaid and misdome against you." "With all my heart," said he; "and since you now speak fairly to me, I am passing glad of heart, and methinks I have the strength to overcome whatever knights I shall henceforth encounter."

Then Sir Perseant prayed them to come to his pavilion, and set before them wines and spices, and made them great cheer. So they rested that night; and on the morrow, the damsel and Sir Beaumains rose, and heard mass. And when they

had broken their fast, they took their leave of Sir Perseant. "Fair damsel," said he, "whither lead ye this knight?" "Sir," answered she, "to the Castle Dangerous, where my sister is besieged by the Knight of the Redlands." "I know him well," said Sir Perseant, "for the most perilous knight alive—a man without mercy, and with the strength of seven men. God save thee, Sir Beaumains, from him! and enable thee to overcome him, for the Lady Lyones, whom he besiegeth, is as fair a lady as there liveth in this world." "Thou sayest truth, sir," said the damsel; "for I am her sister; and men call me Linet, or the Wild Maiden." "Now, I would have thee know," said Sir Perseant to Sir Beaumains, "that the Knight of the Redlands hath kept that siege more than two years, and prolongeth the time hoping that Sir Lancelot, or Sir Tristram, or Sir Lamoracke, may come and battle with him; for these three knights divide between them all knighthood; and thou if thou mayest match the Knight of the Redlands, shalt well be called the fourth knight of the world." "Sir," said Sir Beaumains, "I would fain have that good fame; and truly, I am come of great and honorable lineage. And so that you and this fair damsel will conceal it, I will tell ye my descent." And when they swore to keep it secret, he told them, "My name is Sir Gareth of Orkney, my father was King Lot, and my mother the Lady Belisent, King Arthur's sister. Sir Gawain, Sir Agravain, and Sir Gaheris, are my brethren, and I am the youngest of them all. But, as yet King Arthur and the court know me not, who I am." When he had thus told them, they both wondered greatly.

And the damsel Linet sent the dwarf forward to her sister, to tell her of their coming. Then did Dame Lyones inquire what manner of man the knight was who was coming to her rescue. And the dwarf told her of all Sir Beaumains' deeds by the way: how he had overthrown Sir Key, and left him for dead; how he had battled with Sir Lancelot, and was knighted of him; how he had fought with, and slain, the thieves; how he had overcome the two knights who kept the river passage; how he had fought with, and slain, the Black Knight; and how he had overcome the Green Knight, the Red Knight, and last of all, the Blue Knight, Sir Perseant. Then was Dame Lyones passing glad, and sent the dwarf back to Sir Beaumains with great gifts, thanking him for his courtesy, in taking such a labor on him for her sake, and praying him to be of good heart and courage. And as the dwarf returned, he met the Knight of the Redlands, who asked him whence he came. "I came here with the sister of my lady of the castle," said the dwarf, "who hath been now to King Arthur's court and brought a knight with her to take her battle on him." "Then is her travail lost," replied the knight; "for, though she had brought Sir Lancelot, Sir Tristram, Sir Lamoracke, or Sir Gawain, I count myself their equal, and who besides shall be so called?" Then the dwarf told the knight what deeds Sir Beaumains had done; but he answered,

"I care not for him, whosoever he be, for I shall shortly overcome him, and give him shameful death, as to so many others I have done."

Then the damsel Linet and Sir Beaumains left Sir Perseant, and rode on through a forest to a large plain, where they saw many pavilions, and hard by, a castle passing fair.

But as they came near Sir Beaumains saw upon the branches of some trees which grew there, the dead bodies of forty knights hanging, with rich armor on them, their shields and swords about their necks, and golden spurs upon their heels. "What meaneth this?" said he, amazed. "Lose not thy courage, fair sir," replied the damsel, "at this shameful sight, for all these knights came hither to rescue my sister; and when the Knight of the Redlands had overcome them, he put them to this piteous death, without mercy; and in such wise will he treat thee also unless thou bearest thee more valiantly than they." "Truly he useth shameful customs," said Sir Beaumains; "and it is a marvel that he hath endured so long."

So they rode onward to the castle walls, and found them double-moated, and heard the sea waves dashing on one side the walls. Then said the damsel, "See you that ivory horn hanging upon the sycamore-tree? The Knight of the Redlands hath hung it there, that any knight may blow thereon, and then will he himself come out and fight with him. But I pray thee sound it not till high noontide, for now it is but daybreak, and till noon his strength increases to the might of seven men." "Let that be as it may, fair damsel," answered he, "for were he stronger knight than ever lived, I would not fail him. Either will I defeat him at his mightiest, or die knightly in the field." With that he spurred his horse unto the sycamore, and blew the ivory horn so eagerly, that all the castle rang its echoes. Instantly, all the knights who were in the pavilions ran forth, and those within the castle looked out from the windows, or above the walls. And the Knight of the Redlands, arming himself quickly in blood-red armor, with spear, and shield, and horse's trappings of like color, rode forth into a little valley by the castle walls, so that all in the castle, and at the siege, might see the battle.

"Be of good cheer," said the damsel Linet to Sir Beaumains, "for thy deadly enemy now cometh; and at yonder window is my lady and sister, Dame Lyones." "In good sooth," said Sir Beaumains, "she is the fairest lady I have ever seen, and I would wish no better quarrel than to fight for her." With that, he looked up to the window, and saw the Lady Lyones, who waved her handkerchief to her sister and to him to cheer them. Then called the Knight of the Redlands to Sir Beaumains, "Leave now thy gazing, Sir knight, and turn to me, for I warn thee that lady is mine." "She loveth none of thy fellowship," he answered; "but know this, that I love her, and will rescue her from thee, or die." "Say ye so!" said the Red Knight. "Take ye no warning from those knights that hang on yonder trees?"

"For shame that thou so boastest!" said Sir Beaumains. "Be sure that sight hath raised a hatred for thee that will not lightly be put out, and given me not fear, but rage." "Sir knight, defend thyself," said the Knight of the Redlands, "for we will talk no longer."

Then did they put their spears in rest, and came together at the fullest speed of their horses, and smote each other in the midst of their shields, so that their horses' harness sundered by the shock, and they fell to the ground. And both lay there so long time, stunned, that many deemed their necks were broken. And all men said the strange knight was a strong man, and a noble jouster, for none had ever yet so matched the Knight of the Redlands. Then, in a while, they rose, and putting up their shields before them, drew their swords, and fought with fury, running at each other like wild beasts—now striking such buffets that both reeled backwards, now hewing at each other till they shore the harness off in pieces, and left their bodies naked and unarmed. And thus they fought till noon was past, when, for a time, they rested to get breath, so sorely staggering and bleeding, that many who beheld them wept for pity. Then they renewed the battle—sometimes rushing so furiously together, that both fell to the ground, and anon changing swords in their confusion. Thus they endured, and lashed, and struggled, until eventide, and none who saw knew which was the likeliest to win; for though the Knight of the Redlands was a wily and subtle warrior, his subtlety made Sir Beaumains wiler and wiser too. So once again they rested for a little space, and took their helms off to find breath.

But when Sir Beaumains' helm was off, he looked up to Dame Lyones, where she leaned, gazing and weeping, from her window. And when he saw the sweetness of her smiling, all his heart was light and joyful, and starting up, he bade the Knight of the Redlands make ready. Then did they lace their helms and fight together yet afresh, as though they had never fought before. And at the last, the Knight of the Redlands with a sudden stroke smote Sir Beaumains on the hand, so that his sword fell from it, and with a second stroke upon the helm he drove him to the earth. Then cried aloud the damsel Linet, "Alas! Sir Beaumains, see how my sister weepeth to behold thee fallen!" And when Sir Beaumains heard her words, he sprang upon his feet with strength, and leaping to his sword, he caught it; and with many heavy blows pressed so sorely on the Knight of the Redlands, that in the end he smote his sword from out his hand, and, with a mighty blow upon the head, hurled him upon the ground.

Then Sir Beaumains unlaced his helm, and would have straightway slain him, but the Knight of the Redlands yielded, and prayed for mercy. "I may not spare thee," answered he, "because of the shameful death which thou hast given to so many noble knights." "Yet hold thy hand, Sir knight," said he, "and hear

the cause. I loved once a fair damsel, whose brother was slain, as she told me, by a knight of Arthur's court, either Sir Lancelot, or Sir Gawain; and she prayed me, as I truly loved her, and by the faith of my knighthood, to labor daily in deeds of arms, till I should meet with him; and to put all knights of the Round Table whom I should overcome to a villainous death. And this I swore to her." Then prayed the earls, and knights, and barons, who stood round Sir Beaumains, to spare the Red Knight's life. "Truly," replied he, "I am loth to slay him, notwithstanding he hath done such shameful deeds. And inasmuch as what he did was done to please his lady and to gain her love, I blame him less, and for your sakes I will release him. But on this agreement only shall he hold his life—that straightway he depart into the castle, and yield him to the lady there, and make her such amends as she shall ask, for all the trespass he hath done upon her lands; and afterwards, that he shall go unto King Arthur's court, and ask the pardon of Sir Lancelot and Sir Gawain for all the evil he hath done against them." "All this, Sir knight, I swear to do," said the Knight of the Redlands; and therewith he did him homage and fealty.

Then came the damsel Linet to Sir Beaumains and the Knight of the Redlands, and disarmed them, and staunched their wounds. And when the Knight of the Redlands had made amends for all his trespasses, he departed for the court.

Then Sir Beaumains, being healed of his wounds, armed himself, and took his horse and spear and rode straight to the castle of Dame Lyones, for greatly he desired to see her. But when he came to the gate they closed it fast, and pulled the drawbridge up. And as he marveled thereat, he saw the Lady Lyones standing at a window, who said, "Go thy way as yet, Sir Beaumains, for thou shalt not wholly have my love until thou be among the worthiest knights of all the world. Go, therefore, and labor yet in arms for twelve months more, and then return to me." "Alas! fair lady," said Sir Beaumains, "I have scarce deserved this of thee, for sure I am that I have bought thy love with all the best blood in my body." "Be not aggrieved, fair knight," said she, "for none of thy service is forgot or lost. Twelve months will soon be passed in noble deeds; and trust that to my death I shall love thee and not another." With that she turned and left the window.

So Sir Beaumains rode away from the castle very sorrowful at heart, and rode he knew not whither, and lay that night in a poor man's cottage. On the morrow he went forward, and came at noon to a broad lake, and thereby he alighted, being very sad and weary, and rested his head upon his shield, and told his dwarf to keep watch while he slept.

Now, as soon as he had departed, the Lady Lyones repented, and greatly

longed to see him back, and asked her sister many times of what lineage he was; but the damsel would not tell her, being bound by her oath to Sir Beaumains, and said his dwarf best knew. So she called Sir Gringamors, her brother, who dwelt with her, and prayed him to ride after Sir Beaumains till he found him sleeping, and then to take his dwarf away and bring him back to her. Anon Sir Gringamors departed, and rode till he came to Sir Beaumains, and found him as he lay sleeping by the water-side. Then stepping stealthily behind the dwarf he caught him in his arms and rode off in haste. And though the dwarf cried loudly to his lord for help, and woke Sir Beaumains, yet, though he rode full quickly after him, he could not overtake Sir Gringamors.

When Dame Lyones saw her brother come back, she was passing glad of heart, and forthwith asked the dwarf his master's lineage. "He is a king's son," said the dwarf, "and his mother is King Arthur's sister. His name is Sir Gareth of Orkney, and he is brother to the good knight, Sir Gawain. But I pray you suffer me to go back to my lord, for truly he will never leave this country till he have me again." But when the Lady Lyones knew her deliverer was come of such a kingly stock, she longed more than ever to see him again.

Now as Sir Beaumains rode in vain to rescue his dwarf, he came to a fair green road and met a poor man of the country, and asked him had he seen a knight on a black horse, riding with a dwarf of a sad countenance behind him. "Yea," said the man, "I met with such a knight an hour ago, and his name is Sir Gringamors. He liveth at a castle two miles from hence; but he is a perilous knight, and I counsel ye not to follow him save ye bear him goodwill." Then Sir Beaumains followed the path which the poor man showed him, and came to the castle. And riding to the gate in great anger, he drew his sword, and cried aloud, "Sir Gringamors, thou traitor! deliver me my dwarf again, or by my knighthood it shall be ill for thee!" Then Sir Gringamors looked out of a window and said, "Sir Gareth of Orkney, leave thy boasting words, for thou wilt not get thy dwarf again." But the Lady Lyones said to her brother, "Nay, brother, but I will that he have his dwarf, for he hath done much for me, and delivered me from the Knight of the Redlands, and well do I love him above all other knights." So Sir Gringamors went down to Sir Gareth and cried him mercy, and prayed him to alight and take good cheer.

Then he alighted, and his dwarf ran to him. And when he was in the hall came the Lady Lyones dressed royally like a princess. And Sir Gareth was right glad of heart when he saw her. Then she told him how she had made her brother take away his dwarf and bring him back to her. And then she promised him her love, and faithfully to cleave to him and none other all the days of her life. And so they plighted their troth to each other. Then Sir Gringamors prayed him to

sojourn at the castle, which willing he did. "For," said he, "I have promised to quit the court for twelve months, though sure I am that in the meanwhile I shall be sought and found by my lord King Arthur and many others." So he sojourned long at the castle.

Anon the knights, Sir Perseant, Sir Perimones, and Sir Pertolope, whom Sir Gareth had overthrown, went to King Arthur's court with all the knights who did them service, and told the king they had been conquered by a knight of his named Beaumains. And as they yet were talking, it was told the king there came another great lord with five hundred knights, who, entering in, did homage, and declared himself to be the Knight of the Redlands. "But my true name," said he, "is Ironside, and I am hither sent by one Sir Beaumains, who conquered me, and charged me to yield unto your grace." "Thou art welcome," said King Arthur, "for thou hast been long a foe to me and mine, and truly I am much beholden to the knight who sent thee. And now, Sir Ironside, if thou wilt amend thy life and hold of me, I will entreat thee as a friend, and make thee Knight of the Round Table; but thou mayst no more be a murderer of noble knights." Then the Knight of the Redlands knelt to the king, and told him of his promise to Sir Beaumains to use never more such shameful customs; and how he had so done but at the prayer of a lady whom he loved. Then knelt he to Sir Lancelot and Sir Gawain, and prayed their pardon for the hatred he had borne them.

But the king and all the court marveled greatly who Sir Beaumains was. "For," said the king, "he is a full noble knight." Then said Sir Lancelot, "Truly he is come of honorable blood, else had I not given him the order of knighthood; but he charged me that I should conceal his secret."

Now as they talked thus it was told King Arthur that his sister, the Queen of Orkney, was come to the court with a great retinue of knights and ladies. Then was there great rejoicing, and the king rose and saluted his sister. And her sons, Sir Gawain, Sir Agravain, and Sir Gaheris knelt before her and asked her blessing, for during fifteen years last past they had not seen her. Anon she said, "Where is my youngest son, Sir Gareth? for I know that he was here a twelve-month with you, and that ye made a kitchen knave of him." Then the king and all the knights knew that Sir Beaumains and Sir Gareth were the same. "Truly," said the king, "I knew him not." "Nor I," said Sir Gawain and both his brothers. Then said the king, "God be thanked, fair sister, that he is proved as worshipful a knight as any now alive, and by the grace of Heaven he shall be found forthwith if he be anywhere within these seven realms." Then said Sir Gawain and his brethren, "Lord, if ye will give us leave we will go seek him." But Sir Lancelot said, "It were better that the king should send a messenger to Dame Lyones and pray her to come hither with all speed, and she will counsel where ye shall find



him." "It is well said," replied the king; and sent a messenger quickly unto Dame Lyones.

When she heard the message she promised she would come forthwith, and told Sir Gareth what the messenger had said, and asked him what to do. "I pray you," said he, "tell them not where I am, but when my lord King Arthur asketh for me, advise him thus—that he proclaim a tournament before this castle on Assumption Day, and that the knight who proveth best shall win yourself and all your lands." So the Lady Lyones departed and came to King Arthur's court, and there was right nobly welcomed. And when they asked her where Sir Gareth was, she said she could not tell. "But, lord," said she, "with thy goodwill I will proclaim a tournament before my castle on the Feast of the Assumption, whereof the prize shall be myself and all my lands. Then if it be proclaimed that you, lord, and your knights will be there, I will find knights on my side to fight you and yours, and thus am I sure ye will hear tidings of Sir Gareth." "Be it so done," replied the king.

So Sir Gareth sent messengers privily to Sir Perseant and Sir Ironside, and charged them to be ready on the day appointed, with their companies of knights to aid him and his party against the king. And when they were arrived he said, "Now be ye well assured that we shall be matched with the best knights of the world, and therefore must we gather all the good knights we can find."

So proclamation was made throughout all England, Wales, Scotland, Ireland, and Cornwall, and in the out isles and other countries, that at the Feast of the Assumption of our Lady, next coming, all knights who came to joust at Castle Perilous should make choice whether they would side with the king or with the castle. Then came many good knights on the side of the castle. Sir Epinogris, the son of the King of Northumberland, and Sir Palomedes the Saracen, and Sir Grummore Grummorsum, a good knight of Scotland, and Sir Brian des Iles, a noble knight, and Sir Carados of the Tower Dolorous, and Sir Tristram, who as yet was not a knight of the Round Table, and many others. But none among them knew Sir Gareth, for he took no more upon him than any mean person.

And on King Arthur's side there came the King of Ireland and the King of Scotland, the noble prince Sir Galahaut, Sir Gawain and his brothers Sir Agravain and Sir Gaheris, Sir Ewaine, Sir Tor, Sir Perceval, and Sir Lamoracke, Sir Lancelot also and his kindred, Sir Lionel, Sir Ector, Sir Bors and Sir Bedivere, likewise Sir Key and the most part of the Table Round. The two queens also, Queen Guinevere and the Queen of Orkney, Sir Gareth's mother, came with the king. So there was a great array both within and without the castle, with all manner of feasting and minstrelsy.

Now before the tournament began, Sir Gareth privily prayed Dame Lyones,

Sir Gringamors, Sir Ironside, and Sir Perseant, that they would in nowise disclose his name, nor make more of him than of any common knight. Then said Dame Lyones, "Dear lord, I pray thee take this ring, which hath the power to change the wearer's clothing into any color he may will, and guardeth him from any loss of blood. But give it me again, I pray thee, when the tournament is done, for it greatly increaseth my beauty whensoever I wear it." "Gramercy, mine own lady," said Sir Gareth, "I wished for nothing better, for now I may be certainly disguised as long as I will." Then Sir Gringamors gave Sir Gareth a bay courser that was a passing good horse, with sure armor, and a noble sword, won by his father from a heathen tyrant. And then every knight made him ready for the tournament.

So on the day of the Assumption, when mass and matins were said, the heralds blew their trumpets and sounded for the tourney. Anon came out the knights of the castle and the knights of King Arthur, and matched themselves together.

Then Sir Epinogris, son of the King of Northumberland, a knight of the castle, encountered Sir Ewaine, and both broke off their spears short to their hands. Then came Sir Palomedes from the castle, and met Sir Gawain, and they so hardly smote each other, that both knights and horses fell to the earth. Then Sir Tristram, from the castle, encountered with Sir Bedivere, and smote him to the earth, horse and man. Then the Knight of the Redlands and Sir Gareth met with Sir Bors and Sir Bleoberis; and the Knight of the Redlands and Sir Bors smote together so hard that their spears burst, and their horses fell groveling to the ground. And Sir Bleoberis brake his spear upon Sir Gareth, but himself was hurled upon the ground. When Sir Galihodin saw that, he bade Sir Gareth keep him, but Sir Gareth lightly smote him to the earth. Then Sir Galihud got a spear to avenge his brother, but was served in like manner. And Sir Dinadam, and his brother La-cote-male-taile, and Sir Sagramour le Desirous, and Dodinas le Savage, he bore down all with one spear.

When King Anguish of Ireland saw this, he marveled what that knight could be who seemed at one time green and at another blue; for so at every course he changed his color that none might know him. Then he ran towards him and encountered him, and Sir Gareth smote the king from his horse, saddle and all. And in like manner he served the King of Scotland, and King Urience of Gore, and King Bagdemagus.

Then Sir Galahaut, the noble prince, cried out, "Knight of the many colors! thou hast jousted well; now make thee ready to joust with me." When Sir Gareth heard him, he took a great spear and met him swiftly. And the prince's spear broke off, but Sir Gareth smote him on the left side of the helm, so that he reeled

here and there, and had fallen down had not his men recovered him. "By my faith," said King Arthur, "that knight of the many colors is a good knight. I pray thee, Sir Lancelot du Lake, encounter with him." "Lord," said Sir Lancelot, "by thy leave I will forbear. I find it in my heart to spare him at this time, for he hath done enough work for one day; and when a good knight doth so well it is no knightly part to hinder him from this honor. And peradventure his quarrel is here to-day, and he may be the best beloved of the Lady Lyones of all that be here; for I see well he paineth and forceth himself to do great deeds. Therefore, as for me, this day he shall have the honor; for though I were able to put him from it, I would not." "You speak well and truly," said the king.

Then after the tilting, they drew swords, and there began a great tournament, and there Sir Lancelot did marvelous deeds of arms, for first he fought with both Sir Tristram and Sir Carados, albeit they were the most perilous in all the world. Then came Sir Gareth and put them asunder, but would not smite a stroke against Sir Lancelot, for by him he had been knighted. Anon Sir Gareth's helm had need of mending, and he rode aside to see to it and to drink water, for he was sore athirst with all his mighty feats of strength. And while he drank, his dwarf said to him, "Give me your ring, lest ye lose it while ye drink." So Sir Gareth took it off. And when he had finished drinking, he rode back eagerly to the field, and in his haste forgot to take the ring again. Then all the people saw that he wore yellow armor. And King Arthur told a herald, "Ride and espy the cognizance of that brave knight, for I have asked many who he is, and none can tell me."

Then the herald rode near, and saw written round about his helmet in letters of gold, "Sir Gareth of Orkney." And instantly the herald cried his name aloud, and all men pressed to see him.

But when he saw he was discovered, he pushed with haste through all the crowd, and cried to his dwarf, "Boy, thou hast beguiled me foully in keeping my ring; give it me again, that I may be hidden." And as soon as he had put it on, his armor changed again, and no man knew where he had gone. Then he passed forth from the field; but Sir Gawain, his brother, rode after him.

And when Sir Gareth had ridden far into the forest, he took off his ring, and sent it back by the dwarf to the Lady Lyones, praying her to be true and faithful to him while he was away.

Then rode Sir Gareth long through the forest, till night fell, and coming to a castle he went up to the gate, and prayed the porter to let him in. But churlishly he answered "that he should not lodge there." Then said Sir Gareth, "Tell thy lord and lady that I am a knight of King Arthur's court, and for his sake I pray their shelter." With that the porter went to the duchess who owned the castle.

"Let him in straightway," cried she; "for the king's sake he shall not be harborless!" and went down to receive him. When Sir Gareth saw her coming, he saluted her, and said, "Fair lady, I pray you give me shelter for this night, and if there be here any champion or giant with whom I must needs fight, spare me till to-morrow, when I and my horse shall have rested, for we are full weary." "Sir knight," she said, "thou speakest boldly; for the lord of this castle is a foe to King Arthur and his court, and if thou wilt rest here to-night thou must agree, that wheresoever thou mayest meet my lord, thou must yield to him as a prisoner." "What is thy lord's name, lady?" said Sir Gareth. "The Duke de la Rowse," said she. "I will promise thee," said he, "to yield to him, if he promise to do me no harm; but if he refuse, I will release myself with my sword and spear."

"It is well," said the duchess; and commanded the drawbridge to be let down. So he rode into the hall and alighted. And when he had taken off his armor, the duchess and her ladies made him passing good cheer. And after supper his bed was made in the hall, and there he rested that night. On the morrow he rose and heard mass, and having broken his fast, took his leave and departed.

And as he rode past a certain mountain there met him a knight named Sir Bendelaine, and cried unto him, "Thou shalt not pass unless thou joust with me or be my prisoner!" "Then will we joust," replied Sir Gareth. So they let their horses run at full speed, and Sir Gareth smote Sir Bendelaine through his body so sorely that he scarcely reached his castle ere he fell dead. And as Sir Gareth presently came by the castle, Sir Bendelaine's knights and servants rode out to revenge their lord. And twenty of them fell on him at once, although his spear was broken. But drawing his sword he put his shield before him. And though they brake their spears upon him, one and all, and sorely pressed on him, yet ever he defended himself like a noble knight. Anon, finding they could not overcome him, they agreed to slay his horse; and having killed it with their spears, they set upon Sir Gareth as he fought on foot. But every one he struck he slew, and drave at them with fearful blows, till he had slain them all but four, who fled. Then taking the horse of one of those that lay there dead, he rode upon his way.

Anon he came to another castle and heard from within a sound as of many women moaning and weeping. Then said he to a page who stood without, "What noise is this I hear?" "Sir knight," said he, "there be within thirty ladies, the widows of thirty knights who have been slain by the lord of this castle. He is called the Brown Knight without pity, and is the most perilous knight living, wherefore I warn thee to flee." "That will I never do," said Sir Gareth, "for I fear him not." Then the page saw the Brown Knight coming and said to Gareth, "Lo!

my lord is near."

So both knights made them ready and galloped their horses towards each other, and the Brown Knight brake his spear upon Sir Gareth's shield; but Sir Gareth smote him through the body so that he fell dead. At that he rode into the castle and told the ladies he had slain their foe. Then were they right glad of heart and made him all the cheer they could, and thanked him out of measure. But on the morrow as he went to mass he found the ladies weeping in the chapel upon divers tombs that were there. And he knew that in those tombs their husbands lay. Then he bade them be comforted, and with noble and high words he desired and prayed them all to be at Arthur's court on the next Feast of Pentecost.

So he departed and rode past a mountain where was a goodly knight waiting, who said to him, "Abide, Sir knight, and joust with me!" "How are ye named?" said Sir Gareth. "I am the Duke de la Rowse," answered he. "In good sooth," then said Sir Gareth, "not long ago I lodged within your castle, and there promised I would yield to you whenever we might meet." "Art thou that proud knight," said the duke, "who was ready to fight with me? Guard thyself therefore and make ready." So they ran together, and Sir Gareth smote the duke from his horse. Then they alighted and drew their swords, and fought full sorely for the space of an hour; and at the last Sir Gareth smote the duke to the earth and would have slain him, but he yielded. "Then must ye go," said Sir Gareth, "to my lord King Arthur at the next Feast of Pentecost and say that I, Sir Gareth, sent ye." "As ye will be it," said the duke; and gave him up his shield for pledge.

And as Sir Gareth rode alone he saw an armed knight coming towards him. And putting the duke's shield before him he rode fast to tilt with him; and so they ran together as it had been thunder, and brake their spears upon each other. Then fought they fiercely with their swords, and lashed together with such mighty strokes that blood ran to the ground on every side. And after they had fought together for two hours and more, it chanced the damsel Linet passed that way; and when she saw them, she cried out, "Sir Gawain and Sir Gareth, leave your fighting, for ye are brethren!" At that they threw away their shields and swords, and took each other in their arms, and wept a great while ere they could speak. And each gave to the other the honor of the battle, and there was many a kind word between them. Then said Sir Gawain, "O my brother, for your sake have I had great sorrow and labor! But truly I would honor you though ye were not my brother, for ye have done great worship to King Arthur and his court, and sent more knights to him than any of the Table Round, except Sir Lancelot."

Then the damsel Linet staunched their wounds, and their horses being weary she rode her palfrey to King Arthur and told him of this strange adventure. When

she had told her tidings, the king himself mounted his horse and bade all come with him to meet them. So a great company of lords and ladies went forth to meet the brothers. And when King Arthur saw them he would have spoken hearty words, but for gladness he could not. And both Sir Gawain and Sir Gareth fell down at their uncle's knees and did him homage, and there was passing great joy and gladness among them all.

Then said the king to the damsel Linet, "Why cometh not the Lady Lyones to visit her knight, Sir Gareth, who hath had such travail for her love?" "She knoweth not, my lord, that he is here," replied the damsel, "for truly she desireth greatly to see him." "Go ye and bring her hither," said the king. So the damsel rode to tell her sister where Sir Gareth was, and when she heard it she rejoiced full heartily and came with all the speed she could. And when Sir Gareth saw her, there was great joy and comfort between them.

Then the king asked Sir Gareth whether he would have that lady for his wife? "My lord," replied Sir Gareth, "know well that I love her above all ladies living." "Now, fair lady," said King Arthur, "what say ye?" "Most noble king," she answered, "my lord, Sir Gareth, is my first love and shall be my last, and if I may not have him for my husband I will have none." Then said the king to them, "Be well assured that for my crown I would not be the cause of parting your two hearts."

Then was high preparation made for the marriage, for the king desired it should be at the Michaelmas next following, at Kinkenadon-by-the-Sea.

So Sir Gareth sent out messages to all the knights whom he had overcome in battle that they should be there upon his marriage-day.

Therefore, at the next Michaelmas, came a goodly company to Kinkenadon-by-the-Sea. And there did the Archbishop of Canterbury marry Sir Gareth and the Lady Lyones with all solemnity. And all the knights whom Sir Gareth had overcome were at the feast; and every manner of revels and games was held with music and minstrelsy. And there was a great jousting for three days. But because of his bride the king would not suffer Sir Gareth to joust. Then did King Arthur give great lands and fair, with store of gold, to Sir Gareth and his wife, that so they might live royally together to their lives' end.

## CHAPTER XII

# THE ADVENTURES OF SIR TRISTRAM

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Again King Arthur held high festival at Caerleon, at Pentecost, and gathered round him all the fellowship of the Round Table, and so, according to his custom, sat and waited till some adventure should arise, or some knight return to court whose deeds and perils might be told.

Anon he saw Sir Lancelot and a crowd of knights coming through the doors and leading in their midst the mighty knight, Sir Tristram. As soon as King Arthur saw him, he rose up and went through half the hall, and held out both his hands and cried, "Right welcome to thee, good Sir Tristram, as welcome art thou as any knight that ever came before into this court. A long time have I wished for thee amongst my fellowship." Then all the knights and barons rose up with one accord and came around, and cried out, "Welcome." Queen Guinevere came also, and many ladies with her, and all with one voice said the same.

Then the king took Sir Tristram by the hand and led him to the Round Table and said, "Welcome again for one of the best and gentlest knights in all the world; a chief in war, a chief in peace, a chief in field and forest, a chief in the ladies' chamber—right heartily welcome to this court, and mayest thou long abide in it."

When he had so said he looked at every empty seat until he came to what had been Sir Marhaus', and there he found written in gold letters, "This is the seat of the noble knight, Sir Tristram." Whereat they made him, with great cheer and gladness, a Fellow of the Round Table.

Now the story of Sir Tristram was as follows:—

There was a king of Lyonesse, named Meliodas, married to the sister of King Mark of Cornwall, a right fair lady and a good. And so it happened that King Meliodas hunting in the woods was taken by enchantment and made prisoner in a castle. When his wife Elizabeth heard it she was nigh mad with grief, and ran into the forest to seek out her lord. But after many days of wandering and sorrow she found no trace of him, and laid her down in a deep valley and prayed to meet her death. And so indeed she did, but ere she died she gave birth in the midst of all her sorrow to child, a boy, and called him with her latest breath Tristram; for

she said, "His name shall show how sadly he hath come into this world."

Therewith she gave up her ghost, and the gentlewoman who was with her took the child and wrapped it from the cold as well as she was able, and lay down with it in her arms beneath the shadow of a tree hard by, expecting death to come to her in turn.

But shortly after came a company of lords and barons seeking for the queen, and found the lady and the child and took them home. And on the next day came King Meliodas, whom Merlin had delivered, and when he heard of the queen's death his sorrow was greater than tongue can tell. And anon he buried her solemnly and nobly, and called the child Tristram as she had desired.

Then for seven years King Meliodas mourned and took no comfort, and all that time young Tristram was well nourished; but in a while he wedded with the daughter of Howell, King of Brittany, who, that her own children might enjoy the kingdom, cast about in her mind how she might destroy Tristram. So on a certain day she put poison in a silver cup, where Tristram and her children were together playing, that when he was athirst he might drink of it and die. But so it happened that her own son saw the cup, and, thinking it must hold good drink, he climbed and took it, and drank deeply of it, and suddenly thereafter burst and fell down dead.

When the queen heard that, her grief was very great, but her anger and envy were fiercer than before, and soon again she put more poison in the cup. And by chance one day her husband finding it when thirsty, took it up and was about to drink therefrom, when, seeing him, she sprang up with a mighty cry and dashed it from his hands.

At that King Meliodas, wondering greatly, called to mind the sudden death of his young child, and taking her fiercely by the hand he cried:

"Traitor, tell me what drink is in this cup or I will slay thee in a moment;" and therewith pulling out his sword he swore by a great oath to slay her if she straightway told him not the truth.

"Ah, mercy, lord," said she, and fell down at his feet; "mercy, and I will tell thee all."

And then she told him of her plot to murder Tristram, so that her own sons might enjoy the kingdom.

"The law shall judge thee," said the king.

And so anon she was tried before the barons, and condemned to be burnt to death.

But when the fire was made, and she brought out, came Tristram kneeling at his father's feet and besought of him a favor.

"Whatsoever thou desirest I will give thee," said the king.



"Give me the life, then, of the queen, my step-mother," said he.

"Thou doest wrong to ask it," said Meliodas; "for she would have slain thee with her poisons if she could, and chiefly for thy sake she ought to die."

"Sir," said he, "as for that, I beseech thee of thy mercy to forgive it her, and for my part may God pardon her as I do; and so I pray thee grant me my boon, and for God's sake hold thee to thy promise."

"If it must be so," said the king, "take thou her life, for to thee I give it, and go and do with her as thou wilt."

Then went young Tristram to the fire and loosed the queen from all her bonds and delivered her from death.

And after a great while by his good means the king again forgave and lived in peace with her, though never more in the same lodgings.

Anon was Tristram sent abroad to France in care of one named Governale. And there for seven years he learned the language of the land, and all knightly exercises and gentle crafts, and especially was he foremost in music and in hunting, and was a harper beyond all others. And when at nineteen years of age he came back to his father, he was as lusty and strong of body and as noble of heart as ever man was seen.

Now shortly after his return it befell that King Anguish of Ireland sent to King Mark of Cornwall for the tribute due to Ireland, but which was now seven years behindhand. To whom King Mark sent answer, if he would have it he must send and fight for it, and they would find a champion to fight against it.

So King Anguish called for Sir Marhaus, his wife's brother, a good knight of the Round Table, who lived then at his court, and sent him with a knightly retinue in six great ships to Cornwall. And, casting anchor by the castle of Tintagil, he sent up daily to King Mark for the tribute or the champion. But no knight there would venture to assail him, for his fame was very high in all the realm for strength and hardihood.

Then made King Mark a proclamation throughout Cornwall, that if any knight would fight Sir Marhaus he should stand at the king's right hand forevermore, and have great honor and riches all the rest of his days. Anon this news came to the land of Lyonesse, and when young Tristram heard it he was angry and ashamed to think no knight of Cornwall durst assail the Irish champion. "Alas," said he, "that I am not a knight, that I might match this Marhaus! I pray you give me leave, sir, to depart to King Mark's court and beg him of his grace to make me knight."

"Be ruled by thy own courage," said his father.

So Tristram rode away forthwith to Tintagil to King Mark, and went up boldly to him and said, "Sir, give me the order of knighthood and I will fight to

the uttermost with Sir Marhaus of Ireland."

"What are ye, and whence come ye?" said the king, seeing he was but a young man, though strong and well made both in body and limb.

"My name is Tristram," said he, "and I was born in the country of Lyonesse."

"But know ye," said the king, "this Irish knight will fight with none who be not come of royal blood and near of kin to kings or queens, as he himself is, for his sister is the Queen of Ireland."

Then said Tristram, "Let him know that I am come both on my father's and my mother's side of blood as good as his, for my father is King Meliodas and my mother was that Queen Elizabeth, thy sister, who died in the forest at my birth."

When King Mark heard that he welcomed him with all his heart, and knighted him forthwith, and made him ready to go forth as soon as he would choose, and armed him royally in armor covered with gold and silver.

Then he sent Sir Marhaus word, "That a better man than he should fight with him, Sir Tristram of Lyonesse, son of King Meliodas and of King Mark's own sister." So the battle was ordained to be fought in an island near Sir Marhaus' ships, and there Sir Tristram landed on the morrow, with Governale alone attending him for squire, and him he sent back to the land when he had made himself ready.

When Sir Marhaus and Sir Tristram were thus left alone, Sir Marhaus said, "Young knight Sir Tristram, what doest thou here? I am full sorry for thy rashness, for oftentimes have I been assailed in vain, and by the best knights of the world. Be warned in time, return to them that sent thee."

"Fair knight, and well-proved knight," replied Sir Tristram, "be sure that I shall never quit this quarrel till one of us be overcome. For this cause have I been made knight, and thou shalt know before we part that though as yet unproved, I am a king's son and firstborn of a queen. Moreover I have promised to deliver Cornwall from this ancient burden, or to die. Also, thou shouldst have known, Sir Marhaus, that thy valor and thy might are but the better reasons why I should assail thee; for whether I win or lose I shall gain honor to have met so great a knight as thou art."

Then they began the battle, and tilted at their hardest against each other, so that both knights and horses fell to the earth. But Sir Marhaus' spear smote Sir Tristram a great wound in the side. Then, springing up from their horses, they lashed together with their swords like two wild boars. And when they had stricken together a great while they left off strokes and lunged at one another's breasts and visors; but seeing this availed not they hurtled together again to bear each other down.

Thus fought they more than half the day, till both were sorely spent and

blood ran from them to the ground on every side. But by this time Sir Tristram remained fresher than Sir Marhaus and better winded, and with a mighty stroke he smote him such a buffet as cut through his helm into his brain-pan, and there his sword stuck in so fast that thrice Sir Tristram pulled ere he could get it from his head. Then fell Sir Marhaus down upon his knees, and the edge of Sir Tristram's sword broke off into his brain-pan. And suddenly when he seemed dead, Sir Marhaus rose and threw his sword and shield away from him and ran and fled into his ship. And Tristram cried out after him, "Aha! Sir knight of the Round Table, dost thou withdraw thee from so young a knight? it is a shame to thee and all thy kin; I would rather have been hewn into a hundred pieces than have fled from thee."

But Sir Marhaus answered nothing, and sorely groaning fled away.

"Farewell, Sir knight, farewell," laughed Tristram, whose own voice now was hoarse and faint with loss of blood; "I have thy sword and shield in my safe keeping, and will wear them in all places where I ride on my adventures, and before King Arthur and the Table Round."

Then was Sir Marhaus taken back to Ireland by his company; and as soon as he arrived his wounds were searched, and when they searched his head they found therein a piece of Tristram's sword; but all the skill of surgeons was in vain to move it out. So anon Sir Marhaus died.

But the queen, his sister, took the piece of sword-blade and put it safely by, for she thought that some day it might help her to revenge her brother's death.

Meanwhile, Sir Tristram, being sorely wounded, sat down softly on a little mound and bled passing fast; and in that evil case was found anon by Governale and King Mark's knights. Then they gently took him up and brought him in a barge back to the land, and lifted him into a bed within the castle, and had his wounds dressed carefully.

But for a great while he lay sick, and was likely to have died of the first stroke Sir Marhaus had given him with the spear, for the point of it was poisoned. And, though the wisest surgeons and leeches—both men and women—came from every part, yet could he be by no means cured. At last came a wise lady, and said plainly that Sir Tristram never should be healed, until he went and stayed in that same country when the poison came. When this was understood, the king sent Sir Tristram in a fair and goodly ship to Ireland, and by fortune he arrived fast by a castle where the king and queen were. And as the ship was being anchored, he sat upon his bed and harped a merry lay, and made so sweet a music as was never equaled.

When the king heard that the sweet harper was a wounded knight, he sent for him, and asked his name. "I am of the country of Lyonesse," he answered, "and

my name is Tramtrist;" for he dared not tell his true name lest the vengeance of the queen should fall upon him for her brother's death.

"Well," said King Anguish, "thou art right welcome here, and shalt have all the help this land can give thee; but be not anxious if I am at times cast down and sad, for but lately in Cornwall the best knight in the world, fighting for my cause, was slain; his name was Sir Marhaus, a knight of King Arthur's Round Table." And then he told Sir Tristram all the story of Sir Marhaus' battle, and Sir Tristram made pretense of great surprise and sorrow, though he knew all far better than the king himself.

Then was he put in charge of the king's daughter, La Belle Isault, to be healed of his wound, and she was as fair and noble a lady as men's eyes might see. And so marvelously was she skilled in medicine, that in a few days she fully cured him; and in return Sir Tramtrist taught her the harp; so, before long, they two began to love each other greatly.

But at that time a heathen knight, Sir Palomedes, was in Ireland, and much cherished by the king and queen. He also loved mightily La Belle Isault, and never wearied of making her great gifts, and seeking for her favor, and was ready even to be christened for her sake. Sir Tramtrist therefore hated him out of measure, and Sir Palomedes was full of rage and envy against Tramtrist.

And so it befell that King Anguish proclaimed a great tournament to be held, the prize whereof should be a lady called the Lady of the Launds, of near kindred to the king: and her the winner of the tournament should wed in three days afterwards, and possess all her lands. When La Belle Isault told Sir Tramtrist of this tournament, he said, "Fair lady! I am yet a feeble knight, and but for thee had been a dead man now: what wouldest thou I should do? Thou knowest well I may not joust."

"Ah, Tramtrist," said she, "why wilt thou not fight in this tournament? Sir Palomedes will be there, and will do his mightiest; and therefore be thou there, I pray thee, or else he will be winner of the prize."

"Madam," said Tramtrist, "I will go, and for thy sake will do my best; but let me go unknown to all men; and do thou, I pray thee, keep my counsel, and help me to a disguise."

So on the day of jousting came Sir Palomedes, with a black shield, and overthrew many knights. And all the people wondered at his prowess; for on the first day he put to the worse Sir Gawain, Sir Gaheris, Sir Agravaine, Sir Key, and many more from far and near. And on the morrow he was conqueror again, and overthrew the king with a hundred knights and the King of Scotland. But presently Sir Tramtrist rode up to the lists, having been let out at a privy postern of the castle, where none could see. La Belle Isault had dressed him in white

armor and given him a white horse and shield, and so he came suddenly into the field as it had been a bright angel.

As soon as Sir Palomedes saw him he ran at him with a great spear in rest, but Sir Tramtrist was ready, and at the first encounter hurled him to the ground. Then there arose a great cry that the knight with the black shield was overthrown. And Palomedes, sorely hurt and shamed, sought out a secret way and would have left the field; but Tramtrist watched him, and rode after him, and bade him stay, for he had not yet done with him. Then did Sir Palomedes turn with fury, and lash at Sir Tramtrist with his sword; but at the first stroke Sir Tramtrist smote him to the earth, and cried, "Do now all my commands, or take thy death." Then he yielded to Sir Tristram's mercy, and promised to forsake La Belle Isault, and for twelve months to wear no arms or armor. And rising up, he cut his armor off him into shreds with rage and madness, and turned and left the field: and Sir Tramtrist also left the lists, and rode back to the castle through the postern gate.

Then was Sir Tramtrist long cherished by the King and Queen of Ireland, and ever with La Belle Isault. But on a certain day, while he was bathing, came the queen with La Belle Isault by chance into his chamber, and saw his sword lie naked on the bed: anon she drew it from the scabbard and looked at it a long while, and both thought it a passing fair sword; but within a foot and a half of the end there was a great piece broken out, and while the queen was looking at the gap, she suddenly remembered the piece of sword-blade that was found in the brain-pan of her brother Sir Marhaus.

Therewith she turned and cried, "By my faith, this is the felon knight who slew thy uncle!" And running to her chamber she sought in her casket for the piece of iron from Sir Marhaus' head and brought it back, and fitted it in Tristram's sword; and surely did it fit therein as closely as it had been but yesterday broke out.

Then the queen caught the sword up fiercely in her hand, and ran into the room where Sir Tristram was yet in his bath, and making straight for him, had run him through the body, had not his squire, Sir Hebes, got her in his arms, and pulled the sword away from her.

Then ran she to the king, and fell upon her knees before him, saying, "Lord and husband, thou hast here in thy house that felon knight who slew my brother Marhaus!"

"Who is it?" said the king.

"It is Sir Tramtrist!" said she, "whom Isault hath healed."

"Alas!" replied the king, "I am full grieved thereat, for he is a good knight as ever I have seen in any field; but I charge thee leave thou him, and let me deal

with him."

Then the king went to Sir Tramtrist's chamber and found him all armed and ready to mount his horse, and said to him, "Sir Tramtrist, it is not to prove me against thee I come, for it were shameful of thy host to seek thy life. Depart in peace, but tell me first thy name, and whether thou slewest my brother, Sir Marhaus."

Then Sir Tristram told him all the truth, and how he had hid his name, to be unknown in Ireland; and when he had ended, the king declared he held him in no blame. "Howbeit, I cannot for mine honor's sake retain thee at this court, for so I should displease my barons, and my wife, and all her kin."

"Sir," said Sir Tristram, "I thank thee for the goodness thou hast shown me here, and for the great goodness my lady, thy daughter, hath shown me; and it may chance to be more for thy advantage if I live than if I die; for wheresoever I may be, I shall ever seek thy service, and shall be my lady thy daughter's servant in all places, and her knight in right and wrong, and shall never fail to do for her as much as knight can do."

Then Sir Tristram went to La Belle Isault, and took his leave of her. "O gentle knight," said she, "full of grief am I at your departing, for never yet I saw a man to love so well."

"Madam," said he, "I promise faithfully that all my life I shall be your knight."

Then Sir Tristram gave her a ring, and she gave him another, and after that he left her, weeping and lamenting, and went among the barons, and openly took his leave of them all, saying, "Fair lords, it so befalleth that I now must depart hence; therefore, if there be any here whom I have offended or who is grieved with me, let him now say it, and before I go I will amend it to the utmost of my power. And if there be but one who would speak shame of me behind my back, let him say it now or never, and here is my body to prove it on—body against body."

And all stood still and said no word, though some there were of the queen's kindred who would have assailed him had they dared.

So Sir Tristram departed from Ireland and took the sea and came with a fair wind to Tintagil. And when the news came to King Mark that Sir Tristram was returned, healed of his wound, he was passing glad, and so were all his barons. And when he had visited the king his uncle, he rode to his father, King Meliodas, and there had all the heartiest welcome that could be made him. And both the king and queen gave largely to him of their lands and goods.

Anon he came again to King Mark's court, and there lived in great joy and pleasure, till within a while the king grew jealous of his fame, and of the love

and favor shown him by all damsels. And as long as King Mark lived, he never after loved Sir Tristram, though there was much fair speech between them.

Then it befell upon a certain day that the good knight Sir Bleoberis de Ganis, brother to Sir Blamor de Ganis, and nigh cousin to Sir Lancelot of the Lake, came to King Mark's court and asked of him a favor. And though the king marveled, seeing he was a man of great renown, and a knight of the Round Table, he granted him all his asking. Then said Sir Bleoberis, "I will have the fairest lady in your court, at my own choosing."

"I may not say thee nay," replied the king; "choose therefore, but take all the issues of thy choice."

So when he had looked around, he chose the wife of Earl Segwarides, and took her by the hand, and set her upon horseback behind his squire, and rode forth on his way.

Presently thereafter came in the earl, and rode out straightway after him in rage. But all the ladies cried out shame upon Sir Tristram that he had not gone, and one rebuked him foully and called him coward knight, that he would stand and see a lady forced away from his uncle's court. But Sir Tristram answered her, "Fair lady, it is not my place to take part in this quarrel while her lord and husband is here to do it. Had he not been at this court, peradventure I had been her champion. And if it so befall that he speed ill, then may it happen that I speak with that foul knight before he pass out of this realm."

Anon ran in one of Sir Segwarides' squires, and told that his master was sore wounded, and at the point of death. When Sir Tristram heard that, he was soon armed and on his horse, and Governale, his servant, followed him with shield and spear.

And as he rode, he met his cousin Sir Andret, who had been commanded by King Mark to bring home to him two knights of King Arthur's court who roamed the country thereabouts seeking adventures.

"What tidings?" said Sir Tristram.

"God help me, never worse," replied his cousin; "for those I went to bring have beaten and defeated me, and set my message at naught."

"Fair cousin," said Sir Tristram, "ride ye on your way, perchance if I should meet them ye may be revenged."

So Sir Andret rode into Cornwall, but Sir Tristram rode after the two knights who had misused him, namely, Sir Sagramour le Desirous, and Sir Dodinas le Savage. And before long he saw them but a little way before him.

"Sir," said Governale, "by my advice thou wilt leave them alone, for they be two well-proved knights of Arthur's court."

"Shall I not therefore rather meet them!" said Sir Tristram, and, riding

swiftly after them, he called to them to stop, and asked them whence they came, and whither they were going, and what they were doing in those marches.

Sir Sagramour looked haughtily at Sir Tristram, and made mocking of his words, and said, "Fair knight, be ye a knight of Cornwall?"

"Wherefore askest thou that?" said Tristram.

"Truly, because it is full seldom seen," replied Sir Sagramour, "that Cornish knights are valiant with their arms as with their tongues. It is but two hours since there met us such a Cornish knight, who spoke great words with might and prowess, but anon, with little mastery, he was laid on earth, as I trow wilt thou be also."

"Fair lords," said Sir Tristram, "it may chance I be a better man than he; but, be that as it may, he was my cousin, and for his sake I will assail ye both; one Cornish knight against ye two."

When Sir Dodinas le Savage heard this speech, he caught at his spear and said, "Sir knight, keep well thyself;" and then they parted and came together as it had been thunder, and Sir Dodinas' spear split asunder; but Sir Tristram smote him with so full a stroke as hurled him over his horse's crupper, and nearly brake his neck. Sir Sagramour, seeing his fellow's fall, marveled who this new knight be, and dressed his spear, and came against Sir Tristram as a whirlwind; but Sir Tristram smote him a mighty buffet, and rolled him with his horse down on the ground; and in the falling he brake his thigh.

Then, looking at them both as they lay groveling on the grass, Sir Tristram said, "Fair knights, will ye joust any more? Are there no bigger knights in King Arthur's court? Will ye soon again speak shame of Cornish knights?"

"Thou hast defeated us, in truth," replied Sir Sagramour, "and on the faith of knighthood I require thee tell us thy right name?"

"Ye charge me by a great thing," said Sir Tristram, "and I will answer ye."

And when they heard his name the two knights were right glad that they had met Sir Tristram, for his deeds were known through all the land, and they prayed him to abide in their company.

"Nay," said he, "I must find a fellow-knight of yours, Sir Bleoberis de Ganis, whom I seek."

"God speed you well," said the two knights; and Sir Tristram rode away.

Soon he saw before him in a valley Sir Bleoberis with Sir Segwarides' wife riding behind his squire upon a palfrey. At that he cried out aloud, "Abide, Sir knight of King Arthur's court, bring back again that lady or deliver her to me."

"I will not," said Bleoberis, "for I dread no Cornish knight."

"Why," said Sir Tristram, "may not a Cornish knight do well as any other? This day, but three miles back, two knights of thy own court met me, and found



one Cornish knight enough for both before we parted."

"What were their names?" said Sir Bleoberis.

"Sir Sagramour le Desirous and Sir Dodinas le Savage," said Sir Tristram.

"Ah," said Sir Bleoberis, amazed; "hast thou then met with them? By my faith, they were two good knights and men of worship, and if thou hast beat both thou must needs be a good knight; but for all that, thou shalt beat me also ere thou hast this lady."

"Defend thee, then," cried out Sir Tristram, and came upon him swiftly with his spear in rest. But Sir Bleoberis was as swift as he, and each bore down the other, horse and all, on to the earth.

Then they sprang clear of their horses, and lashed together full eagerly and mightily with their swords, tracing and traversing on the right hand and on the left more than two hours, and sometimes rushing together with such fury that they both lay groveling on the ground. At last Sir Bleoberis started back and said, "Now, gentle knight, hold hard awhile, and let us speak together."

"Say on," said Sir Tristram, "and I will answer thee."

"Sir," said Sir Bleoberis, "I would know thy name, and court, and country."

"I have no shame to tell them," said Sir Tristram. "I am King Meliodas' son, and my mother was sister to King Mark, from whose court I now come. My name is Sir Tristram de Lyonesse."

"Truly," said Sir Bleoberis, "I am right glad to hear it, for thou art he that slew Sir Marhaus hand-to-hand, fighting for the Cornish tribute; and overcame Sir Palomedes at the great Irish tournament, where also thou didst overthrow Sir Gawain and his nine companions."

"I am that knight," said Sir Tristram, "and now I pray thee tell me thy name."

"I am Sir Bleoberis de Ganis, cousin of Sir Lancelot of the Lake, one of the best knights in all the world," he answered.

"Thou sayest truth," said Sir Tristram; "for Sir Lancelot, as all men know, is peerless in courtesy and knighthood, and for the great love I bear to his name I will not willingly fight more with thee his kinsman."

"In good faith, sir," said Sir Bleoberis, "I am as loth to fight thee more; but since thou hast followed me to win this lady, I proffer thee kindness, courtesy, and gentleness; this lady shall be free to go with which of us she pleaseth best."

"I am content," said Sir Tristram, "for I doubt not she will come to me."

"That shalt thou shortly prove," said he, and called his squire, and set the lady in the midst between them, who forthwith walked to Sir Bleoberis and elected to abide with him. Which, when Sir Tristram saw, he was in wondrous anger with her, and felt that he could scarce for shame return to King Mark's court. But Sir Bleoberis said, "Hearken to me, good knight, Sir Tristram, because

King Mark gave me free choice of any gift, and because this lady chose to go with me, I took her; but now I have fulfilled my quest and my adventure, and for thy sake she shall be sent back to her husband at the abbey where he lieth."

So Sir Tristram rode back to Tintagil, and Sir Bleoberis to the abbey where Sir Segwarides lay wounded, and there delivered up his lady, and departed as a noble knight.

After this adventure Sir Tristram abode still at his uncle's court, till in the envy of his heart King Mark devised a plan to be rid of him. So on a certain day he desired him to depart again for Ireland, and there demand La Belle Isault on his behalf, to be his queen—forever had Sir Tristram praised her beauty and her goodness, till King Mark desired to wed her for himself. Moreover, he believed his nephew surely would be slain by the queen's kindred if he once were found again in Ireland.

But Sir Tristram, scorning fear, made ready to depart, and took with him the noblest knights that could be found, arrayed in the richest fashion.

And when they were come to Ireland, upon a certain day Sir Tristram gave his uncle's message, and King Anguish consented thereto.

But when La Belle Isault was told the tidings she was very sorrowful and loth—yet made she ready to set forth with Sir Tristram, and took with her Dame Bragwaine, her chief gentlewoman. Then the queen gave Dame Bragwaine, and Governale, Sir Tristram's servant, a little flask, and charged them that La Belle Isault and King Mark should both drink of it on their marriage day, and then should they surely love each other all their lives.

Anon, Sir Tristram and Isault, with a great company, took the sea and departed. And so it chanced that one day sitting in their cabin they were athirst, and saw a little flask of gold which seemed to hold good wine. So Sir Tristram took it up, and said, "Fair lady, this looketh to be the best of wines, and your maid, Dame Bragwaine, and my servant, Governale, have kept it for themselves." Thereat they both laughed merrily, and drank each after other from the flask, and never before had they tasted any wine which seemed so good and sweet. But by the time they had finished drinking they loved each other so well that their love nevermore might leave them for weal or woe. And thus it came to pass that though Sir Tristram might never wed La Belle Isault, he did the mightiest deeds of arms for her sake only all his life.

Then they sailed onwards till they came to a castle called Pluere, where they would have rested. But anon there ran forth a great company and took them prisoners. And when they were in prison, Sir Tristram asked a knight and lady whom they found therein wherefore they were so shamefully dealt with; "for," said he, "it was never the custom of any place of honor that I ever came unto to

seize a knight and lady asking shelter and thrust them into prison, and a full evil and discourteous custom is it."

"Sir," said the knight, "know ye not that this is called the Castle Pluere, or the weeping castle, and that it is an ancient custom here that whatsoever knight abideth in it must needs fight the lord of it, Sir Brewnor, and he that is the weakest shall lose his head. And if the lady he hath with him be less fair than the lord's wife, she shall lose her head; but if she be fairer, then must the lady of the castle lose her head."

"Now Heaven help me," said Sir Tristram, "but this is a foul and shameful custom. Yet have I one advantage, for my lady is the fairest that doth live in all the world, so that I nothing fear for her; and as for me, I will full gladly fight for my own head in a fair field."

Then said the knight, "Look ye be up betimes to-morrow, and make you ready and your lady."

And on the morrow came Sir Brewnor to Sir Tristram, and put him and Isault forth out of prison, and brought him a horse and armor, and bade him make ready, for all the commons and estates of that lordship waited in the field to see and judge the battle.

Then Sir Brewnor, holding his lady by the hand, all muffled, came forth, and Sir Tristram went to meet him with La Belle Isault beside him, muffled also. Then said Sir Brewnor, "Sir knight, if thy lady be fairer than mine, with thy sword smite off my lady's head; but if my lady be fairer than thine, with my sword I will smite off thy lady's head. And if I overcome thee thy lady shall be mine, and thou shalt lose thy head."

"Sir knight," replied Sir Tristram, "this is a right foul and felon custom, and rather than my lady shall lose her head will I lose my own."

"Nay," said Sir Brewnor, "but the ladies shall be now compared together and judgment shall be had."

"I consent not," cried Sir Tristram, "for who is here that will give rightful judgment? Yet doubt not that my lady is far fairer than thine own, and that will I prove and make good." Therewith Sir Tristram lifted up the veil from off La Belle Isault, and stood beside her with his naked sword drawn in his hand.

Then Sir Brewnor unmuffled his lady and did in like manner. But when he saw La Belle Isault he knew that none could be so fair, and all there present gave their judgment so. Then said Sir Tristram, "Because thou and thy lady have long used this evil custom, and have slain many good knights and ladies, it were a just thing to destroy thee both."

"In good sooth," said Sir Brewnor, "thy lady is fairer than mine, and of all women I never saw any so fair. Therefore, slay my lady if thou wilt, and I doubt

not but I shall slay thee and have thine."

"Thou shalt win her," said Sir Tristram, "as dearly as ever knight won lady; and because of thy own judgment and of the evil custom that thy lady hath consented to, I will slay her as thou sayest."

And therewithal Sir Tristram went to him and took his lady from him, and smote off her head at a stroke.

"Now take thy horse," cried out Sir Brewnor, "for since I have lost my lady I will win thine and have thy life."

So they took their horses and came together as fast as they could fly, and Sir Tristram lightly smote Sir Brewnor from his horse. But he rose right quickly, and when Sir Tristram came again he thrust his horse through both the shoulders, so that it reeled and fell. But Sir Tristram was light and nimble, and voided his horse, and rose up and dressed his shield before him, though meanwhile, ere he could draw out his sword, Sir Brewnor gave him three or four grievous strokes. Then they rushed furiously together like two wild boars, and fought hurtling and hewing here and there for nigh two hours, and wounded each other full sorely. Then at the last Sir Brewnor rushed upon Sir Tristram and took him in his arms to throw him, for he trusted greatly in his strength. But Sir Tristram was at that time called the strongest and biggest knight of the world; for he was bigger than Sir Lancelot, though Sir Lancelot was better breathed. So anon he thrust Sir Brewnor groveling to the earth, and then unlaced his helm and struck off his head. Then all they that belonged to the castle came and did him homage and fealty, and prayed him to abide there for a season and put an end to that foul custom.

But within a while he departed and came to Cornwall, and there King Mark was forthwith wedded to La Belle Isault with great joy and splendor.

And Sir Tristram had high honor, and ever lodged at the king's court. But for all he had done him such services King Mark hated him, and on a certain day he set two knights to fall upon him as he rode in the forest. But Sir Tristram lightly smote one's head off, and sorely wounded the other, and made him bear his fellow's body to the king. At that the king dissembled and hid from Sir Tristram that the knights were sent by him; yet more than ever he hated him in secret, and sought to slay him.

So on a certain day, by the assent of Sir Andret, a false knight, and forty other knights, Sir Tristram was taken prisoner in his sleep and carried to a chapel on the rocks above the sea to be cast down. But as they were about to cast him in, suddenly he brake his bonds asunder, and rushing at Sir Andret, took his sword and smote him down therewith. Then, leaping down the rocks where none could follow, he escaped them. But one shot after him and wounded him full

sorely with a poisoned arrow in the arm.

Anon, his servant Governale, with Sir Lambegus, sought him and found him safe among the rocks, and told him that King Mark had banished him and all his followers to avenge Sir Andret's death. So they took ship and came to Brittany.

Now Sir Tristram, suffering great anguish from his wound, was told to seek Isoude, the daughter of the King of Brittany, for she alone could cure such wounds. Wherefore he went to King Howell's court, and said, "Lord, I am come into this country to have help from thy daughter, for men tell me none but she may help me." And Isoude gladly offering to do her best, within a month he was made whole.

While he abode still at that court, an earl named Grip made war upon King Howell, and besieged him; and Sir Kay Hedijs, the king's son, went forth against him, but was beaten in battle and sore wounded. Then the king praying Sir Tristram for his help, he took with him such knights as he could find, and on the morrow, in another battle, did such deeds of arms that all the land spake of him. For there he slew the earl with his own hands, and more than a hundred knights besides.

When he came back King Howell met him, and saluted him with every honor and rejoicing that could be thought of, and took him in his arms, and said, "Sir Tristram, all my kingdom will I resign to thee."

"Nay," answered he, "God forbid, for truly am I beholden to you forever for your daughter's sake."

Then the king prayed him to take Isoude in marriage, with a great dower of lands and castles. To this Sir Tristram presently consenting anon they were wedded at the court.

But within a while Sir Tristram greatly longed to see Cornwall, and Sir Kay Hedijs desired to go with him. So they took ship; but as soon as they were at sea the wind blew them upon the coast of North Wales, nigh to Castle Perilous, hard by a forest wherein were many strange adventures oftentimes to be met. Then said Sir Tristram to Sir Kay Hedijs, "Let us prove some of them ere we depart." So they took their horses and rode forth.

When they had ridden a mile or more, Sir Tristram spied a goodly knight before him well armed, who sat by a clear fountain with a strong horse near him, tied to an oak-tree. "Fair sir," said he, when they came near, "ye seem to be a knight errant by your arms and harness, therefore make ready now to joust with one of us, or both."

Thereat the knight spake not, but took his shield and buckled it round his neck, and leaping on his horse caught a spear from his squire's hand.

Then said Sir Kay Hedijs to Sir Tristram, "Let me assay him."

"Do thy best," said he.

So the two knights met, and Sir Kay Hediis fell sorely wounded in the breast.

"Thou hast well jousted," cried Sir Tristram to the knight; "now make ready for me!"

"I am ready," answered he, and encountered him, and smote him so heavily that he fell down from his horse. Whereat, being ashamed, he put his shield before him, and drew his sword, crying to the strange knight to do likewise. Then they fought on foot for well nigh two hours, till they were both weary.

At last Sir Tristram said, "In all my life I never met a knight so strong and well-breathed as ye be. It were a pity we should further hurt each other. Hold thy hand, fair knight, and tell me thy name."

"That will I," answered he, "if thou wilt tell me thine."

"My name," said he, "is Sir Tristram of Lyonesse."

"And mine, Sir Lamoracke of Gaul."

Then both cried out together, "Well met;" and Sir Lamoracke said, "Sir for your great renown, I will that ye have all the worship of this battle, and therefore will I yield me unto you." And therewith he took his sword by the point to yield him.

"Nay," said Sir Tristram, "ye shall not do so, for well I know ye do it of courtesy, and not of dread." And therewith he offered his sword to Sir Lamoracke, saying, "Sir, as an overcome knight, I yield me unto you as unto the man of noblest powers I have ever met with."

"Hold," said Sir Lamoracke, "let us now swear together nevermore to fight against each other."

Then did they swear as he said.

Then Sir Tristram returned to Sir Kay Hediis, and when he was whole of his wounds, they departed together in a ship, and landed on the coast of Cornwall. And when they came ashore, Sir Tristram eagerly sought news of La Belle Isault. And one told him in mistake that she was dead. Whereat, for sore and grievous sorrow, he fell down in a swoon, and so lay for three days and nights.

When he awoke therefrom he was crazed, and ran into the forest and abode there like a wild man many days; whereby he waxed lean and weak of body, and would have died, but that a hermit laid some meat beside him as he slept. Now in that forest was a giant named Tauleas, who, for fear of Tristram, had hid himself within a castle, but when they told him he was mad, came forth and went at large again. And on a certain day he saw a knight of Cornwall, named Sir Dinaunt, pass by with a lady, and when he had alighted by a well to rest, the giant leaped out from his ambush, and took him by the throat to slay him. But Sir Tristram, as

he wandered through the forest, came upon them as they struggled; and when the knight cried out for help, he rushed upon the giant, and taking up Sir Dinaunt's sword, struck off therewith the giant's head, and straightway disappeared among the trees.

Anon, Sir Dinaunt took the head of Tauleas, and bare it with him to the court of King Mark, whither he was bound, and told of his adventures. "Where had ye this adventure?" said King Mark.

"At a fair fountain in thy forest," answered he.

"I would fain see that wild man," said the king.

So within a day or two he commanded his knights to a great hunting in the forest. And when the king came to the well, he saw a wild man lying there asleep, having a sword beside him; but he knew not that it was Sir Tristram. Then he blew his horn, and summoned all his knights to take him gently up and bear him to the court.

And when they came thereto they bathed and washed him, and brought him somewhat to his right mind. Now La Belle Isault knew not that Sir Tristram was in Cornwall; but when she heard that a wild man had been found in the forest, she came to see him. And so sorely was he changed, she knew him not. "Yet," said she to Dame Bragwaine, "in good faith I seem to have beheld him oftentimes before."

As she thus spoke a little hound, which Sir Tristram had given her when she first came to Cornwall, and which was ever with her, saw Sir Tristram lying there, and leapt upon him, licking his hands and face, and whined and barked for joy.

"Alas," cried out La Belle Isault, "it is my own true knight, Sir Tristram."

And at her voice Sir Tristram's senses wholly came again, and wellnigh he wept for joy to see his lady living.

But never would the hound depart from Tristram; and when King Mark and other knights came up to see him, it sat upon his body and bayed at all who came too near. Then one of the knights said, "Surely this is Sir Tristram; I see it by the hound."

"Nay," said the king, "it cannot be," and asked Sir Tristram on his faith who he was.

"My name," said he, "is Sir Tristram of Lyonesse, and now ye may do what ye list with me."

Then the king said, "It repents me that ye are recovered," and sought to make his barons slay him. But most of them would not assent thereto, and counseled him instead to banish Tristram for ten years again from Cornwall, for returning without orders from the king. So he was sworn to depart forthwith.

And as he went towards the ship a knight of King Arthur, named Sir Dinadan, who sought him, came and said, "Fair knight, ere that you pass out of this country, I pray you joust with me!"

"With a good will," said he.

Then they ran together, and Sir Tristram lightly smote him from his horse. Anon he prayed Sir Tristram's leave to bear him company, and when he had consented they rode together to the ship.

Then was Sir Tristram full of bitterness of heart, and said to all the knights who took him to the shore, "Greet well King Mark and all mine enemies from me, and tell them I will come again when I may. Well am I now rewarded for slaying Sir Marhaus, and delivering this kingdom from its bondage, and for the perils wherewithal I brought La Belle Isault from Ireland to the king, and rescued her at the Castle Pluere, and for the slaying of the giant Tauleas, and all the other deeds that I have done for Cornwall and King Mark." Thus angrily and passing bitterly he spake, and went his way.

And after sailing awhile the ship stayed at a landing-place upon the coast of Wales; and there Sir Tristram and Sir Dinadan alighted, and on the shore they met two knights, Sir Ector and Sir Bors. And Sir Ector encountered with Sir Dinadan and smote him to the ground; but Sir Bors would not encounter with Sir Tristram, "For," said he, "no Cornish knights are men of worship." Thereat Sir Tristram was full wroth, but presently there met them two more knights, Sir Bleoberis and Sir Driant; and Sir Bleoberis proffered to joust with Sir Tristram, who shortly smote him down.

"I had not thought," cried out Sir Bors, "that any Cornish knight could do so valiantly."

Then Sir Tristram and Sir Dinadan departed, and rode into a forest, and as they rode a damsel met them, who for Sir Lancelot's sake was seeking any noble knights to rescue him. For Queen Morgan le Fay, who hated him, had ordered thirty men-at-arms to lie in ambush for him as he passed, with the intent to kill him. So the damsel prayed them to rescue him.

Then said Sir Tristram, "Bring me to that place, fair damsel."

But Sir Dinadan cried out, "It is not possible for us to meet with thirty knights! I will take no part in such a hardihood, for to match one or two or three knights is enough; but to match fifteen I will never assay."

"For shame," replied Sir Tristram, "do but your part."

"That will I not," said he; "wherefore, I pray ye, lend me your shield, for it is of Cornwall, and because men of that country are deemed cowards, ye are but little troubled as ye ride with knights to joust with."

"Nay," said Sir Tristram, "I will never give my shield up for her sake who



gave it me; but if thou wilt not stand by me to-day I will surely slay thee; for I ask no more of thee than to fight one knight, and if thy heart will not serve thee that much, thou shalt stand by and look on me and them."

"Would God that I had never met with ye!" cried Sir Dinadan; "but I promise to look on and do all that I may to save myself."

Anon they came to where the thirty knights lay waiting, and Sir Tristram rushed upon them, saying, "Here is one who fights for love of Lancelot!" Then slew he two of them at the first onset with his spear, and ten more swiftly after with his sword. At that Sir Dinadan took courage, and assailed the others with him, till they turned and fled.

But Sir Tristram and Sir Dinadan rode on till nightfall, and meeting with a shepherd, asked him if he knew of any lodging thereabouts.

"Truly, fair lords," said he, "there is good lodging in a castle hard by, but it is a custom there that none shall lodge therein save ye first joust with two knights, and as soon as ye be within, ye shall find your match."

"That is an evil lodging," said Sir Dinadan; "lodge where ye will, I will not lodge there."

"Shame on thee!" said Sir Tristram; "art thou a knight at all?"

Then he required him on his knighthood to go with him, and they rode together to the castle. As soon as they were near, two knights came out and ran full speed against them; but both of them they overthrew, and went within the castle, and had noble cheer. Now, when they were unarmed and ready to take rest, there came to the castle-gate two knights, Sir Palomedes and Sir Gaheris, and desired the custom of the castle.

"I would far rather rest than fight," said Sir Dinadan.

"That may not be," replied Sir Tristram, "for we must needs defend the custom of the castle, seeing we have overcome its lords; therefore, make ready."

"Alas that I ever came into your company," said Sir Dinadan.

So they made ready, and Sir Gaheris encountered Sir Tristram and fell before him; but Sir Palomedes overthrew Sir Dinadan. Then would all fight on foot save Sir Dinadan, for he was sorely bruised and frightened by his fall. And when Sir Tristram prayed him to fight, "I will not," answered he, "for I was wounded by those thirty knights with whom we fought this morning; and as to you, ye are in truth like one gone mad, and who would cast himself away! There be but two knights in the world so mad, and the other is Sir Lancelot, with whom I once rode forth, who kept me evermore at battling so that for a quarter of a year thereafter I lay in my bed. Heaven defend me again from either of your fellowships!"

"Well," said Sir Tristram, "if it must be, I will fight them both."

Therewith he drew his sword and assailed Sir Palomedes and Sir Gaheris together; but Sir Palomedes said, "Nay, but it is a shame for two to fight with one." So he bade Sir Gaheris stand by, and he and Sir Tristram fought long together; but in the end Sir Tristram drave him backward, whereat Sir Gaheris and Sir Dinadan with one accord sundered them. Then Sir Tristram prayed the two knights to lodge there; but Dinadan departed and rode away into a priory hard by, and there he lodged that night.

And on the morrow came Sir Tristram to the priory to find him, and seeing him so weary that he could not ride, he left him, and departed. At that same priory was lodged Sir Pellinore, who asked Sir Dinadan Sir Tristram's name, but could not learn it, for Sir Tristram had charged that he should remain unknown. Then said Sir Pellinore, "Since ye will not tell it me, I will ride after him and find it myself."

"Beware, Sir knight," said Sir Dinadan, "ye will repent it if ye follow him."

But Sir Pellinore straightway mounted and overtook him, and cried to him to joust; whereat Sir Tristram forthwith turned and smote him down; and wounded him full sorely in the shoulder.

On the day after, Sir Tristram met a herald, who told him of a tournament proclaimed between King Carados of Scotland, and the King of North Wales, to be held at the Maiden's Castle. Now King Carados sought Sir Lancelot to fight there on his side, and the King of North Wales sought Sir Tristram. And Sir Tristram purposed to be there. So as he rode, he met Sir Key, the seneschal, and Sir Sagramour, and Sir Key proffered to joust with him. But he refused, desiring to keep himself unwearied for the tourney. Then Sir Key cried, "Sir knight of Cornwall, joust with me, or yield as recreant." When Sir Tristram heard that, he fiercely turned and set his spear in rest, and spurred his horse towards him. But when Sir Key saw him so madly coming on, he in his turn refused, whereat Sir Tristram called him coward, till for shame he was compelled to meet him. Then Sir Tristram lightly smote him down, and rode away. But Sir Sagramour pursued him, crying loudly to joust with him also. So Sir Tristram turned and quickly overthrew him likewise, and departed.

Anon a damsel met him as he rode, and told him of a knight adventurous who did great harm thereby, and prayed him for his help. But as he went with her he met Sir Gawain, who knew the damsel for a maiden of Queen Morgan le Fay. Knowing, therefore, that she needs must have evil plots against Sir Tristram, Sir Gawain demanded of him courteously whither he went.

"I know not whither," said he, "save as this damsel leadeth me."

"Sir," said Sir Gawain, "ye shall not ride with her, for she and her lady never yet did good to any;" and, drawing his sword, he said to the damsel, "Tell me

now straightway for what cause thou ledest this knight, or else shalt thou die; for I know of old thy lady's treason."

"Mercy, Sir Gawain," cried the damsel, "and I will tell thee all." Then she told him that Queen Morgan had ordained thirty fair damsels to seek out Sir Lancelot and Sir Tristram, and by their wiles persuade them to her castle, where she had thirty knights in wait to slay them.

"Oh shame!" cried Sir Gawain, "that ever such foul treason should be wrought by a queen, and a king's sister." Then said he to Sir Tristram, "Sir knight, if ye will stand with me, we will together prove the malice of these thirty knights."

"I will not fail you," answered he, "for but few days since I had to do with thirty knights of that same queen, and trust we may win honor as lightly now as then."

So they rode together, and when they came to the castle, Sir Gawain cried aloud, "Queen Morgan le Fay, send out thy knights that we may fight with them."

Then the queen urged her knights to issue forth, but they durst not, for they well knew Sir Tristram, and feared him greatly.

So Sir Tristram and Sir Gawain went on their way, and as they rode they saw a knight, named Sir Brewse-without-pity, chasing a lady, with intent to slay her. Then Sir Gawain prayed Sir Tristram to hold still and let him assail that knight. So he rode up between Sir Brewse and the lady, and cried, "False knight, turn thee to me and leave that lady." Then Sir Brewse turned and set his spear in rest, and rushed against Sir Gawain and overthrew him, and rode his horse upon him as he lay, which when Sir Tristram saw, he cried, "Forbear that villainy," and galloped at him. But when Sir Brewse saw by the shield it was Sir Tristram, he turned and fled. And though Sir Tristram followed swiftly after him, yet he was so well horsed that he escaped.

Anon Sir Tristram and Sir Gawain came nigh the Maiden's Castle, and there an old knight named Sir Pellonnes gave them lodging. And Sir Persides, the son of Sir Pellonnes, a good knight, came out to welcome them. And, as they stood talking at a bay window of the castle, they saw a goodly knight ride by on a black horse, and carrying a black shield. "What knight is that?" asked Tristram.

"One of the best knights in all the world," said Sir Persides.

"Is he Sir Lancelot?" said Sir Tristram.

"Nay," answered Sir Persides, "it is Sir Palomedes, who is yet unchristened."

Within a while one came and told them that a knight with a black shield had smitten down thirteen knights. "Let us go and see this jousting," said Sir Tristram. So they armed themselves and went down. And when Sir Palomedes

saw Sir Persides, he sent a squire to him and proffered him to joust. So they joust, and Sir Persides was overthrown. Then Sir Tristram made ready to joust, but ere he had his spear in rest, Sir Palomedes took him at advantage, and struck him on the shield so that he fell. At that Sir Tristram was wroth out of measure and sore ashamed, wherefore he sent a squire and prayed Sir Palomedes to joust once again. But he would not, saying, "Tell thy master to revenge himself to-morrow at the Maiden's Castle, where he shall see me again."

So on the morrow Sir Tristram commanded his servant to give him a black shield with no cognizance thereon, and he and Sir Persides rode into the tournament and joined King Carados' side.

Then the knights of the King of North Wales came forth, and there was a great fighting and breaking of spears, and overthrow of men and horses.

Now King Arthur sat above in a high gallery to see the tourney and give the judgment, and Sir Lancelot sat beside him. Then came against Sir Tristram and Sir Persides, two knights with them of North Wales, Sir Bleoberis and Sir Gaheris; and Sir Persides was smitten down and nigh slain, for four horsemen rode over him. But Sir Tristram rode against Sir Gaheris and smote him from his horse, and when Sir Bleoberis next encountered him, he overthrew him also. Anon they horsed themselves again, and with them came Sir Dinadan, whom Sir Tristram forthwith smote so sorely, that he reeled off his saddle. Then cried he, "Ah! Sir knight, I know ye better than ye deem, and promise nevermore to come against ye." Then rode Sir Bleoberis at him the second time, and had a buffet that felled him to the earth. And soon thereafter the king commanded to cease for that day, and all men marveled who Sir Tristram was, for the prize of the first day was given him in the name of the Knight of the Black Shield.

Now Sir Palomedes was on the side of the King of North Wales, but knew not Sir Tristram again. And, when he saw his marvelous deeds, he sent to ask his name. "As to that," said Sir Tristram, "he shall not know at this time, but tell him he shall know when I have broken two spears upon him, for I am the knight he smote down yesterday, and whatever side he taketh, I will take the other."

So when they told him that Sir Palomedes would be on King Carados' side—for he was kindred to King Arthur—"Then will I be on the King of North Wales' side," said he, "but else would I be on my lord King Arthur's."

Then on the morrow, when King Arthur was come, the heralds blew unto the tourney. And King Carados joust, and fell before him, and then came in King Arthur's knights and bare back those of North Wales. But anon Sir Tristram came to aid them and bare back the battle, and fought so mightily that none could stand against him, for he smote down on the right and on the left, so that all the knights and common people shouted his

praise.

"Since I bare arms," said King Arthur, "never saw I a knight do more marvelous deeds."

Then the King of the Hundred Knights and those of North Wales set upon twenty knights who were of Sir Lancelot's kin, who fought all together, none failing the others. When Sir Tristram beheld their nobleness and valor, he marveled much. "Well may he be valiant and full of prowess," said he, "who hath such noble knights for kindred." So, when he had looked on them awhile, he thought it shame to see two hundred men assailing twenty, and riding to the King of a Hundred Knights, he said, "I pray thee, Sir king, leave your fighting with those twenty knights, for ye be too many and they be too few. For ye shall gain no honor if ye win, and that I see verily ye will not do unless ye slay them; but if ye will not stay, I will ride with them and help them."

"Nay," said the king, "ye shall not do so; for full gladly I will do your courtesy," and with that he withdrew his knights.

Then Sir Tristram rode his way into the forest, that no man might know him. And King Arthur caused the heralds to blow that the tourney should end that day, and he gave the King of North Wales the prize, because Sir Tristram was on his side. And in all the field there was such a cry that the sound thereof was heard two miles away—"The knight with the black shield hath won the field."

"Alas!" said King Arthur, "where is that knight? it is shame to let him thus escape us." Then he comforted his knights, and said, "Be not dismayed, my friends, howbeit ye have lost the day; be of good cheer; to-morrow I myself will be in the field, and fare with you." So they all rested that night.

And on the morrow the heralds blew unto the field. So the King of North Wales and the King of a Hundred Knights encountered with King Carados and the King of Ireland, and overthrew them. With that came King Arthur, and did mighty deeds of arms, and overthrew the King of North Wales and his fellows, and put twenty valiant knights to the worse. Anon came in Sir Palomedes, and made great fight upon King Arthur's side. But Sir Tristram rode furiously against him, and Sir Palomedes was thrown from his horse. Then cried King Arthur, "Knight of the Black Shield, keep thyself." And as he spake he came upon him, and smote him from his saddle to the ground, and so passed on to other knights. Then Sir Palomedes having now another horse rushed at Sir Tristram, as he was on foot, thinking to run over him. But he was aware of him, and stepped aside, and grasped Sir Palomedes by the arms, and pulled him off his horse. Then they rushed together with their swords, and many stood still to gaze on them. And Sir Tristram smote Sir Palomedes with three mighty strokes upon the helm, crying at each stroke, "Take this for Sir Tristram's sake," and with that Sir Palomedes

fell to the earth.

Anon the King of North Wales brought Sir Tristram another horse, and Sir Palomedes found one also. Then did they joust again with passing rage, for both by now were like mad lions. But Sir Tristram avoided his spear, and seized Sir Palomedes by the neck, and pulled him from his saddle, and bore him onward ten spears' length, and so let him fall. Then King Arthur drew forth his sword and smote the spear asunder, and gave Sir Tristram two or three sore strokes ere he could get at his own sword. But when he had it in his hand he mightily assailed the king. With that eleven knights of Lancelot's kin went forth against him, but he smote them all down to the earth, so that men marveled at his deeds.

And the cry was now so great that Sir Lancelot got a spear in his hand, and came down to assay Sir Tristram, saying, "Knight with the black shield, make ready." When Sir Tristram heard him he leveled his spear, and both stooping their heads, they ran together mightily, as it had been thunder. And Sir Tristram's spear brake short, but Sir Lancelot struck him with a deep wound in the side and broke his spear, yet overthrew him not. Therewith Sir Tristram, smarting at his wound, drew forth his sword, and rushing at Sir Lancelot, gave him mighty strokes upon the helm, so that the sparks flew from it, and Sir Lancelot stooped his head down to the saddle-bow. But then Sir Tristram turned and left the field, for he felt his wound so grievous that he deemed he should soon die. Then did Sir Lancelot hold the field against all comers, and put the King of North Wales and his party to the worse. And because he was the last knight in the field the prize was given him.

But he refused to take it, and when the cry was raised, "Sir Lancelot hath won the day," he cried out, "Nay, but Sir Tristram is the victor, for he first began and last endured, and so hath he done each day." And all men honored Lancelot more for his knightly words than if he had taken the prize.

This was the tournament ended, and King Arthur departed to Caerleon, for the Whitsun feast was now nigh come, and all the knights adventurous went their ways. And many sought Sir Tristram in the forest whither he had gone, and at last Sir Lancelot found him, and brought him to King Arthur's court, as hath been told already.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE KNIGHTS GO TO SEEK THE GRAIL

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After these things Merlin fell into a dotage of love for a damsel of the lady of the lake, and would let her have no rest, but followed her in every place. And ever she encouraged him, and made him welcome till she had learned all his crafts that she desired to know.

Then upon a time she went with him beyond the sea to the land of Benwicke, and as they went he showed her many wonders, till at length she was afraid, and would fain have been delivered from him.

And as they were in the forest of Broceliande, they sat together under an oak-tree, and the damsel prayed to see all that charm whereby men might be shut up yet alive in rocks or trees. But he refused her a long time, fearing to let her know, yet in the end, her prayers and kisses overcame him, and he told her all. Then did she make him great cheer, but anon, as he lay down to sleep, she softly rose, and walked about him waving her hands and muttering the charm, and presently enclosed him fast within the tree whereby he slept. And therefrom nevermore he could by any means come out for all the crafts that he could do. And so she departed and left Merlin.

At the vigil of the next Feast of Pentecost, when all the Knights of the Round Table were met together at Camelot, and had heard mass, and were about to sit down to meat, there rode into the hall a fair lady on horseback, who went straight up to King Arthur where he sat upon his throne, and reverently saluted him.

"God be with thee, fair damsel," quoth the king; "what desirest thou of me?"

"I pray thee tell me, lord," she answered, "where Sir Lancelot is."

"Yonder may ye see him," said King Arthur.

Then went she to Sir Lancelot and said, "Sir, I salute thee in King Pelles' name, and require thee to come with me into the forest hereby."

Then asked he her with whom she dwelt, and what she wished of him.

"I dwell with King Pelles," said she, "whom Balin erst so sorely wounded when he smote the dolorous stroke. It is he who hath sent me to call thee."

"I will go with thee gladly," said Sir Lancelot, and bade his squire

straightway saddle his horse and bring his armor.

Then came the queen to him and said, "Sir Lancelot, will ye leave me thus at this high feast?"

"Madam," replied the damsel, "by dinner-time to-morrow he shall be with you."

"If I thought not," said the queen, "he should not go with thee by my goodwill."

Then Sir Lancelot and the lady rode forth till they came to the forest, and in a valley thereof found an abbey of nuns, whereby a squire stood ready to open the gates. When they had entered, and descended from their horses, a joyful crowd pressed round Sir Lancelot and heartily saluted him, and led him to the abbess's chamber, and unarmed him. Anon he saw his cousins likewise there, Sir Bors and Sir Lionel, who also made great joy at seeing him, and said, "By what adventure art thou here, for we thought to have seen thee at Camelot to-morrow?"

"A damsel brought me here," said he, "but as yet I know not for what service."

As they thus talked twelve nuns came in, who brought with them a youth so passing fair and well made, that in all the world his match could not be found. His name was Galahad, and though he knew him not, nor Lancelot him, Sir Lancelot was his father.

"Sir," said the nuns, "we bring thee here this child whom we have nourished from his youth, and pray thee to make him a knight, for from no worthier hand can he receive that order."

Then Sir Lancelot, looking on the youth, saw that he was seemly and demure as a dove, with every feature good and noble, and thought he never had beheld a better fashioned man of his years. "Cometh this desire from himself?" said he.

"Yea," answered Galahad and all the nuns.

"To-morrow, then, in reverence for the feast, he shall have his wish," said Sir Lancelot.

And the next day at the hour of prime, he knighted him, and said, "God make of thee as good a man as He hath made thee beautiful."

Then with Sir Lionel and Sir Bors he returned to the court, and found all gone to the minster to hear service. When they came into the banquet-hall each knight and baron found his name written in some seat in letters of gold, as "here ought to sit Sir Lionel," "here ought to sit Sir Gawain,"—and so forth. And in the Perilous Seat, at the high center of the table, a name was also written, whereat they marveled greatly, for no living man had ever yet dared sit upon that seat, save one, and him a flame leaped forth and drew down under earth, so that he



was no more seen.

Then came Sir Lancelot and read the letters in that seat, and said, "My counsel is that this inscription be now covered up until the knight be come who shall achieve this great adventure." So they made a veil of silk and put it over the letters.

In the meanwhile came Sir Gawain to the court and told the king he had a message to him from beyond the sea, from Merlin.

"For," said he, "as I rode through the forest of Broceliande but five days since, I heard the voice of Merlin speaking to me from the midst of an oak-tree, whereat, in great amazement, I besought him to come forth. But he, with many groans, replied he never more might do so, for that none could free him, save the damsel of the Lake, who had enclosed him there by his own spells which he had taught her. 'But go,' said he, 'to King Arthur, and tell him, that he now prepare his knights and all his Table Round to seek the Sangreal, for the time is come when it shall be achieved.'"

When Sir Gawain had spoken thus, King Arthur sat pensive in spirit, and mused deeply of the Holy Grail and what saintly knight should come who might achieve it.

Anon he bade them hasten to set on the banquet. "Sir," said Sir Key, the seneschal, "if we go now to meat ye will break the ancient custom of your court, for never have ye dined at this high feast till ye have seen some strange adventure."

"Thou sayest truly," said the king, "but my mind was full of wonders and musings, till I bethought me not of mine old custom."

As they stood speaking thus, a squire ran in and cried, "Lord, I bring thee marvelous tidings."

"What be they?" said King Arthur.

"Lord," said he, "hereby at the river is a marvelous great stone, which I myself saw swim down hither-wards upon the water, and in it there is set a sword, and ever the stone heaveth and swayeth on the water, but floateth down no further with the stream."

"I will go and see it," said the king. So all the knights went with him, and when they came to the river, there surely found they a mighty stone of red marble floating on the water, as the squire had said, and therein stuck a fair and rich sword, on the pommel whereof were precious stones wrought skillfully with gold into these words: "No man shall take me hence but he by whose side I should hang, and he shall be the best knight in the world."

When the king read this, he turned round to Sir Lancelot, and said, "Fair sir, this sword ought surely to be thine, for thou art the best knight in all the world."

But Lancelot answered soberly, "Certainly, sir, it is not for me; nor will I have the hardihood to set my hand upon it. For he that toucheth it and faileth to achieve it shall one day be wounded by it mortally. But I doubt not, lord, this day will show the greatest marvels that we yet have seen, for now the time is fully come, as Merlin hath forewarned us, when all the prophecies about the Sangreal shall be fulfilled."

Then stepped Sir Gawain forward and pulled at the sword, but could not move it, and after him Sir Percival, to keep him fellowship in any peril he might suffer. But no other knight durst be so hardy as to try.

"Now may ye go to your dinner," said Sir Key, "for a marvelous adventure ye have had."

So all returned from the river, and every knight sat down in his own place, and the high feast and banquet then was sumptuously begun, and all the hall was full of laughter and loud talk and jests, and running to and fro of squires who served their knights, and noise of jollity and mirth.

Then suddenly befell a wondrous thing, for all the doors and windows of the hall shut violently of themselves, and made thick darkness; and presently there came a fair and gentle light from out the Perilous Seat, and filled the palace with its beams. Then a dead silence fell on all the knights, and each man anxiously beheld his neighbor.

But King Arthur rose and said, "Lords and fair knights, have ye no fear, but rejoice; we have seen strange things to-day, but stranger yet remain. For now I know we shall to-day see him who may sit in the Siege Perilous, and shall achieve the Sangreal. For as ye all well know, that holy vessel, wherfrom at the Supper of our Lord before His death He drank the wine with His disciples, hath been held ever since the holiest treasure of the world, and wheresoever it hath rested peace and prosperity have rested with it on the land. But since the dolorous stroke which Balin gave King Pelles none have seen it, for Heaven, wroth with that presumptuous blow, hath hid it none know where. Yet somewhere in the world it still may be, and may be it is left to us, and to this noble order of the Table Round, to find and bring it home, and make of this our realm the happiest in the earth. Many great quests and perilous adventures have ye all taken and achieved, but this high quest he only shall attain who hath clean hands and a pure heart, and valor and hardihood beyond all other men."

While the king spoke there came in softly an old man robed all in white, leading with him a young knight clad in red from top to toe, but without armor or shield, and having by his side an empty scabbard.

The old man went up to the king, and said, "Lord, here I bring thee this young knight of royal lineage, and of the blood of Joseph of Arimathea, by

whom the marvels of thy court shall fully be accomplished."

The king was right glad at his words, and said, "Sir, ye be right heartily welcome, and the young knight also."

Then the old man put on Sir Galahad (for it was he) a crimson robe trimmed with fine ermine, and took him by the hand and led him to the Perilous Seat, and lifting up the silken cloth which hung upon it, read these words written in gold letters, "This is the seat of Sir Galahad, the good knight."

"Sir," said the old man, "this place is thine."

Then sat Sir Galahad down firmly and surely, and said to the old man, "Sir, ye may now go your way, for ye have done well and truly all ye were commanded, and commend me to my grandsire, King Pelles, and say that I shall see him soon." So the old man departed with a retinue of twenty noble squires.

But all the knights of the Round Table marveled at Sir Galahad, and at his tender age, and at his sitting there so surely in the Perilous Seat.

Then the king led Sir Galahad forth from the palace, to show him the adventure of the floating stone. "Here," said he, "is as great a marvel as I ever saw, and right good knights have tried and failed to gain that sword."

"I marvel not thereat," said Galahad, "for this adventure is not theirs, but mine; and for the certainty I had thereof, I brought no sword with me, as thou mayst see here by this empty scabbard."

Anon he laid his hand upon the sword, and lightly drew it from the stone, and put it in his sheath, and said, "This sword was that enchanted one which erst belonged to the good knight, Sir Balin, wherewith he slew through piteous mistake his brother Balan; who also slew him at the same time: all which great woe befell him through the dolorous stroke he gave my grandsire, King Pelles, the wound whereof is not yet whole, nor shall be till I heal him."

As he stood speaking thus, they saw a lady riding swiftly down the river's bank towards them, on a white palfrey, who, saluting the king and queen, said, "Lord king, Nacien the hermit sendeth thee word that to thee shall come to-day the greatest honor and worship that hath yet ever befallen a king of Britain; for this day shall the Sangreal appear in thy house."

With that the damsel took her leave, and departed the same way she came.

"Now," said the king, "I know that from to-day the quest of the Sangreal shall begin, and all ye of the Round Table will be scattered so that nevermore shall I see ye again together as ye are now; let me then see a joust and tournament amongst ye for the last time before ye go."

So they all took their harness and met together in the meadows by Camelot, and the queen and all her ladies sat in a tower to see.

Then Sir Galahad, at the prayer of the king and queen, put on a coat of light

armor, and a helmet, but shield he would take none, and grasping a lance, he drove into the middle of the press of knights, and began to break spears marvelously, so that all men were full of wonder. And in so short a time he had surmounted and exceeded the rest, save Sir Lancelot and Sir Percival, that he took the chief worship of the field.

Then the king and all the court and fellowship of knights went back to the palace, and so to evensong in the great minster, a royal and goodly company, and after that sat down to supper in the hall, every knight in his own seat, as they had been before.

Anon suddenly burst overhead the cracking and crying of great peals of thunder, till the palace walls were shaken sorely, and they thought to see them riven all to pieces.

And in the midst of the blast there entered in a sunbeam, clearer by seven times than ever they saw day, and a marvelous great glory fell upon them all. Then each knight, looking on his neighbor, found his face fairer than he had ever seen, and so—all standing on their feet—they gazed as dumb men on each other, not knowing what to say.

Then entered into the hall the Sangreal, borne aloft without hands through the midst of the sunbeam, and covered with white samite, so that none might see it. And all the hall was filled with perfume and incense, and every knight was fed with the food he best loved. And when the holy vessel had been thus borne through the hall, it suddenly departed, no man saw whither.

When they recovered breath to speak, King Arthur first rose up, and yielded thanks to God and to our Lord.

Then Sir Gawain sprang up and said, "Now have we all been fed by miracle with whatsoever food we thought of or desired; but with our eyes we have not seen the blessed vessel whence it came, so carefully and preciously it was concealed. Therefore, I make a vow, that from to-morrow I shall labor twelve months and a day in quest of the Sangreal, and longer if need be; nor will I come again into this court until mine eyes have seen it evidently."

When he had spoken thus, knight after knight rose up and vowed himself to the same quest, till the most part of the Round Table had thus sworn.

But when King Arthur heard them all, he could not refrain his eyes from tears, and said, "Sir Gawain, Sir Gawain, thou hast set me in great sorrow, for I fear me my true fellowship shall never meet together here again; and surely never Christian king had such a company of worthy knights around his table at one time."

And when the queen and her ladies and gentlewomen heard the vows, they had such grief and sorrow as no tongue could tell; and Queen Guinevere cried

out, "I marvel that my lord will suffer them to depart from him." And many of the ladies who loved knights would have gone with them, but were forbidden by the hermit Nacien, who sent this message to all who had sworn themselves to the quest: "Take with ye no lady nor gentlewoman, for into so high a service as ye go in, no thought but of our Lord and heaven may enter."

On the morrow morning all the knights rose early, and when they were fully armed, save shields and helms, they went in with the king and queen to service in the minster. Then the king counted all who had taken the adventure on themselves, and found them a hundred and fifty knights of the Round Table; and so they all put on their helms, and rode away together in the midst of cries and lamentations from the court, and from the ladies, and from all the town.

But the queen went alone to her chamber, that no man might see her sorrow; and Sir Lancelot followed her to say farewell.

When she saw him she cried out, "Oh, Sir Lancelot, thou hast betrayed me; thou hast put me to death thus to depart and leave my lord the king."

"Ah, madam," said he, "be not displeased or angry, for I shall come again as soon as I can with honor."

"Alas!" said she, "that ever I saw thee; but He that suffered death upon the cross for all mankind be to thee safety and good conduct, and to all thy company."

Then Sir Lancelot saluted her and the king, and went forth with the rest, and came with them that night to Castle Vagon, where they abode, and on the morrow they departed from each other on their separate ways, every knight taking the way that pleased him best.

Now Sir Galahad went forth without a shield, and rode so four days without adventure; and on the fourth day, after evensong, he came to an abbey of white monks, where he was received in the house, and led into a chamber. And there he was unarmed, and met two knights of the Round Table, King Bagdemagus, and Sir Uwaine.

"Sirs," said Sir Galahad, "what adventure hath brought ye here?"

"Within this place, as we are told," they answered, "there is a shield no man may bear around his neck without receiving sore mischance, or death within three days."

"To-morrow," said King Bagdemagus, "I shall attempt the adventure; and if I fail, do thou, Sir Galahad, take it up after me."

"I will willingly," said he; "for as ye see I have no shield as yet."

So on the morrow they arose and heard mass, and afterwards King Bagdemagus asked where the shield was kept. Then a monk led him behind the altar, where the shield hung, as white as any snow, and with a blood-red cross in

the midst of it.

"Sir," said the monk, "this shield should hang from no knight's neck unless he be the worthiest in the world. I warn ye, therefore, knights; consider well before ye dare to touch it."

"Well," said King Bagdemagus, "I know well that I am far from the best knight in all the world, yet shall I make the trial"; and so he took the shield, and bore it from the monastery.

"If it please thee," said he to Sir Galahad, "abide here till thou hearest how I speed."

"I will abide thee," said he.

Then taking with him a squire who might return with any tidings to Sir Galahad, the king rode forth; and before he had gone two miles, he saw in a fair valley a hermitage, and a knight who came forth dressed in white armor, horse and all, who rode fast against him. When they encountered, Bagdemagus brake his spear upon the White Knight's shield, but was himself struck through the shoulder with a sore wound, and hurled down from his horse. Then the White Knight alighting, came and took the white shield from the king, and said, "Thou hast done great folly, for this shield ought never to be borne but by one who hath no living peer." And turning to the squire, he said, "Bear thou this shield to the good knight, Sir Galahad, and greet him well from me."

"In whose name shall I greet him?" said the squire.

"Take thou no heed of that," he answered; "it is not for thee or any earthly man to know."

"Now tell me, fair sir, at the least," said the squire, "why may this shield be never borne except its wearer come to injury or death?"

"Because it shall belong to no man save its rightful owner, Galahad," replied the knight.

Then the squire went to his master, and found him wounded nigh to death, wherefore he fetched his horse, and bore him back with him to the abbey. And there they laid him in a bed, and looked to his wounds; and when he had lain many days grievously sick, he at the last barely escaped with his life.

"Sir Galahad," said the squire, "the knight who overthrew King Bagdemagus sent you greeting, and bade you bear this shield."

"Now blessed be God and fortune," said Sir Galahad, and hung the shield about his neck, and armed him, and rode forth.

Anon he met the White Knight by the hermitage, and each saluted courteously the other.

"Sir," said Sir Galahad, "this shield I bear hath surely a full marvelous history."

"Thou sayest rightly," answered he. "That shield was made in the days of Joseph of Arimathea, the gentle knight who took our Lord down from the cross. He, when he left Jerusalem with his kindred, came to the country of King Evelake, who warred continually with one Tollome; and when, by the teaching of Joseph, King Evelake became a Christian, this shield was made for him in our Lord's name; and through its aid King Tollome was defeated. For when King Evelake met him next in battle, he hid it in a veil, and suddenly uncovering it, he showed his enemies the figure of a bleeding man nailed to a cross, at sight of which they were discomfited and fled. Presently after that, a man whose hand was smitten off touched the cross upon the shield, and had his hand restored to him; and many other miracles it worked. But suddenly the cross that was upon it vanished away. Anon both Joseph and King Evelake came to Britain, and by the preaching of Joseph the people were made Christians. And when at length he lay upon his death-bed, King Evelake begged of him some token ere he died. Then, calling for his shield, he dipped his finger in his own blood, for he was bleeding fast, and none could staunch the wound, and marked that cross upon it, saying, 'This cross shall ever show as bright as now, and the last of my lineage shall wear this shield about his neck, and go forth to all the marvelous deeds he will achieve.'"

When the White Knight had thus spoken he vanished suddenly away, and Sir Galahad returned to the abbey.

As he alighted, came a monk, and prayed him to go see a tomb in the churchyard, wherefrom came such a great and hideous noise, that none could hear it but they went nigh mad, or lost all strength. "And, sir," said he, "I deem it is a fiend."

"Lead me thither," said Sir Galahad.

When they were come near the place, "Now," said the monk, "go thou to the tomb, and lift it up."

And Galahad, nothing afraid, quickly lifted up the stone, and forthwith came out a foul smoke, and from the midst thereof leaped up the loathliest figure that ever he had seen in the likeness of man; and Galahad blessed himself, for he knew it was a fiend of hell. Then he heard a voice crying out, "Oh, Galahad, I cannot tear thee as I would; I see so many angels round thee, that I may not come at thee."

Then the fiend suddenly disappeared with a marvelous great cry; and Sir Galahad, looking in the tomb, saw there a body all armed, with a sword beside it. "Now, fair brother," said he to the monk, "let us remove this cursed body, which is not fit to lie in a churchyard, for when it lived, a false and perjured Christian man dwelt in it. Cast it away, and there shall come no more hideous noises from

the tomb."

"And now must I depart," he added, "for I have much in hand, and am upon the holy quest of the Sangreal, with many more good knights."

So he took his leave, and rode many journeys backwards and forwards as adventure would lead him; and at last one day he departed from a castle without first hearing mass, which was it ever his custom to hear before he left his lodging. Anon he found a ruined chapel on a mountain, and went in and kneeled before the altar, and prayed for wholesome counsel what to do; and as he prayed he heard a voice, which said, "Depart, adventurous knight, unto the Maiden's Castle, and redress the violence and wrongs there done!"

Hearing these words he cheerfully arose, and mounted his horse, and rode but half a mile, when he saw before him a strong castle, with deep ditches round it, and a fair river running past. And seeing an old churl hard by, he asked him what men called that castle.

"Fair sir," said he, "it is the Maiden's Castle."

"It is a cursed place," said Galahad, "and all its masters are but felons, full of mischief and hardness and shame."

"For that good reason," said the old man, "thou wert well-advised to turn thee back."

"For that same reason," quoth Sir Galahad, "will I the more certainly ride on."

Then, looking at his armor carefully, to see that nothing failed him, he went forward, and presently there met him seven damsels, who cried out, "Sir knight, thou ridest in great peril, for thou hast two waters to pass over."

"Why should I not pass over them?" said he, and rode straight on.

Anon he met a squire, who said, "Sir knight, the masters of this castle defy thee, and bid thee go no further, till thou showest them thy business here."

"Fair fellow," said Sir Galahad, "I am come here to destroy their wicked customs."

"If that be thy purpose," answered he, "thou wilt have much to do."

"Go thou," said Galahad, "and hasten with my message."

In a few minutes after rode forth furiously from the gateways of the castle seven knights, all brothers, and crying out, "Knight, keep thee," bore down all at once upon Sir Galahad. But thrusting forth his spear, he smote the foremost to the earth, so that his neck was almost broken, and warded with his shield the spears of all the others, which every one brake off from it, and shivered into pieces. Then he drew out his sword, and set upon them hard and fiercely, and by his wondrous force drave them before him, and chased them to the castle gate, and there he slew them.



At that came out to him an ancient man, in priest's vestments, saying, "Behold, sir, here, the keys of this castle."

Then he unlocked the gates, and found within a multitude of people, who cried out, "Sir knight, ye be welcome, for long have we waited thy deliverance," and told him that the seven felons he had slain had long enslaved the people round about, and killed all knights who passed that way, because the maiden whom they had robbed of the castle had foretold that by one knight they should themselves be overthrown.

"Where is the maiden?" asked Sir Galahad.

"She lingereth below in a dungeon," said they.

So Sir Galahad went down and released her, and restored her her inheritance; and when he had summoned the barons of the country to do her homage, he took his leave, and departed.

Presently thereafter, as he rode, he entered a great forest, and in a glade thereof met two knights, disguised, who proffered him to joust. These were Sir Lancelot, his father, and Sir Percival, but neither knew the other. So he and Sir Lancelot encountered first, and Sir Galahad smote down his father. Then drawing his sword, for his spear was broken, he fought with Sir Percival, and struck so mightily that he clave Sir Percival's helm, and smote him from his horse.

Now hard by where they fought there was a hermitage, where dwelt a pious woman, a recluse, who, when she heard the sound, came forth, and seeing Sir Galahad ride, she cried, "God be with thee, the best knight in the world; had yonder knights known thee as well as I do, they would not have encountered with thee."

When Sir Galahad heard that, fearing to be made known, he forthwith smote his horse with his spurs, and departed at a great pace.

Sir Lancelot and Sir Percival heard her words also, and rode fast after him, but within a while he was out of their sight. Then Sir Percival rode back to ask his name of the recluse; but Sir Lancelot went forward on his quest, and following any path his horse would take, he came by-and-by after nightfall to a stone cross hard by an ancient chapel. When he had alighted and tied his horse up to a tree, he went and looked in through the chapel door, which was all ruinous and wasted, and there within he saw an altar, richly decked with silk, whereon there stood a fair candlestick of silver, bearing six great lights. And when Sir Lancelot saw the light, he tried to get within the chapel, but could find no place. So, being passing weary and heavy, he came again to his horse, and when he had unsaddled him, and set him free to pasture, he unlaced his helm, and ungirded his sword, and laid him down to sleep upon his shield before the

cross.

And while he lay between waking and sleeping, he saw come by him two white palfreys bearing a litter, wherein a sick knight lay, and the palfreys stood still by the cross. Then Sir Lancelot heard the sick man say, "O sweet Lord, when shall this sorrow leave me, and the holy vessel pass by me, wherethrough I shall be blessed? for I have long endured."

With that Sir Lancelot saw the chapel open, and the candlestick with the six tapers come before the cross, but he could see none who bare it. Then came there also a table of silver, and thereon the holy vessel of the Sangreal. And when the sick knight saw that, he sat up, and lifting both his hands, said, "Fair Lord, sweet Lord, who art here within this holy vessel, have mercy on me, that I may be whole"; and therewith he crept upon his hands and knees so nigh, that he might touch the vessel; and when he had kissed it, he leaped up, and stood and cried aloud, "Lord God, I thank Thee, for I am made whole." Then the Holy Grail departed with the table and the silver candlestick into the chapel, so that Sir Lancelot saw it no more, nor for his sins' sake could he follow it. And the knight who was healed went on his way.

Then Sir Lancelot awake, and marveled whether he had seen aught but a dream. And as he marveled, he heard a voice saying, "Sir Lancelot, thou art unworthy, go thou hence, and withdraw thee from this holy place." And when he heard that, he was passing heavy, for he bethought him of his sins.

So he departed weeping, and cursed the day of his birth, for the words went into his heart, and he knew wherefore he was thus driven forth. Then he went to seek his arms and horse, but could not find them; and then he called himself the wretchedest and most unhappy of all knights, and said, "My sin hath brought me unto great dishonor: for when I sought earthly honors, I achieved them ever; but now I take upon me holy things, my guilt doth hinder me, and shameth me; therefore had I no power to stir or speak when the holy blood appeared before me."

So thus he sorrowed till it was day, and he heard the birds sing; then was he somewhat comforted, and departing from the cross on foot, he came into a wild forest, and to a high mountain, and there he found a hermitage; and, kneeling before the hermit down upon both his knees, he cried for mercy for his wicked works, and prayed him to hear his confession. But when he told his name, the hermit marveled to see him in so sore a case, and said, "Sir, ye ought to thank God more than any knight living, for He hath given thee more honor than any; yet for thy presumption, while in deadly sin to come into the presence of His flesh and blood, He suffered thee neither to see nor follow it. Wherefore, believe that all thy strength and manhood will avail thee little, when God is against

thee."

Then Sir Lancelot wept and said, "Now know I well ye tell me truth."

Then he confessed to him, and told him all his sins, and how he had for fourteen years served but Queen Guinevere only, and forgotten God, and done great deeds of arms for her, and not for Heaven, and had little or nothing thanked God for the honor that he won. And then Sir Lancelot said, "I pray you counsel me."

"I will counsel thee," said he: "never more enter into that queen's company when ye can avoid it."

So Sir Lancelot promised him.

"Look that your heart and your mouth accord," said the good man, "and ye shall have more honor and more nobleness than ever ye have had."

Then were his arms and horse restored to him, and so he took his leave, and rode forth, repenting greatly.

Now Sir Percival had ridden back to the recluse, to learn who that knight was whom she had called the best in the world. And when he had told her that he was Sir Percival, she made passing great joy of him, for she was his mother's sister, wherefore she opened her door to him, and made him good cheer. And on the morrow she told him of her kindred to him, and they both made great rejoicing. Then he asked her who that knight was, and she told him, "He it is who on Whit Sunday last was clad in the red robe, and bare the red arms; and he hath no peer, for he worketh all by miracle, and shall be never overcome by any earthly hands."

"By my goodwill," said Sir Percival, "I will never after these tidings have to do with Sir Galahad but in the way of kindness; and I would fain learn where I may find him."

"Fair nephew," said she, "ye must ride to the Castle of Goth, where he hath a cousin; by him ye may be lodged, and he will teach you the way to go; but if he can tell you no tidings, ride straight to the Castle of Carbonek, where the wounded king is lying, for there shall ye surely hear true tidings of him."

So Sir Percival departed from his aunt, and rode till evensong time, when he was ware of a monastery closed round with walls and deep ditches, where he knocked at the gate, and anon was let in. And there he had good cheer that night, and on the morrow heard mass. And beside the altar where the priest stood, was a rich bed of silk and cloth of gold; and on the bed there lay a man passing old, having a crown of gold upon his head, and all his body was full of great wounds, and his eyes almost wholly blind; and ever he held up his hands and said, "Sweet Lord, forget not me!"

Then Sir Percival asked one of the brethren who he was.

"Sir," said the good man, "ye have heard of Joseph of Arimathea, how he was sent of Jesus Christ into this land to preach and teach the Christian faith. Now, in the city of Sarras he converted a king named Evelake, and this is he. He came with Joseph to this land, and ever desired greatly to see the Sangreal; so on a time he came nigh thereto, and was struck almost blind. Then he cried out for mercy, and said, 'Fair Lord, I pray thee let me never die until a good knight of my blood achieve the Sangreal, and I may see and kiss him.' When he had thus prayed, he heard a voice that said, 'Thy prayers be heard and answered, for thou shalt not die till that knight kiss thee; and when he cometh shall thine eyes be opened and thy wounds be healed.' And now hath he lived here for three hundred winters in a holy life, and men say a certain knight of King Arthur's court shall shortly heal him."

Thereat Sir Percival marveled greatly, for he well knew who that knight should be; and so, taking his leave of the monk, departed.

Then he rode on till noon, and came into a valley where he met twenty men-at-arms bearing a dead knight on a bier. And they cried to him, "Whence comest thou?"

"From King Arthur's court," he answered.

Then they all cried together, "Slay him," and set upon him.

But he smote down the first man to the ground, and his horse upon him; whereat seven of them all at once assailed him, and others slew his horse. Thus he had been either taken or slain, but by good chance Sir Galahad was passing by that way, who, seeing twenty men attacking one, cried, "Slay him not," and rushed upon them; and, as fast as his horse could drive, he encountered with the foremost man, and smote him down. Then, his spear being broken, he drew forth his sword and struck out on the right hand and on the left, at each blow smiting down a man, till the remainder fled, and he pursued them.

Then Sir Percival, knowing that it was Sir Galahad, would fain have overtaken him, but could not, for his horse was slain. Yet followed he on foot as fast as he could go; and as he went there met him a yeoman riding on a palfrey, and leading in his hand a great black steed. So Sir Percival prayed him to lend him the steed, that he might overtake Sir Galahad. But he replied, "That can I not do, fair sir, for the horse is my master's, and should I lend it he would slay me." So he departed, and Sir Percival sat down beneath a tree in heaviness of heart. And as he sat, anon a knight went riding past on the black steed which the yeoman had led. And presently after came the yeoman back in haste, and asked Sir Percival if he had seen a knight riding his horse.

"Yea," said Sir Percival.

"Alas," said the yeoman, "he hath reft him from me by strength, and my

master will slay me."

Then he besought Sir Percival to take his hackney and follow, and get back his steed. So he rode quickly, and overtook the knight, and cried, "Knight, turn again." Whereat he turned and set his spear, and smote Sir Percival's hackney in the breast, so that it fell dead, and then went on his way. Then cried Sir Percival after him, "Turn now, false knight, and fight with me on foot"; but he would not, and rode out of sight.

Then was Sir Percival passing wroth and heavy of heart, and lay down to rest beneath a tree, and slept till midnight. When he awoke he saw a woman standing by him, who said to him right fiercely, "Sir Percival, what doest thou here?"

"I do neither good nor evil," said he.

"If thou wilt promise me," said she, "to do my will whenever I shall ask thee, I will bring thee here a horse that will bear thee wheresoever thou desirest."

At that he was full glad, and promised as she asked. Then anon she came again, with a great black steed, strong and well appareled. So Sir Percival mounted, and rode through the clear moonlight, and within less than an hour had gone a four days' journey, till he came to a rough water that roared; and his horse would have borne him into it, but Sir Percival would not suffer him, yet could he scarce restrain him. And seeing the water so furious, he made the sign of the cross upon his forehead, whereat the horse suddenly shook him off, and with a terrible sound leaped into the water and disappeared, the waves all burning up in flames around him. Then Sir Percival knew it was a fiend which had brought him the horse; so he commended himself to God, and prayed that he might escape temptations, and continued in prayer till it was day.

Then he saw that he was on a wild mountain, nigh surrounded on all sides by the sea, and filled with wild beasts; and going on into a valley, he saw a serpent carrying a young lion by the neck. With that came another lion, crying and roaring after the serpent, and anon overtook him, and began to battle with him. And Sir Percival helped the lion, and drew his sword, and gave the serpent such a stroke that it fell dead. Thereat the lion fawned upon him like a dog, licking his hands, and crouching at his feet, and at night lay down by him and slept at his side.

And at noon the next day Sir Percival saw a ship come sailing before a strong wind upon the sea towards him, and he rose and went towards it. And when it came to shore, he found it covered with white samite, and on the deck there stood an old man dressed in priest's robes, who said, "God be with you, fair sir; whence come ye?"

"I am a knight of King Arthur's court," said he, "and follow the quest of the Sangreal; but here have I lost myself in this wilderness."

"Fear nothing," said the old man, "for I have come from a strange country to comfort thee."

Then he told Sir Percival it was a fiend of hell upon which he had ridden to the sea, and that the lion, whom he had delivered from the serpent, meant the Church. And Sir Percival rejoiced at these tidings, and entered into the ship, which presently sailed from the shore into the sea.

Now when Sir Bors rode forth from Camelot to seek the Sangreal, anon he met a holy man riding on an ass, and courteously saluted him.

"Who are ye, son?" said the good man.

"I am a knight," said he, "in quest of the Sangreal, and would fain have thy counsel, for he shall have much earthly honor who may bring it to a favorable end."

"That is truth," said the good man, "for he shall be the best knight of the world; yet know that none shall gain it save by sinless living."

So they rode to his hermitage together, and there he prayed Sir Bors to abide that night, and anon they went into the chapel, and Sir Bors was confessed. And they eat bread and drank water together.

"Now," said the hermit, "I pray thee eat no other food till thou sit at the table where the Sangreal shall be." Thereto Sir Bors agreed.

"Also," said the hermit, "it were wise that ye should wear a sackcloth garment next your skin, for penance"; and in this also did Sir Bors as he was counseled. And afterwards he armed himself and took his leave.

Then rode he onwards all that day, and as he rode he saw a passing great bird sit in an old dry tree, whereon no leaves were left; and many little birds lay round the great one, nigh dead with hunger. Then did the big bird smite himself with his own bill, and bled till he died amongst his little ones, and they recovered life in drinking up his blood. When Sir Bors saw this he knew it was a token, and rode on full of thought. And about eventide he came to a tower, whereto he prayed admission, and he was received gladly by the lady of the castle. But when a supper of many meats and dainties was set before him, he remembered his vow, and bade a squire to bring him water, and therein he dipped his bread, and ate.

Then said the lady, "Sir Bors, I fear ye like not my meat."

"Yea, truly," said he; "God thank thee, madam; but I may eat no other meat this day."

After supper came a squire, and said, "Madam, bethink thee to provide a champion for thee to-morrow for the tourney, or else shall thy sister have thy castle."

At that the lady wept, and made great sorrow. But Sir Bors prayed her to be

comforted, and asked her why the tournament was held. Then she told him how she and her sister were the daughters of King Anianse, who left them all his lands between them; and how her sister was the wife of a strong knight, named Sir Pridan le Noir, who had taken from herself all her lands, save the one tower wherein she dwelt. "And now," said she, "this also will they take, unless I find a champion by to-morrow."

Then said Sir Bors, "Be comforted; to-morrow I will fight for thee"; whereat she rejoiced not a little, and sent word to Sir Pridan that she was provided and ready. And Sir Bors lay on the floor, and in no bed, nor ever would do otherwise till he had achieved his quest.

On the morrow he arose and clothed himself, and went into the chapel, where the lady met him, and they heard mass together. Anon he called for his armor, and went with a goodly company of knights to the battle. And the lady prayed him to refresh himself ere he should fight, but he refused to break his fast until the tournament were done. So they all rode together to the lists, and there they saw the lady's eldest sister, and her husband, Sir Pridan le Noir. And a cry was made by the heralds that, whichever should win, his lady should have all the other's lands.

Then the two knights departed asunder a little space, and came together with such force, that both their spears were shivered, and their shields and hauberks pierced through; and both fell to the ground sorely wounded, with their horses under them. But swiftly they arose, and drew their swords, and smote each other on the head with many great and heavy blows, till the blood ran down their bodies; and Sir Pridan was a full good knight, so that Sir Bors had more ado than he had thought for to overcome him.

But at last Sir Pridan grew a little faint; that instantly perceived Sir Bors, and rushed upon him the more vehemently, and smote him fiercely, till he rent off his helm, and then gave him great strokes upon his visage with the flat of his sword, and bade him yield or be slain.

And then Sir Pridan cried him mercy, and said, "For God's sake slay me not, and I will never war against thy lady more." So Sir Bors let him go, and his wife fled away with all her knights.

Then all those who had held lands of the lady of the tower came and did homage to her again, and swore fealty. And when the country was at peace Sir Bors departed, and rode forth into a forest until it was midday, and there befell him a marvelous adventure.

For at a place where two ways parted, there met him two knights, bearing Sir Lionel, his brother, all naked, bound on a horse, and as they rode, they beat him sorely with thorns, so that the blood trailed down in more than a hundred places

from his body; but for all this he uttered no word or groan, so great he was of heart. As soon as Sir Bors knew his brother, he put his spear in rest to run and rescue him; but in the same moment heard a woman's voice cry close beside him in the wood, "St. Mary, succor thy maid"; and, looking round, he saw a damsel whom a felon knight dragged after him into the thickets; and she, perceiving him, cried piteously for help, and adjured him to deliver her as he was a sworn knight. Then was Sir Bors sore troubled, and knew not what to do, for he thought within himself, "If I let my brother be, he will be murdered; but if I help not the maid, she is shamed forever, and my vow compelleth me to set her free; wherefore must I first help her, and trust my brother unto God."

So, riding to the knight who held the damsel, he cried out, "Sir knight, lay your hand off that maid, or else ye be but dead."

At that the knight set down the maid, and dropped his shield, and drew forth his sword against Sir Bors, who ran at him, and smote him through both shield and shoulder, and threw him to the earth; and when he pulled his spear forth, the knight swooned. Then the maid thanked Sir Bors heartily, and he set her on the knight's horse, and brought her to her men-at-arms, who presently came riding after her. And they made much joy, and besought him to come to her father, a great lord, and he should be right welcome. But "truly," said he, "I may not at this time, for I have a great adventure yet to do"; and commending them to God, he departed in great haste to find his brother.

So he rode, seeking him by the track of the horses a great while. Anon he met a seeming holy man riding upon a strong black horse, and asked him, had he seen pass by that way a knight led bound and beaten with thorns by two others.

"Yea, truly, such an one I saw," said the man; "but he is dead, and lo! his body is hard by in a bush."

Then he showed him a newly slain body lying in a thick bush, which seemed indeed to be Sir Lionel. Then made Sir Bors such mourning and sorrow that by-and-by he fell into a swoon upon the ground. And when he came to himself again, he took the body in his arms and put it on his horse's saddle, and bore it to a chapel hard by, and would have buried it. But when he made the sign of the cross, he heard a full great noise and cry as though all the fiends of hell had been about him, and suddenly the body and the chapel and the old man vanished all away. Then he knew that it was the devil who had thus beguiled him, and that his brother yet lived.

Then held he up his hands to heaven, and thanked God for his own escape from hurt, and rode onwards; and anon, as he passed by an hermitage in a forest, he saw his brother sitting armed by the door. And when he saw him he was filled with joy, and lighted from his horse, and ran to him and said, "Fair brother, when



came ye hither?"

But Sir Lionel answered, with an angry face, "What vain words be these, when for you I might have been slain? Did ye not see me bound and led away to death, and left me in that peril to go succoring a gentlewoman, the like whereof no brother ever yet hath done? Now, for thy false misdeed, I do defy thee, and ensure thee speedy death."

Then Sir Bors prayed his brother to abate his anger, and said, "Fair brother, remember the love that should be between us twain."

But Sir Lionel would not hear, and prepared to fight, and mounted his horse and came before him, crying, "Sir Bors, keep thee from me, for I shall do to thee as a felon and a traitor; therefore, start upon thy horse, for if thou wilt not, I will run upon thee as thou standest."

But for all his words Sir Bors would not defend himself against his brother. And anon the fiend stirred up Sir Lionel to such rage, that he rushed over him and overthrew him with his horse's hoofs, so that he lay swooning on the ground. Then would he have rent off his helm and slain him, but the hermit of that place ran out, and prayed him to forbear, and shielded Sir Bors with his body.

Then Sir Lionel cried out, "Now, God so help me, sir priest, but I shall slay thee else thou depart, and him too after thee."

And when the good man utterly refused to leave Sir Bors, he smote him on the head until he died, and then he took his brother by the helm and unlaced it, to have stricken off his head, and so he would have done, but suddenly was pulled off backwards by a knight of the Round Table, who, by the will of Heaven, was passing by that place—Sir Colgrevice by name.

"Sir Lionel," he cried, "will ye slay your brother, one of the best knights of all the world? That ought no man to suffer."

"Why," said Sir Lionel, "will ye hinder me and meddle in this strife? beware, lest I shall slay both thee and him."

And when Sir Colgrevice refused to let them be, Sir Lionel defied him, and gave him a great stroke through the helmet, whereat Sir Colgrevice drew his sword, and smote again right manfully. And so long they fought together that Sir Bors awoke from his swoon, and tried to rise and part them, but had no strength to stand upon his feet.

Anon Sir Colgrevice saw him, and cried out to him for help, for now Sir Lionel had nigh defeated him. When Sir Bors heard that, he struggled to his feet, and put his helmet on, and took his sword. But before he could come to him, Sir Lionel had smitten off Sir Colgrevice's helm, and thrown him to the earth and slain him. Then turned he to his brother as a man possessed by fiends, and gave him such a stroke as bent him nearly double.

But Sir Bors prayed him for God's sake to quit that battle, "For if it befell us that we either slew the other we should die for care of that sin."

"Never will I spare thee if I master thee," cried out Sir Lionel.

Then Sir Bors drew his sword all weeping, and said, "Now, God have mercy on me, though I defend my life against my brother"; with that he lifted up his sword to strike, but suddenly he heard a mighty voice, "Put up thy sword, Sir Bors, and flee, or thou shalt surely slay him." And then there fell upon them both a fiery cloud, which flamed and burned their shields, and they fell to the earth in sore dread.

Anon Sir Bors rose to his feet, and saw that Sir Lionel had taken no harm. Then came the voice again, and said, "Sir Bors, go hence and leave thy brother, and ride thou forward to the sea, for there Sir Percival abideth thee."

Then he said to his brother, "Brother, forgive me all my trespass against thee."

And Sir Lionel answered, "God forgive it thee, as I do."

Then he departed and rode to the sea, and on the strand he found a ship all covered with white samite, and as soon as he had entered thereinto, it put forth from the shore. And in the midst of the ship there stood an armed knight, whom he knew to be Sir Percival. Then they rejoiced greatly over each other, and said, "We lack nothing now but the good knight Sir Galahad."

Now when Sir Galahad had rescued Sir Percival from the twenty knights he rode into a vast forest. And after many days it befell that he came to a castle whereat was a tournament. And the knights of the castle were put to the worse; which when he saw, he set his spear in rest and ran to help them, and smote down many of their adversaries. And as it chanced, Sir Gawain was amongst the stranger knights, and when he saw the white shield with the red cross, he knew it was Sir Galahad, and proffered to joust with him. So they encountered, and having broken their spears, they drew their swords, and Sir Galahad smote Sir Gawain so sorely on the helm that he clove it through, and struck on slanting to the earth, carving the horse's shoulder in twain, and Sir Gawain fell to the earth. Then Sir Galahad beat back all who warred against the castle, yet would he not wait for thanks, but rode away that no man might know him.

And he rested that night at a hermitage, and when he was asleep, he heard a knocking at the door. So he rose, and found a damsel there, who said, "Sir Galahad, I will that ye arm you, and mount upon your horse and follow me, for I will show you within these three days the highest adventure that ever any knight saw."

Anon Sir Galahad armed him, and took his horse, and commended himself to God, and bade the gentlewoman go, and he would follow where she liked.

So they rode onwards to the sea as fast as their horses might gallop, and at night they came to a castle in a valley, inclosed by running water, and by strong and high walls, whereinto they entered and had great cheer, for the lady of the castle was the damsel's mistress.

And when he was unarmed, the damsel said to her lady, "Madam, shall we abide here this night?"

"Nay," said she, "but only till he hath dined and slept a little."

So he ate and slept a while, till the maid called him, and armed him by torchlight; and when he had saluted the lady of the castle, the damsel and Sir Galahad rode on.

Anon they came to the seaside, and lo! the ship, wherein were Sir Percival and Sir Bors, abode by the shore. Then they cried, "Welcome, Sir Galahad, for we have awaited thee long."

Then they rejoiced to see each other, and told of all their adventures and temptations. And the damsel went into the ship with them, and spake to Sir Percival: "Sir Percival, know ye not who I am?"

And he replied, "Nay, certainly, I know thee not."

Then said she, "I am thy sister, the daughter of King Pellinore, and am sent to help thee and these knights, thy fellows, to achieve the quest which ye all follow."

So Sir Percival rejoiced to see his sister, and they departed from the shore. And after a while they came upon a whirlpool, where their ship could not live. Then saw they another greater ship hard by and went towards it, but saw neither man nor woman therein. And on the end of it these words were written, "Thou who shalt enter me, beware that thou be in steadfast belief, for I am Faith; and if thou doubtest, I cannot help thee." Then were they all adread, but, commending themselves to God, they entered in.

As soon as they were on board they saw a fair bed, whereon lay a crown of silk, and at the foot was a fair and rich sword drawn from its scabbard half a foot and more. The pommel was of precious stones of many colors, every color having a different virtue, and the scales of the haft were of two ribs of different beasts. The one was bone of a serpent from Calidone forest, named the serpent of the fiend; and its virtue saveth all men who hold it from weariness. The other was of a fish that haunteth the floods of Euphrates, named Ertanax; and its virtue causeth whoever holdeth it to forget all other things, whether of joy or pain, save the thing he seeth before him.

"In the name of God," said Sir Percival, "I shall assay to handle this sword"; and set his hand to it, but could not grasp it. "By my faith," said he, "now have I failed."

Sir Bors set his hand to it, and failed also.

Then came Sir Galahad, and saw these letters written red as blood, "None shall draw me forth save the hardiest of all men; but he that draweth me shall never be shamed or wounded to death." "By my faith," said Sir Galahad, "I would draw it forth, but dare not try."

"Ye may try safely," said the gentlewoman, Sir Percival's sister, "for be ye well assured the drawing of this sword is forbid to all but you. For this was the sword of David, King of Israel, and Solomon his son made for it this marvelous pommel and this wondrous sheath, and laid it on this bed till thou shouldest come and take it up; and though before thee some have dared to raise it, yet have they all been maimed or wounded for their daring."

"Where," said Sir Galahad, "shall we find a girdle for it?"

"Fair sir," said she, "dismay you not"; and therewith took from out a box a girdle, nobly wrought with golden thread, set full of precious stones and with a rich gold buckle. "This girdle, lords," said she, "is made for the most part of mine own hair, which, while I was yet in the world, I loved full well; but when I knew that this adventure was ordained me, I cut off and wove as ye now see."

Then they all prayed Sir Galahad to take the sword, and so anon he gripped it in his fingers; and the maiden girt it round his waist, saying, "Now reckon I not though I die, for I have made thee the worthiest knight of all the world."

"Fair damsel," said Sir Galahad, "ye have done so much that I shall be your knight all the days of my life."

Then the ship sailed a great way on the sea, and brought them to land near the Castle of Carteloise. When they were landed came a squire and asked them, "Be ye of King Arthur's court?"

"We are," said they.

"In an evil hour are ye come," said he, and went back swiftly to the castle.

Within a while they heard a great horn blow, and saw a multitude of well-armed knights come forth, who bade them yield or die. At that they ran together, and Sir Percival smote one to the earth and mounted his horse, and so likewise did Sir Bors and Sir Galahad, and soon had they routed all their enemies and alighted on foot, and with their swords slew them downright, and entered into the castle.

Then came there forth a priest, to whom Sir Galahad kneeled and said, "In sooth, good father, I repent me of this slaughter; but we were first assailed, or else it had not been."

"Repent ye not," said the good man, "for if ye lived as long as the world lasted ye could do no better deed, for these were all the felon sons of a good knight, Earl Hernox, whom they have thrown into a dungeon, and in his name

have slain priests and clerks, and beat down chapels far and near."

Then Sir Galahad prayed the priest to bring him to the earl; who, when he saw Sir Galahad, cried out, "Long have I waited for thy coming, and now I pray thee hold me in thine arms that I may die in peace."

And therewith, when Sir Galahad had taken him in his arms, his soul departed from his body.

Then came a voice in the hearing of them all, "Depart now, Sir Galahad, and go quickly to the maimed king, for he hath long abided to receive health from thy hand."

So the three knights departed, and Sir Percival's sister with them, and came to a vast forest, and saw before them a white hart, exceeding fair, led by four lions; and marveling greatly at that sight, they followed.

Anon they came to a hermitage and a chapel, whereunto the hart entered, and the lions with it. Then a priest offered mass, and presently they saw the hart change into the figure of a man, most sweet and comely to behold; and the four lions also changed and became a man, an eagle, a lion, and an ox. And suddenly all those five figures vanished without sound. Then the knights marveled greatly, and fell upon their knees, and when they rose they prayed the priest to tell them what that sight might mean.

"What saw ye, sirs?" said he, "for I saw nothing." Then they told him.

"Ah, lords!" said he, "ye are full welcome; now know I well ye be the knights who shall achieve the Sangreal, for unto them alone such mysteries are revealed. The hart ye saw is One above all men, white and without blemish, and the four lions with Him are the four evangelists."

When they heard that they heartily rejoiced, and thanking the priest, departed.

Anon, as they passed by a certain castle, an armed knight suddenly came after them, and cried out to the damsel, "By the holy cross, ye shall not go till ye have yielded to the custom of the castle."

"Let her go," said Sir Percival, "for a maiden, wheresoever she cometh, is free."

"Whatever maiden passeth here," replied the knight, "must give a dishful of her blood from her right arm."

"It is a foul and shameful custom," cried Sir Galahad and both his fellows, "and sooner will we die than let this maiden yield thereto."

"Then shall ye die," replied the knight, and as he spake there came out from a gate hard by, ten or twelve more, and encountered with them, running upon them vehemently with a great cry. But the three knights withstood them, and set their hands to their swords, and beat them down and slew them.

At that came forth a company of threescore knights, all armed. "Fair lords," said Sir Galahad, "have mercy on yourselves and keep from us."

"Nay, fair lords," they answered, "rather be advised by us, and yield ye to our custom."

"It is an idle word," said Galahad, "in vain ye speak it."

"Well," said they, "will ye die?"

"We be not come thereto as yet," replied Sir Galahad.

Then did they fall upon each other, and Sir Galahad drew forth his sword, and smote on the right hand and on the left, and slew so mightily that all who saw him thought he was a monster and no earthly man. And both his comrades helped him well, and so they held the field against that multitude till it was night. Then came a good knight forward from the enemy and said, "Fair knights, abide with us to-night and be right welcome; by the faith of our bodies as we are true knights, to-morrow ye shall rise unharmed, and meanwhile maybe ye will, of your own accord, accept the custom of the castle when ye know it better."

So they entered and alighted and made great cheer. Anon, they asked them whence that custom came. "The lady of this castle is a leper," said they, "and can be no way cured save by the blood of a pure virgin and a king's daughter; therefore to save her life are we her servants bound to stay every maid that passeth by, and try if her blood may not cure our mistress."

Then said the damsel, "Take ye of my blood as much as ye will, if it may avail your lady."

And though the three knights urged her not to put her life in that great peril, she replied, "If I die to heal another's body, I shall get health to my soul," and would not be persuaded to refuse.

So on the morrow she was brought to the sick lady, and her arm was bared, and a vein thereof was opened, and the dish filled with her blood. Then the sick lady was anointed therewith, and anon she was whole of her malady. With that Sir Percival's sister lifted up her hand and blessed her, saying, "Madam, I am come to my death to make you whole; for God's love pray for me"; and thus saying she fell down in a swoon.

Then Sir Galahad, Sir Percival, and Sir Bors started to lift her up and staunch her blood, but she had lost too much to live. So when she came to herself she said to Sir Percival, "Fair brother, I must die for the healing of this lady, and now, I pray thee, bury me not here, but when I am dead put me in a boat at the next haven and let me float at venture on the sea. And when ye come to the city of Sarras, to achieve the Sangreal, shall ye find me waiting by a tower, and there I pray thee bury me, for there shall Sir Galahad and ye also be laid." Thus having said, she died.

Then Sir Percival wrote all the story of her life and put it in her right hand, and so laid her in a barge and covered it with silk. And the wind arising drove the barge from land, and all the knights stood watching it till it was out of sight.

Anon they returned to the castle, and forthwith fell a sudden tempest of thunder and lightning and rain, as if the earth were broken up: and half the castle was thrown down. Then came a voice to the three knights which said, "Depart ye now asunder till ye meet again where the maimed king is lying." So they parted and rode divers ways.

Now after Sir Lancelot had left the hermit, he rode a long while till he knew not whither to turn, and so he lay down to sleep, if haply he might dream whither to go.

And in his sleep a vision came to him saying, "Lancelot, rise up and take thine armor, and enter the first ship that thou shalt find."

When he awoke he obeyed the vision, and rode till he came to the sea-shore, and found there a ship without sails or oars, and as soon as he was in it he smelt the sweetest savor he had ever known, and seemed filled with all things he could think of or desire. And looking round he saw a fair bed, and thereon a gentlewoman lying dead, who was Sir Percival's sister. And as Sir Lancelot looked on her he spied the writing in her right hand, and, taking it, he read therein her story. And more than a month thereafter he abode in that ship and was nourished by the grace of Heaven, as Israel was fed with manna in the desert.

And on a certain night he went ashore to pass the time, for he was somewhat weary, and, listening, he heard a horse come towards him, from which a knight alighted and went up into the ship; who, when he saw Sir Lancelot, said, "Fair sir, ye be right welcome to mine eyes, for I am thy son Galahad, and long time I have sought for thee." With that he kneeled and asked his blessing, and took off his helm and kissed him, and the great joy there was between them no tongue can tell.

Then for half a year they dwelt together in the ship, and served God night and day with all their powers, and went to many unknown islands, where none but wild beasts haunted, and there found many strange and perilous adventures.

And upon a time they came to the edge of a forest, before a cross of stone, and saw a knight armed all in white, leading a white horse. Then the knight saluted them, and said to Galahad, "Ye have been long time enough with your father; now, therefore, leave him and ride this horse till ye achieve the Holy Quest."

Then went Sir Galahad to his father and kissed him full courteously, and said, "Fair father, I know not when I shall see thee again."

And as he took his horse a voice spake in their hearing, "Ye shall meet no more in this life."

"Now, my son, Sir Galahad," said Sir Lancelot, "since we must so part and see each other never more, I pray the High Father of Heaven to preserve both you and me."

Then they bade farewell, and Sir Galahad entered the forest, and Sir Lancelot returned to the ship, and the wind rose and drove him more than a month through the sea, whereby he slept but little, yet ever prayed that he might see the Sangreal.

So it befell upon a certain midnight, the moon shining clear, he came before a fair and rich castle, whereof the postern gate was open towards the sea, having no keeper save two lions in the entry.

Anon Sir Lancelot heard a voice: "Leave now thy ship and go within the castle, and thou shalt see a part of thy desire."

Then he armed and went towards the gate, and coming to the lions he drew out his sword, but suddenly a dwarf rushed out and smote him on the arm, so that he dropt his sword, and heard again the voice, "Oh, man of evil faith, and poor belief, wherefore trustest thou thine arms above thy Maker?" Then he put up his sword and signed the cross upon his forehead, and so passed by the lions without hurt.

And going in, he found a chamber with the door shut, which in vain he tried to open. And listening thereat he heard a voice within, which sang so sweetly that it seemed no earthly thing, "Joy and honor be to the Father of Heaven!" Then he kneeled down at the door, for he knew well the Sangreal was there within.

Anon the door was opened without hands, and forthwith came thereout so great a splendor as if all the torches of the world had been alight together. But when he would have entered in, a voice forbade him; wherefore he drew back, and looked, standing upon the threshold of the door. And there he saw a table of silver, and the holy vessel covered with red samite, and many angels round it holding burning candles and a cross and all the ornaments of the altar.

Then a priest stood up and offered mass, and when he took the vessel up, he seemed to sink beneath that burden. At that Sir Lancelot cried, "O Father, take it not for sin that I go in to help the priest, who hath much need thereof." So saying, he went in, but when he came towards the table he felt a breath of fire which issued out therefrom and smote him to the ground, so that he had no power to rise.

Then felt he many hands about him, which took him up and laid him down outside the chapel door. There lay he in a swoon all through that night, and on



the morrow certain people found him senseless, and bore him to an inner chamber and laid him on a bed. And there he rested, living, but moving no limbs, twenty-four days and nights.

On the twenty-fifth day he opened his eyes and saw those standing round, and said, "Why have ye waked me? for I have seen marvels that no tongue can tell, and more than any heart can think."

Then he asked where he was, and they told him, "In the Castle of Carbonek."  
"Tell your lord, King Pelles," said he, "that I am Sir Lancelot."

At that they marveled greatly, and told their lord it was Sir Lancelot who had lain there so long.

Then was King Pelles wondrous glad and went to see him, and prayed him to abide there for a season. But Sir Lancelot said, "I know well that I have now seen as much as mine eyes may behold of the Sangreal; wherefore I will return to my own country." So he took leave of King Pelles, and departed towards Logris.

Now after Sir Galahad had parted from Sir Lancelot, he rode many days, till he came to the monastery where the blind King Evelake lay, whom Sir Percival had seen. And on the morrow, when he had heard mass, Sir Galahad desired to see the king, who cried out, "Welcome, Sir Galahad, servant of the Lord! long have I abided thy coming. Take me now in thine arms, that I may die in peace."

At that Sir Galahad embraced him; and when he had so done the king's eyes were opened, and he said, "Fair Lord Jesus, suffer me now to come to Thee"; and anon his soul departed.

Then they buried him royally, as a king should be; and Sir Galahad went on his way.

Within a while he came to a chapel in a forest, in the crypt whereof he saw a tomb which always blazed and burnt. And asking the brethren what that might mean, they told him, "Joseph of Arimathea's son did found this monastery, and one who wronged him hath lain here these three hundred and fifty years and burneth evermore, until that perfect knight who shall achieve the Sangreal doth quench the fire."

Then said he, "I pray ye bring me to the tomb."

And when he touched the place immediately the fire was quenched, and a voice came from the grave and cried, "Thanks be to God, who now hath purged me of my sin, and draweth me from earthly pains into the joys of paradise."

Then Sir Galahad took the body in his arms and bore it to the abbey, and on the morrow put it in the earth before the high altar.

Anon he departed from thence and rode five days in a great forest; and after that he met Sir Percival, and a little further on Sir Bors. When they had told each

other their adventures, they rode together to the Castle of Carbonek: and there King Pelles gave them hearty welcome, for he knew they should achieve the Holy Quest.

As soon as they were come into the castle, a voice cried in the midst of the chamber, "Let them who ought not now to sit at the table of the Lord rise and depart hence!" Then all, save those three knights, departed.

Anon they saw other knights come in with haste at the hall doors and take their harness off, who said to Sir Galahad, "Sir, we have tried sore to be with you at this table."

"Ye be welcome," said he, "but whence are ye?"

So three of them said they were from Gaul; and three from Ireland; and three from Denmark.

Then came forth the likeness of a bishop, with a cross in his hand, and four angels stood by him, and a table of silver was before them, whereon was set the vessel of the Sangreal. Then came forth other angels also—two bearing burning candles, and the third a towel, and the fourth a spear which bled marvelously, the drops wherefrom fell into a box he held in his left hand. Anon the bishop took the wafer up to consecrate it, and at the lifting up, they saw the figure of a Child, whose visage was as bright as any fire, which smote itself into the midst of the wafer and vanished, so that all saw the flesh made bread.

Thereat the bishop went to Galahad and kissed him, and bade him go and kiss his fellows; and said, "Now, servants of the Lord, prepare for food such as none ever yet were fed with since the world began."

With that he vanished, and the knights were filled with a great dread and prayed devoutly.

Then saw they come forth from the holy vessel the vision of a man bleeding all openly, whom they knew well by the tokens of His passion for the Lord Himself. At that they fell upon their faces and were dumb. Anon he brought the Holy Grail to them and spake high words of comfort, and, when they drank therefrom, the taste thereof was sweeter than any tongue could tell or heart desire. Then a voice said to Galahad, "Son, with this blood which drippeth from the spear anoint thou the maimed king and heal him. And when thou hast this done, depart hence with thy brethren in a ship that ye shall find, and go to the city of Sarras. And bear with thee the holy vessel, for it shall no more be seen in the realm of Logris."

At that Sir Galahad walked to the bleeding spear, and therefrom anointing his fingers went out straightway to the maimed King Pelles, and touched his wound. Then suddenly he uprose from his bed as whole a man as ever he was, and praised God passing thankfully with all his heart.

Then Sir Galahad, Sir Bors, and Sir Percival departed as they had been told; and when they had ridden three days they came to the sea-shore, and found the ship awaiting them. Therein they entered, and saw in the midst the silver table and the vessel of the Sangreal, covered with red samite. Then were they passing glad, and made great reverence thereto. And Sir Galahad prayed that now he might leave the world and pass to God. And presently, the while he prayed, a voice said to him, "Galahad, thy prayer is heard, and when thou asketh the death of the body thou shalt have it, and find the life of thy soul."

But while they prayed and slept the ship sailed on, and when they woke they saw the city of Sarras before them, and the other ship wherein was Sir Percival's sister. Then the three knights took up the holy table and the Sangreal and went into the city; and there, in a chapel, they buried Sir Percival's sister right solemnly.

Now at the gate of the town they saw an old cripple sitting, whom Sir Galahad called to help them bear their weight.

"Truly," said the old man, "it is ten years since I have gone a step without these crutches."

"Care ye not," said Sir Galahad, "rise now and show goodwill."

So he assayed to move, and found his limbs as strong as any man's might be, and running to the table helped to carry it.

Anon there rose a rumor in the city that a cripple had been healed by certain marvelous strange knights.

But the king, named Estouranse, who was a heathen tyrant, when he heard thereof took Sir Galahad and his fellows, and put them in prison in a deep hole. Therein they abode a great while, but ever the Sangreal was with them and fed them with marvelous sweet food, so that they fainted not, but had all joy and comfort they could wish.

At the year's end the king fell sick and felt that he should die. Then sent he for the three knights, and when they came before him prayed their mercy for his trespasses against them. So they forgave him gladly, and anon he died.

Then the chief men of the city took counsel together who should be king in his stead, and as they talked, a voice cried in their midst, "Choose ye the youngest of the three knights King Estouranse cast into prison for your king." At that they sought Sir Galahad and made him king with the assent of all the city, and else they would have slain him.

But within a twelve-month came to him, upon a certain day, as he prayed before the Sangreal, a man in likeness of a bishop, with a great company of angels round about him, who offered mass, and afterwards called to Sir Galahad, "Come forth, thou servant of the Lord, for the time hath come thou hast desired

so long."

Then Sir Galahad lifted up his hands and prayed, "Now, blessed Lord! would I no longer live if it might please Thee."

Anon the bishop gave him the sacrament, and when he had received it with unspeakable gladness, he said, "Who art thou, father?"

"I am Joseph of Arimathea," answered he, "whom our Lord hath sent to bear thee fellowship."

When he heard that, Sir Galahad went to Sir Percival and Sir Bors and kissed them and commended them to God, saying, "Salute for me Sir Lancelot, my father, and bid them remember this unstable world."

Therewith he kneeled down and prayed, and suddenly his soul departed, and a multitude of angels bare it up to heaven. Then came a hand from heaven and took the vessel and the spear and bare them out of sight.

Since then was never man so hardy as to say that he had seen the Sangreal.

And after all these things, Sir Percival put off his armor and betook him to an hermitage, and within a little while passed out of this world. And Sir Bors, when he had buried him beside his sister, returned, weeping sore for the loss of his two brethren, to King Arthur, at Camelot.

## CHAPTER XIV

# SIR LANCELOT AND THE FAIR ELAINE

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Now after the quest of the Sangreal was fulfilled and all the knights who were left alive were come again to the Round Table, there was great joy in the court. And passing glad were King Arthur and Queen Guinevere to see Sir Lancelot and Sir Bors, for they had been long absent in that quest.

And so greatly was Sir Lancelot's fame now spread abroad that many ladies and damsels daily resorted to him and besought him for their champion; and all right quarrels did he gladly undertake for the pleasure of our Lord Christ. And always as much as he might he withdrew him from the queen.

Wherefore Queen Guinevere, who counted him for her own knight, grew wroth with him, and on a certain day she called him to her chamber, and said thus: "Sir Lancelot, I daily see thy loyalty to me doth slack, for ever thou art absent from this court, and takest other ladies' quarrels on thee more than ever thou wert wont. Now do I understand thee, false knight, and therefore shall I never trust thee more. Depart now from my sight, and come no more within this court upon pain of thy head." With that she turned from him and would hear no excuses.

So Sir Lancelot departed in heaviness of heart, and calling Sir Bors, Sir Ector, and Sir Lionel, he told them how the queen had dealt with him.

"Fair sir," replied Sir Bors, "remember what honor ye have in this country, and how ye are called the noblest knight in the world; wherefore go not, for women are hasty, and do often what they sore repent of afterwards. Be ruled by my advice. Take horse and ride to the hermitage beside Windsor, and there abide till I send ye better tidings."

To that Sir Lancelot consented, and departed with a sorrowful countenance.

Now when the queen heard of his leaving she was inwardly sorry, but made no show of grief, bearing a proud visage outwardly. And on a certain day she made a costly banquet to all the knights of the Round Table, to show she had as great joy in all others as in Sir Lancelot. And at the banquet were Sir Gawain, and his brothers Sir Agravaine, Sir Gaheris, and Sir Gareth; also Sir Modred, Sir Bors, Sir Blamor, Sir Bleoberis, Sir Ector, Sir Lionel, Sir Palomedes, Sir Mador

de la Port, and his cousin Sir Patrice—a knight of Ireland, Sir Pinell le Savage, and many more.

Now Sir Pinell hated Sir Gawain because he had slain one of his kinsmen by treason; and Sir Gawain had a great love for all kinds of fruit, which, when Sir Pinell knew, he poisoned certain apples that were set upon the table, with intent to slay him. And so it chanced as they ate and made merry, Sir Patrice, who sat next to Sir Gawain, took one of the poisoned apples and eat it, and when he had eaten he suddenly swelled up and fell down dead.

At that every knight leapt from the board ashamed and enraged nigh out of their wits, for they knew not what to say, yet seeing that the queen had made the banquet they all had suspicion of her.

"My lady the queen," said Sir Gawain, "I wit well this fruit was meant for me, for all men know my love for it, and now had I been nearly slain; wherefore, I fear me, ye will be ashamed."

"This shall not end so," cried Sir Mador de la Port; "now have I lost a noble knight of my own blood, and for this despite and shame I will be revenged to the uttermost."

Then he challenged Queen Guinevere concerning the death of his cousin, but she stood still, sore abashed, and anon with her sorrow and dread, she swooned.

At the noise and sudden cry came in King Arthur, and to him appealed Sir Mador, and impeached the queen.

"Fair lords," said he, "full sorely am I troubled at this matter, for I must be rightful judge, and therein it repenteth me I may not do battle for my wife, for, as I deem, this deed was none of hers. But I suppose she will not lack a champion, and some good knight surely will put his body in jeopardy to save her."

But all who had been bidden to the banquet said they could not hold the queen excused, or be her champions, for she had made the feast, and either by herself or servants must it have come.

"Alas!" said the queen, "I made this dinner for a good intent, and no evil, so God help me in my need."

"My lord the king," said Sir Mador, "I require you heartily as you be a righteous king give me a day when I may have justice."

"Well," said the king, "I give ye this day fifteen days, when ye shall be ready and armed in the meadow beside Westminster, and if there be a knight to fight with you, God speed the right, and if not, then must my queen be burnt."

When the king and queen were alone together he asked her how this case befell.

"I wot not how or in what manner," answered she.

"Where is Sir Lancelot?" said King Arthur, "for he would not grudge to do

battle for thee."

"Sir," said she, "I cannot tell you, but all his kinsmen deem he is not in this realm."

"These be sad tidings," said the king; "I counsel ye to find Sir Bors, and pray him for Sir Lancelot's sake to do this battle for you."

So the queen departed and sent for Sir Bors to her chamber, and besought his succor.

"Madam," said he, "what would you have me do? for I may not with my honor take this matter on me, for I was at that same dinner, and all the other knights would have me ever in suspicion. Now do ye miss Sir Lancelot, for he would not have failed you in right nor yet in wrong, as ye have often proved, but now ye have driven him from the country."

"Alas! fair knight," said the queen, "I put me wholly at your mercy, and all that is done amiss I will amend as ye will counsel me."

And therewith she kneeled down upon both her knees before Sir Bors, and besought him to have mercy on her.

Anon came in King Arthur also, and prayed him of his courtesy to help her, saying, "I require you for the love of Lancelot."

"My lord," said he, "ye require the greatest thing of me that any man can ask, for if I do this battle for the queen I shall anger all my fellows of the Table Round; nevertheless, for my lord Sir Lancelot's sake, and for yours, I will that day be the queen's champion, unless there chance to come a better knight than I am to do battle for her." And this he promised on his faith.

Then were the king and queen passing glad, and thanked him heartily, and so departed.

But Sir Bors rode in secret to the hermitage where Sir Lancelot was, and told him all these tidings.

"It has chanced as I would have it," said Sir Lancelot; "yet make ye ready for the battle, but tarry till ye see me come."

"Sir," said Sir Bors, "doubt not but ye shall have your will."

But many of the knights were greatly wroth with him when they heard he was to be the queen's champion, for there were few in the court but deemed her guilty.

Then said Sir Bors, "Wit ye will, fair lords, it were a shame to us all to suffer so fair and noble a lady to be burnt for lack of a champion, for ever hath she proved herself a lover of good knights; wherefore I doubt not she is guiltless of this treason."

At that were some well pleased, but others rested passing wroth.

And when the day was come, the king and queen and all the knights went to

the meadow beside Westminster, where the battle should be fought. Then the queen was put in ward, and a great fire was made round the iron stake, where she must be burnt if Sir Mador won the day.

So when the heralds blew, Sir Mador rode forth, and took oath that Queen Guinevere was guilty of Sir Patrice's death, and his oath he would prove with his body against any who would say the contrary. Then came forth Sir Bors, and said, "Queen Guinevere is in the right, and that will I prove with my hands."

With that they both departed to their tents to make ready for the battle. But Sir Bors tarried long, hoping Sir Lancelot would come, till Sir Mador cried out to King Arthur, "Bid thy champion come forth, unless he dare not." Then was Sir Bors ashamed, and took his horse and rode to the end of the lists.

But ere he could meet Sir Mador he was aware of a knight upon a white horse, armed at all points, and with a strange shield, who rode to him and said, "I pray you withdraw from this quarrel, for it is mine, and I have ridden far to fight in it."

Thereat Sir Bors rode to King Arthur, and told him that another knight was come who would do battle for the queen.

"Who is he?" said King Arthur.

"I may not tell you," said Sir Bors; "but he made a covenant with me to be here to-day, wherefore I am discharged."

Then the king called that knight, and asked him if he would fight for the queen.

"Therefore came I hither, Sir king," answered he; "but let us tarry no longer, for anon I have other matters to do. But wit ye well," said he to the Knights of the Round Table, "it is shame to ye for such a courteous queen to suffer this dishonor."

And all men marveled who this knight might be, for none knew him save Sir Bors.

Then Sir Mador and the knight rode to either end of the lists, and couching their spears, ran one against the other with all their might; and Sir Mador's spear broke short, but the strange knight bore both him and his horse down to the ground. Then lightly they leaped from their saddles and drew their swords, and so came eagerly to the battle, and either gave the other many sad strokes and sore and deep wounds.

Thus they fought nigh an hour, for Sir Mador was a full strong and valiant knight. But at last the strange knight smote him to the earth, and gave him such a buffet on the helm as wellnigh killed him. Then did Sir Mador yield, and prayed his life.

"I will but grant it thee," said the strange knight, "if thou wilt release the



queen from this quarrel forever, and promise that no mention shall be made upon Sir Patrice's tomb that ever she consented to that treason."

"All this shall be done," said Sir Mador.

Then the knights parters took up Sir Mador and led him to his tent, and the other knight went straight to the stair foot of King Arthur's throne; and by that time was the queen come to the king again, and kissed him lovingly.

Then both the king and she stooped down, and thanked the knight, and prayed him to put off his helm and rest him, and to take a cup of wine. And when he put his helmet off to drink, all people saw it was Sir Lancelot. But when the queen beheld him she sank almost to the ground weeping for sorrow and for joy, that he had done her such great goodness when she had showed him such unkindness.

Then the knights of his blood gathered round him, and there was great joy and mirth in the court. And Sir Mador and Sir Lancelot were soon healed of their wounds; and not long after came the Lady of the Lake to the court, and told all there by her enchantments how Sir Pinell, and not the queen, was guilty of Sir Patrice's death. Whereat the queen was held excused of all men, and Sir Pinell fled the country.

So Sir Patrice was buried in the church of Winchester, and it was written on his tomb that Sir Pinell slew him with a poisoned apple, in error for Sir Gawain. Then, through Sir Lancelot's favor, the queen was reconciled to Sir Mador, and all was forgiven.

Now fifteen days before the Feast of the Assumption of our Lady, the king proclaimed a tourney to be held that feast-day at Camelot, whereat himself and the King of Scotland would joust with all who should come against them. So thither went the King of North Wales, and King Anguish of Ireland, and Sir Galahaut the noble prince, and many other nobles of divers countries.

And King Arthur made ready to go, and would have had the queen go with him, but she said that she was sick. Sir Lancelot, also, made excuses, saying he was not yet whole of his wounds.

At that the king was passing heavy and grieved, and so departed alone towards Camelot. And by the way he lodged in a town called Astolat, and lay that night in the castle.

As soon as he had gone, Sir Lancelot said to the queen, "This night I will rest, and to-morrow betimes will I take my way to Camelot; for at these jousts I will be against the king and his fellowship."

"Ye may do as ye list," said Queen Guinevere; "but by my counsel ye will not be against the king, for in his company are many hardy knights, as ye well know."

"Madam," said Sir Lancelot, "I pray ye be not displeased with me, for I will take the adventure that God may send me."

And on the morrow he went to the church and heard mass, and took his leave of the queen, and so departed.

Then he rode long till he came to Astolat, and there lodged at the castle of an old baron called Sir Bernard of Astolat, which was near the castle where King Arthur lodged. And as Sir Lancelot entered the king espied him, and knew him. Then said he to the knights, "I have just seen a knight who will fight full well at the joust toward which we go."

"Who is it?" asked they.

"As yet ye shall not know," he answered smiling.

When Sir Lancelot was in his chamber unarming the old baron came to him, saluting him, though as yet he knew not who he was.

Now Sir Bernard had a daughter passing beautiful, called the Fair Maid of Astolat, and when she saw Sir Lancelot she loved him from that instant with her whole heart, and could not stay from gazing on him.

On the morrow, Sir Lancelot asked the old baron to lend him a strange shield. "For," said he, "I would be unknown."

"Sir," said his host, "ye shall have your desire, for here is the shield of my eldest son, Sir Torre, who was hurt the day he was made knight, so that he cannot ride; and his shield, therefore, is not known. And, if it please you, my youngest son, Sir Lavaine, shall ride with you to the jousts, for he is of his age full strong and mighty; and I deem ye be a noble knight, wherefore I pray ye tell me your name."

"As to that," said Sir Lancelot, "ye must hold me excused at this time, but if I speed well at the jousts, I will come again and tell you; but in anywise let me have your son, Sir Lavaine, with me, and lend me his brother's shield."

Then, ere they departed, came Elaine, the baron's daughter, and said to Sir Lancelot, "I pray thee, gentle knight, to wear my token at to-morrow's tourney."

"If I should grant you that, fair damsel," said he, "ye might say that I did more for you than ever I have done for lady or damsel."

Then he bethought him that if he granted her request he would be the more disguised, for never before had he worn any lady's token. So anon he said, "Fair damsel, I will wear thy token on my helmet if thou wilt show it me."

Thereat was she passing glad, and brought him a scarlet sleeve brodered with pearls, which Sir Lancelot took, and put upon his helm. Then he prayed her to keep his shield for him until he came again, and taking Sir Torre's shield instead, rode forth with Sir Lavaine towards Camelot.

On the morrow the trumpets blew for the tourney, and there was a great press

of dukes and earls and barons and many noble knights; and King Arthur sat in a gallery to behold who did the best. So the King of Scotland and his knights, and King Anguish of Ireland rode forth on King Arthur's side; and against them came the King of North Wales, the King of a Hundred Knights, the King of Northumberland, and the noble prince Sir Galahaut.

But Sir Lancelot and Sir Lavaine rode into a little wood behind the party which was against King Arthur, to watch which side should prove the weakest.

Then was there a strong fight between the two parties, for the King of a Hundred Knights smote down the King of Scotland; and Sir Palomedes, who was on King Arthur's side, overthrew Sir Galahaut. Then came fifteen Knights of the Round Table and beat back the Kings of Northumberland and North Wales with their knights.

"Now," said Sir Lancelot to Sir Lavaine, "if ye will help me, ye shall see yonder fellowship go back as fast as they came."

"Sir," said Sir Lavaine, "I will do what I can."

Then they rode together into the thickest of the press, and there, with one spear, Sir Lancelot smote down five Knights of the Round Table, one after other, and Sir Lavaine overthrew two. And taking another spear, for his own was broken, Sir Lancelot smote down four more knights, and Sir Lavaine a fifth. Then, drawing his sword, Sir Lancelot fought fiercely on the right hand and the left, and unhorsed Sir Safire, Sir Epinogris, and Sir Galleron. At that the Knights of the Round Table withdrew themselves as well as they were able.

"Now, mercy," said Sir Gawain, who sat by King Arthur; "what knight is that who doth such marvelous deeds of arms? I should deem him by his force to be Sir Lancelot, but that he wears a lady's token on his helm as never Lancelot doth."

"Let him be," said King Arthur; "he will be better known, and do more ere he depart."

Thus the party against King Arthur prospered at this time, and his knights were sore ashamed. Then Sir Bors, Sir Ector, and Sir Lionel called together the knights of their blood, nine in number, and agreed to join together in one band against the two strange knights. So they encountered Sir Lancelot all at once, and by main force smote his horse to the ground; and by misfortune Sir Bors struck Sir Lancelot through the shield into the side, and the spear broke off and left the head in the wound.

When Sir Lavaine saw that, he ran to the King of Scotland and struck him off his horse, and brought it to Sir Lancelot, and helped him to mount. Then Sir Lancelot bore Sir Bors and his horse to the ground, and in like manner served Sir Ector and Sir Lionel; and turning upon three other knights he smote them down

also; while Sir Lavaine did many gallant deeds.

But feeling himself now sorely wounded Sir Lancelot drew his sword, and proffered to fight with Sir Bors, who, by this time, was mounted anew. And as they met, Sir Ector and Sir Lionel came also, and the swords of all three drave fiercely against him. When he felt their buffets, and his wound that was so grievous, he determined to do all his best while he could yet endure, and smote Sir Bors a blow that bent his head down nearly to the ground and razed his helmet off and pulled him from his horse.

Then rushing at Sir Ector and Sir Lionel, he smote them down, and might have slain all three, but when he saw their faces his heart forbade him. Leaving them, therefore, on the field, he hurled into the thickest of the press, and did such feats of arms as never were beheld before.

And Sir Lavaine was with him through it all, and overthrew ten knights; but Sir Lancelot smote down more than thirty, and most of them Knights of the Round Table.

Then the king ordered the trumpets to blow for the end of the tourney, and the prize to be given by the heralds to the knight with the white shield who bore the red sleeve.

But ere Sir Lancelot was found by the heralds, came the King of the Hundred Knights, the King of North Wales, the King of Northumberland, and Sir Galahaut, and said to him, "Fair knight, God bless thee, for much have ye done this day for us; wherefore we pray ye come with us and receive the honor and the prize as ye have worshipfully deserved it."

"My fair lords," said Sir Lancelot, "wit ye well if I have deserved thanks, I have sore bought them, for I am like never to escape with my life; therefore pray ye let me depart, for I am sore hurt. I take no thought of honor, for I had rather rest me than be lord of all the world." And therewith he groaned piteously, and rode a great gallop away from them.

And Sir Lavaine rode after him, sad at heart, for the broken spear still stuck fast in Sir Lancelot's side, and the blood streamed sorely from the wound. Anon they came near a wood more than a mile from the lists, where he knew he could be hidden.

Then said he to Sir Lavaine, "O gentle knight, help me to pull out this spear-head from my side, for the pain thereof nigh killeth me."

"Dear lord," said he, "I fain would help ye; but I dread to draw it forth, lest ye should die for loss of blood."

"I charge you as you love me," said Sir Lancelot, "draw it out."

So they dismounted, and with a mighty wrench Sir Lavaine drew the spear forth from Sir Lancelot's side; whereat he gave a marvelous great shriek and

ghastly groan, and all his blood leaped forth in a full stream. Then he sank swooning to the earth, with a visage pale as death.

"Alas!" cried Sir Lavaine, "what shall I do now?"

And then he turned his master's face towards the wind, and sat by him nigh half an hour while he lay quiet as one dead. But at the last he lifted up his eyes, and said, "I pray ye bear me on my horse again, and lead me to a hermit who dwelleth within two miles hence, for he was formerly a knight of Arthur's court, and now hath mighty skill in medicine and herbs."

So with great pain Sir Lavaine got him to his horse, and led him to the hermitage within the wood, beside a stream. Then knocked he with his spear upon the door, and prayed to enter. At that a child came out, to whom he said, "Fair child, pray the good man thy master to come hither and let in a knight who is sore wounded."

Anon came out the knight-hermit, whose name was Sir Baldwin, and asked, "Who is this wounded knight?"

"I know not," said Sir Lavaine, "save that he is the noblest knight I ever met with, and hath done this day such marvelous deeds of arms against King Arthur that he hath won the prize of the tourney."

Then the hermit gazed long on Sir Lancelot, and hardly knew him, so pale he was with bleeding, yet said he at the last, "Who art thou, lord?"

Sir Lancelot answered feebly, "I am a stranger knight adventurous, who laboreth through many realms to win worship."

"Why hidest thou thy name, dear lord, from me?" cried Sir Baldwin; "for in sooth I know thee now to be the noblest knight in all the world—my lord Sir Lancelot du Lake, with whom I long had fellowship at the Round Table."

"Since ye know me, fair sir," said he, "I pray ye, for Christ's sake, to help me if ye may."

"Doubt not," replied he, "that ye shall live and fare right well."

Then he staunched his wound, and gave him strong medicines and cordials till he was refreshed from his faintness and came to himself again.

Now after the jousting was done King Arthur held a feast, and asked to see the knight with the red sleeve that he might take the prize. So they told him how that knight had ridden from the field wounded nigh to death. "These be the worst tidings I have heard for many years," cried out the king; "I would not for my kingdom he were slain."

Then all men asked, "Know ye him, lord?"

"I may not tell ye at this time," said he; "but would to God we had good tidings of him."

Then Sir Gawain prayed leave to go and seek that knight, which the king

gladly gave him. So forthwith he mounted and rode many leagues round Camelot, but could hear no tidings.

Within two days thereafter King Arthur and his knights returned from Camelot, and Sir Gawain chanced to lodge at Astolat, in the house of Sir Bernard. And there came in the fair Elaine to him, and prayed him news of the tournament, and who won the prize. "A knight with a white shield," said he, "who bare a red sleeve in his helm, smote down all comers and won the day."

At that the visage of Elaine changed suddenly from white to red, and heartily she thanked our Lady.

Then said Sir Gawain, "Know ye that knight?" and urged her till she told him that it was her sleeve he wore. So Sir Gawain knew it was for love that she had given it; and when he heard she kept his proper shield he prayed to see it.

As soon as it was brought he saw Sir Lancelot's arms thereon, and cried, "Alas! now am I heavier of heart than ever yet."

"Wherefore?" said fair Elaine.

"Fair damsel," answered he, "know ye not that the knight ye love is of all knights the noblest in the world, Sir Lancelot du Lake? With all my heart I pray ye may have joy of each other, but hardly dare I think that ye shall see him in this world again, for he is so sore wounded he may scarcely live, and is gone out of sight where none can find him."

Then was Elaine nigh mad with grief and sorrow, and with piteous words she prayed her father that she might go seek Sir Lancelot and her brother. So in the end her father gave her leave, and she departed.

And on the morrow came Sir Gawain to the court, and told how he had found Sir Lancelot's shield in Elaine's keeping, and how it was her sleeve which he had worn; whereat all marveled, for Sir Lancelot had done for her more than he had ever done for any woman.

But when Queen Guinevere heard it she was beside herself with wrath, and sending privily for Sir Bors, who sorrowed sorely that through him Sir Lancelot had been hurt—"Have ye now heard," said she, "how falsely Sir Lancelot hath betrayed me?"

"I beseech thee, madam," said he, "speak not so, for else I may not hear thee."

"Shall I not call him traitor," cried she, "who hath worn another lady's token at the jousting?"

"Be sure he did it, madam, for no ill intent," replied Sir Bors, "but that he might be better hidden, for never did he in that wise before."

"Now shame on him, and thee who wouldest help him," cried the queen.

"Madam, say what ye will," said he; "but I must haste to seek him, and God

send me soon good tidings of him."

So with that he departed to find Sir Lancelot.

Now Elaine had ridden with full haste from Astolat, and come to Camelot, and there she sought throughout the country for any news of Lancelot. And so it chanced that Sir Lavaine was riding near the hermitage to exercise his horse, and when she saw him she ran up and cried aloud, "How doth my lord Sir Lancelot fare?"

Then said Sir Lavaine, marveling greatly, "How know ye my lord's name, fair sister?"

So she told him how Sir Gawain had lodged with Sir Bernard, and knew Sir Lancelot's shield.

Then prayed she to see his lord forthwith, and when she came to the hermitage and found him lying there sore sick and bleeding, she swooned for sorrow. Anon, as she revived, Sir Lancelot kissed her, and said, "Fair maid, I pray ye take comfort, for, by God's grace, I shall be shortly whole of this wound, and if ye be come to tend me, I am heartily bounden to your great kindness." Yet was he sore vexed to hear Sir Gawain had discovered him, for he knew Queen Guinevere would be full wroth because of the red sleeve.

So Elaine rested in the hermitage, and ever night and day she watched and waited on Sir Lancelot, and would let none other tend him. And as she saw him more, the more she set her love upon him, and could by no means withdraw it. Then said Sir Lancelot to Sir Lavaine, "I pray thee set some to watch for the good knight Sir Bors, for as he hurt me, so will he surely seek for me."

Now Sir Bors by this time had come to Camelot, and was seeking for Sir Lancelot everywhere, so Sir Lavaine soon found him, and brought him to the hermitage.

And when he saw Sir Lancelot pale and feeble, he wept for pity and sorrow that he had given him that grievous wound. "God send thee a right speedy cure, dear lord," said he; "for I am of all men most unhappy to have wounded thee, who art our leader, and the noblest knight in all the world."

"Fair cousin," said Sir Lancelot, "be comforted, for I have but gained what I sought, and it was through pride that I was hurt, for had I warned ye of my coming it had not been; wherefore let us speak of other things."

So they talked long together, and Sir Bors told him of the queen's anger. Then he asked Sir Lancelot, "Was it from this maid who tendeth you so lovingly ye had the token?"

"Yea," said Sir Lancelot; "and would I could persuade her to withdraw her love from me."

"Why should ye do so?" said Sir Bors; "for she is passing fair and loving. I

would to heaven ye could love her."

"That may not be," replied he; "but it repenteth me in sooth to grieve her."

Then they talked of other matters, and of the great jousting at Allhallowtide next coming, between King Arthur and the King of North Wales.

"Abide with me till then," said Sir Lancelot, "for by that time I trust to be all whole again, and we will go together."

So Elaine daily and nightly tending him, within a month he felt so strong he deemed himself full cured. Then on a day, when Sir Bors and Sir Lavaine were from the hermitage, and the knight-hermit also was gone forth, Sir Lancelot prayed Elaine to bring him some herbs from the forest.

When she was gone he rose and made haste to arm himself, and try if he were whole enough to joust, and mounted on his horse, which was fresh with lack of labor for so long a time. But when he set his spear in the rest and tried his armor, the horse bounded and leapt beneath him, so that Sir Lancelot strained to keep him back. And therewith his wound, which was not wholly healed, burst forth again, and with a mighty groan he sank down swooning on the ground.

At that came fair Elaine and wept and piteously moaned to see him lying so. And when Sir Bors and Sir Lavaine came back, she called them traitors to let him rise, or to know any rumor of the tournament. Anon the hermit returned and was wroth to see Sir Lancelot risen, but within a while he recovered him from his swoon and staunched the wound. Then Sir Lancelot told him how he had risen of his own will to assay his strength for the tournament. But the hermit bade him rest and let Sir Bors go alone, for else would he sorely peril his life. And Elaine, with tears, prayed him in the same wise, so that Sir Lancelot in the end consented.

So Sir Bors departed to the tournament, and there he did such feats of arms that the prize was given between him and Sir Gawain, who did like valiantly.

And when all was over he came back and told Sir Lancelot, and found him so nigh well that he could rise and walk. And within a while thereafter he departed from the hermitage and went with Sir Bors, Sir Lavaine, and fair Elaine to Astolat, where Sir Bernard joyfully received them.

But after they had lodged there a few days Sir Lancelot and Sir Bors must needs depart and return to King Arthur's court.

So when Elaine knew Sir Lancelot must go, she came to him and said, "Have mercy on me, fair knight, and let me not die for your love."

Then said Sir Lancelot, very sad at heart, "Fair maid, what would ye that I should do for you?"

"If I may not be your wife, dear lord," she answered, "I must die."

"Alas!" said he, "I pray heaven that may not be; for in sooth I may not be



your husband. But fain would I show ye what thankfulness I can for all your love and kindness to me. And ever will I be your knight, fair maiden; and if it chance that ye shall ever wed some noble knight, right heartily will I give ye such a dower as half my lands will bring."

"Alas! what shall that aid me?" answered she; "for I must die," and therewith she fell to the earth in a deep swoon.

Then was Sir Lancelot passing heavy of heart, and said to Sir Bernard and Sir Lavaine, "What shall I do for her?"

"Alas!" said Sir Bernard, "I know well that she will die for your sake."

And Sir Lavaine said, "I marvel not that she so sorely mourneth your departure, for truly I do as she doth, and since I once have seen you, lord, I cannot leave you."

So anon, with a full sorrowful heart, Sir Lancelot took his leave, and Sir Lavaine rode with him to the court. And King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table joyed greatly to see him whole of his wound, but Queen Guinevere was sorely wroth, and neither spake with him nor greeted him.

Now when Sir Lancelot had departed, the Maid of Astolat could neither eat, nor drink, nor sleep for sorrow; and having thus endured ten days, she felt within herself that she must die.

Then sent she for a holy man, and was shriven and received the sacrament. But when he told her she must leave her earthly thoughts, she answered, "Am I not an earthly woman? What sin is it to love the noblest knight of all the world? And, by my truth, I am not able to withstand the love whereof I die; wherefore, I pray the High Father of Heaven to have mercy on my soul."

Then she besought Sir Bernard to indite a letter as she should devise, and said, "When I am dead put this within my hand, and dress me in my fairest clothes, and lay me in a barge all covered with black samite, and steer it down the river till it reach the court. Thus, father, I beseech thee let it be."

Then, full of grief, he promised her it should be so. And anon she died, and all the household made a bitter lamentation over her.

Then did they as she had desired, and laid her body, richly dressed, upon a bed within the barge, and a trusty servant steered it down the river towards the court.

Now King Arthur and Queen Guinevere sat at a window of the palace, and saw the barge come floating with the tide, and marveled what was laid therein, and sent a messenger to see, who, soon returning, prayed them to come forth.

When they came to the shore they marveled greatly, and the king asked of the serving-man who steered the barge what this might mean. But he made signs that he was dumb, and pointed to the letter in the damsel's hands. So King Arthur

took the letter from the hand of the corpse, and found thereon written, "To the noble knight, Sir Lancelot du Lake."

Then was Sir Lancelot sent for, and the letter read aloud by a clerk, and thus it was written:—

"Most noble knight, my lord Sir Lancelot, now hath death forever parted us. I, whom men call the Maid of Astolat, set my love upon you, and have died for your sake. This is my last request, that ye pray for my soul and give me burial. Grant me this, Sir Lancelot, as thou art a peerless knight."

At these words the queen and all the knights wept sore for pity.

Then said Sir Lancelot, "My lord, I am right heavy for the death of this fair damsel; and God knoweth that right unwillingly I caused it, for she was good as she was fair, and much was I beholden to her; but she loved me beyond measure, and asked me that I could not give her."

"Ye might have shown her gentleness enough to save her life," answered the queen.

"Madam," said he, "she would but be repaid by my taking her to wife, and that I could not grant her, for love cometh of the heart and not by constraint."

"That is true," said the king; "for love is free."

"I pray you," said Sir Lancelot, "let me now grant her last asking, to be buried by me."

So on the morrow, he caused her body to be buried richly and solemnly, and ordained masses for her soul, and made great sorrow over her.

Then the queen sent for Sir Lancelot, and prayed his pardon for her wrath against him without cause. "This is not the first time it hath been so," answered he; "yet must I ever bear with ye, and so do I now forgive you."

So Queen Guinevere and Sir Lancelot were made friends again; but anon such favor did she show him, as in the end brought many evils on them both and all the realm.

## CHAPTER XV

# THE WAR BETWEEN ARTHUR AND LANCELOT AND THE PASSING OF ARTHUR

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Within a while thereafter was a jousting at the court, wherein Sir Lancelot won the prize. And two of those he smote down were Sir Agravaine, the brother of Sir Gawain, and Sir Modred, his false brother—King Arthur's son by Belisent. And because of his victory they hated Sir Lancelot, and sought how they might injure him.

So on a night, when King Arthur was hunting in the forest, and the queen sent for Sir Lancelot to her chamber, they two espied him; and thinking now to make a scandal and a quarrel between Lancelot and the king, they found twelve others, and said Sir Lancelot was ever now in the queen's chamber, and King Arthur was dishonored.

Then, all armed, they came suddenly round the queen's door, and cried, "Traitor! now art thou taken."

"Madam, we be betrayed," said Sir Lancelot; "yet shall my life cost these men dear."

Then did the queen weep sore, and dismally she cried, "Alas! there is no armor here whereby ye might withstand so many; wherefore ye will be slain, and I be burnt for the dread crime they will charge on me."

But while she spake the shouting of the knights was heard without, "Traitor, come forth, for now thou art snared!"

"Better were twenty deaths at once than this vile outcry," said Sir Lancelot.

Then he kissed her and said, "Most noble lady, I beseech ye, as I have ever been your own true knight, take courage; pray for my soul if I be now slain, and trust my faithful friends, Sir Bors and Sir Lavaine, to save you from the fire."

But ever bitterly she wept and moaned, and cried, "Would God that they would take and slay me, and that thou couldest escape."

"That shall never be," said he. And wrapping his mantle round his arm he unbarred the door a little space, so that but one could enter.

Then first rushed in Sir Chalaunce, a full strong knight, and lifted up his sword to smite Sir Lancelot; but lightly he avoided him, and struck Sir

Chalaunce, with his hand, such a sore buffet on the head as felled him dead upon the floor.

Then Sir Lancelot pulled in his body and barred the door again, and dressed himself in his armor, and took his drawn sword in his hand.

But still the knights cried mightily without the door, "Traitor, come forth!"

"Be silent and depart," replied Sir Lancelot; "for be ye sure ye will not take me, and to-morrow will I meet ye face to face before the king."

"Ye shall have no such grace," they cried; "but we will slay thee, or take thee as we list."

"Then save yourselves who may," he thundered, and therewith suddenly unbarred the door and rushed forth at them. And at the first blow he slew Sir Agravaine, and after him twelve other knights, with twelve more mighty buffets. And none of all escaped him save Sir Modred, who, sorely wounded, flew away for life.

Then returned he to the queen, and said, "Now, madam, will I depart, and if ye be in any danger I pray ye come to me."

"Surely will I stay here, for I am queen," she answered; "yet if to-morrow any harm come to me I trust to thee for rescue."

"Have ye no doubt of me," said he, "for ever while I live am I your own true knight."

Therewith he took his leave, and went and told Sir Bors and all his kindred of this adventure. "We will be with thee in this quarrel," said they all; "and if the queen be sentenced to the fire, we certainly will save her."

Meanwhile Sir Modred, in great fear and pain, fled from the court, and rode until he found King Arthur, and told him all that had befallen. But the king would scarce believe him till he came and saw the bodies of Sir Agravaine and all the other knights.

Then felt he in himself that all was true, and with his passing grief his heart nigh broke. "Alas!" cried he, "now is the fellowship of the Round Table forever broken: yea, woe is me! I may not with my honor spare my queen."

Anon it was ordained that Queen Guinevere should be burned to death, because she had dishonored King Arthur.

But when Sir Gawain heard thereof, he came before the king, and said, "My lord, I counsel thee be not too hasty in this matter, but stay the judgment of the queen a season, for it may well be that Sir Lancelot was in her chamber for no evil, seeing she is greatly beholden to him for so many deeds done for her sake, and peradventure she had sent to him to thank him, and did it secretly that she might avoid slander."

But King Arthur answered, full of grief, "Alas! I may not help her; she is

judged as any other woman."

Then he required Sir Gawain and his brethren, Sir Gaheris and Sir Gareth, to be ready to bear the queen to-morrow to the place of execution.

"Nay, noble lord," replied Sir Gawain, "that can I never do; for neither will my heart suffer me to see the queen die, nor shall men ever say I was of your counsel in this matter."

Then said his brother, "Ye may command us to be there, but since it is against our will, we will be without arms, that we may do no battle against her."

So on the morrow was Queen Guinevere led forth to die by fire, and a mighty crowd was there, of knights and nobles, armed and unarmed. And all the lords and ladies wept sore at that piteous sight. Then was she shriven by a priest, and the men came nigh to bind her to the stake and light the fire.

At that Sir Lancelot's spies rode hastily and told him and his kindred, who lay hidden in a wood hard by; and suddenly, with twenty knights, he rushed into the midst of all the throng to rescue her.

But certain of King Arthur's knights rose up and fought with them, and there was a full great battle and confusion. And Sir Lancelot drave fiercely here and there among the press, and smote on every side, and at every blow struck down a knight, so that many were slain by him and his fellows.

Then was the queen set free, and caught up on Sir Lancelot's saddle and fled away with him and all his company to the Castle of La Joyous Garde.

Now so it chanced that, in the turmoil of the fighting, Sir Lancelot had unawares struck down and slain the two good knights Sir Gareth and Sir Gaheris, knowing it not, for he fought wildly, and saw not that they were unarmed.

When King Arthur heard thereof, and of all that battle, and the rescue of the queen, he sorrowed heavily for those good knights, and was passing wroth with Lancelot and the queen.

But when Sir Gawain heard of his brethren's death he swooned for sorrow and wrath, for he wist that Sir Lancelot had killed them in malice. And as soon as he recovered he ran in to the king, and said, "Lord king and uncle, hear this oath which now I swear, that from this day I will not fail Sir Lancelot till one of us hath slain the other. And now, unless ye haste to war with him, that we may be avenged, will I myself alone go after him."

Then the king, full of wrath and grief, agreed thereto, and sent letters throughout the realm to summon all his knights, and went with a vast army to besiege the Castle of La Joyous Garde. And Sir Lancelot, with his knights, mightily defended it; but never would he suffer any to go forth and attack one of the king's army, for he was right loth to fight against him.

So when fifteen weeks were passed, and King Arthur's army wasted itself in vain against the castle, for it was passing strong, it chanced upon a day Sir Lancelot was looking from the walls and espied King Arthur and Sir Gawain close beside.

"Come forth, Sir Lancelot," said King Arthur right fiercely, "and let us two meet in the midst of the field."

"God forbid that I should encounter with thee, lord, for thou didst make me a knight," replied Sir Lancelot.

Then cried Sir Gawain, "Shame on thee, traitor and false knight, yet be ye well assured we will regain the queen and slay thee and thy company; yea, double shame on ye to slay my brother Gaheris unarmed, Sir Gareth also, who loved ye so well. For that treachery, be sure I am thine enemy till death."

"Alas!" cried Sir Lancelot, "that I hear such tidings, for I knew not I had slain those noble knights, and right sorely now do I repent it with a heavy heart. Yet abate thy wrath, Sir Gawain, for ye know full well I did it by mischance, for I loved them ever as my own brothers."

"Thou liest, false recreant," cried Sir Gawain, fiercely.

At that Sir Lancelot was wroth, and said, "I well see thou art now mine enemy, and that there can be no more peace with thee, or with my lord the king, else would I gladly give back the queen."

Then the king would fain have listened to Sir Lancelot, for more than all his own wrong did he grieve at the sore waste and damage of the realm, but Sir Gawain persuaded him against it, and ever cried out foully on Sir Lancelot.

When Sir Bors and the other knights of Lancelot's party heard the fierce words of Sir Gawain, they were passing wroth, and prayed to ride forth and be avenged on him, for they were weary of so long waiting to no good. And in the end Sir Lancelot, with a heavy heart, consented.

So on the morrow the hosts on either side met in the field, and there was a great battle. And Sir Gawain prayed his knights chiefly to set upon Sir Lancelot; but Sir Lancelot commanded his company to forbear King Arthur and Sir Gawain.

So the two armies jostled together right fiercely, and Sir Gawain proffered to encounter with Sir Lionel, and overthrew him. But Sir Bors and Sir Blamor, and Sir Palomedes, who were on Sir Lancelot's side, did great feats of arms, and overthrew many of King Arthur's knights.

Then the king came forth against Sir Lancelot, but Sir Lancelot forbore him and would not strike again.

At that Sir Bors rode up against the king and smote him down. But Sir Lancelot cried, "Touch him not on pain of thy head," and going to King Arthur

he alighted and gave him his own horse, saying, "My lord, I pray thee forbear this strife, for it can bring to neither of us any honor."

And when King Arthur looked on him the tears came to his eyes as he thought of his noble courtesy, and he said within himself, "Alas! that ever this war began."

But on the morrow Sir Gawain led forth the army again, and Sir Bors commanded on Sir Lancelot's side. And they two struck together so fiercely that both fell to the ground sorely wounded; and all the day they fought till night fell, and many were slain on both sides, yet in the end neither gained the victory.

But by now the fame of this fierce war spread through all Christendom, and when the Pope heard thereof he sent a Bull, and charged King Arthur to make peace with Lancelot, and receive back Queen Guinevere; and for the offense imputed to her absolution should be given by the Pope.

Thereto would King Arthur straightway have obeyed, but Sir Gawain ever urged him to refuse.

When Sir Lancelot heard thereof, he wrote thus to the king: "It was never in my thought, lord, to withhold thy queen from thee; but since she was condemned for my sake to death, I deemed it but a just and knightly part to rescue her therefrom; wherefore I recommend me to your grace, and within eight days will I come to thee and bring the queen in safety."

Then, within eight days, as he had said, Sir Lancelot rode from out the castle with Queen Guinevere, and a hundred knights for company, each carrying an olive branch, in sign of peace. And so they came to the court, and found King Arthur sitting on his throne, with Sir Gawain and many other knights around him. And when Sir Lancelot entered with the queen, they both kneeled down before the king.

Anon Sir Lancelot rose and said, "My lord, I have brought hither my lady the queen again, as right requireth, and by commandment of the Pope and you. I pray ye take her to your heart again and forget the past. For myself I may ask nothing, and for my sin I shall have sorrow and sore punishment; yet I would to heaven I might have your grace."

But ere the king could answer, for he was moved with pity at his words, Sir Gawain cried aloud, "Let the king do as he will, but be sure, Sir Lancelot, thou and I shall never be accorded while we live, for thou has slain my brethren traitorously and unarmed."

"As heaven is my help," replied Sir Lancelot, "I did it ignorantly, for I loved them well, and while I live I shall bewail their death; but to make war with me were no avail, for I must needs fight with thee if thou assailest, and peradventure I might kill thee also, which I were right loth to do."

"I will forgive thee never," cried Sir Gawain, "and if the king accordeth with thee he shall lose my service."

Then the knights who stood near tried to reconcile Sir Gawain to Sir Lancelot, but he would not hear them. So, at the last, Sir Lancelot said, "Since peace is vain, I will depart, lest I bring more evil on my fellowship."

And as he turned to go, the tears fell from him, and he said, "Alas, most noble Christian realm, which I have loved above all others, now shall I see thee never more!" Then said he to the queen, "Madam, now must I leave ye and this noble fellowship forever. And, I beseech ye, pray for me, and if ye ever be defamed of any, let me hear thereof, and as I have been ever thy true knight in right and wrong, so will I be again."

With that he kneeled and kissed King Arthur's hands, and departed on his way. And there was none in all that court, save Sir Gawain alone, but wept to see him go.

So he returned with all his knights to the Castle of La Joyous Garde, and, for his sorrow's sake, he named it Dolorous Garde thenceforth.

Anon he left the realm, and went with many of his fellowship beyond the sea to France, and there divided all his lands among them equally, he sharing but as the rest.

And from that time forward peace had been between him and King Arthur, but for Sir Gawain, who left the king no rest, but constantly persuaded him that Lancelot was raising mighty hosts against him.

So in the end his malice overcame the king, who left the government in charge of Modred, and made him guardian of the queen, and went with a great army to invade Sir Lancelot's lands.

Yet Sir Lancelot would make no war upon the king, and sent a message to gain peace on any terms King Arthur chose. But Sir Gawain met the herald ere he reached the king, and sent him back with taunting and bitter words. Whereat Sir Lancelot sorrowfully called his knights together and fortified the Castle of Benwicke, and there was shortly besieged by the army of King Arthur.

And every day Sir Gawain rode up to the walls, and cried out foully on Sir Lancelot, till, upon a time, Sir Lancelot answered him that he would meet him in the field and put his boasting to the proof. So it was agreed on both sides that there should none come nigh them or separate them till one had fallen or yielded; and they two rode forth.

Then did they wheel their horses apart, and turning, came together as it had been thunder, so that both horses fell, and both their lances broke. At that they drew their swords and set upon each other fiercely, with passing grievous strokes.



Now Sir Gawain had through magic a marvelous great gift. For every day, from morning till noon, his strength waxed to the might of seven men, but after that waned to his natural force. Therefore till noon he gave Sir Lancelot many mighty buffets, which scarcely he endured. Yet greatly he forbore Sir Gawain, for he was aware of his enchantment, and smote him slightly till his own knights marveled. But after noon Sir Gawain's strength sank fast, and then, with one full blow, Sir Lancelot laid him on the earth. Then Sir Gawain cried out, "Turn not away, thou traitor knight, but slay me if thou wilt, or else I will arise and fight with thee again some other time."

"Sir knight," replied Sir Lancelot, "I never yet smote a fallen man."

At that they bore Sir Gawain sorely wounded to his tent, and King Arthur withdrew his men, for he was loth to shed the blood of so many knights of his own fellowship.

But now came tidings to King Arthur from across the sea, which caused him to return in haste. For thus the news ran, that no sooner was Sir Modred set up in his regency, than he had forged false tidings from abroad that the king had fallen in a battle with Sir Lancelot. Whereat he had proclaimed himself the king, and had been crowned at Canterbury, where he had held a coronation feast for fifteen days. Then he had gone to Winchester, where Queen Guinevere abode, and had commanded her to be his wife; whereto, for fear and sore perplexity, she had feigned consent, but, under pretext of preparing for the marriage, had fled in haste to London and taken shelter in the Tower, fortifying it and providing it with all manner of victuals, and defending it against Sir Modred, and answering to all his threats that she would rather slay herself than be his queen.

Thus was it written to King Arthur. Then, in passing great wrath and haste, he came with all his army swiftly back from France and sailed to England. But when Sir Modred heard thereof, he left the Tower and marched with all his host to meet the king at Dover.

Then fled Queen Guinevere to Amesbury to a nunnery, and there she clothed herself in sackcloth, and spent her time in praying for the king and in good deeds and fasting. And in that nunnery evermore she lived, sorely repenting and mourning for her sin, and for the ruin she had brought on all the realm. And there anon she died.

And when Sir Lancelot heard thereof, he put his knightly armor off, and bade farewell to all his kin, and went a mighty pilgrimage for many years, and after lived a hermit till his death.

When Sir Modred came to Dover, he found King Arthur and his army but just landed; and there they fought a fierce and bloody battle, and many great and noble knights fell on both sides.

But the king's side had the victory, for he was beyond himself with might and passion, and all his knights so fiercely followed him, that, in spite of all their multitude, they drove Sir Modred's army back with fearful wounds and slaughter, and slept that night upon the battle-field.

But Sir Gawain was smitten by an arrow in the wound Sir Lancelot gave him, and wounded to the death. Then was he borne to the king's tent, and King Arthur sorrowed over him as it had been his own son. "Alas!" said he; "in Sir Lancelot and in you I had my greatest earthly joy, and now is all gone from me."

And Sir Gawain answered, with a feeble voice, "My lord and king, I know well my death is come, and through my own wilfulness, for I am smitten in the wound Sir Lancelot gave me. Alas! that I have been the cause of all this war, for but for me thou hadst been now at peace with Lancelot, and then had Modred never done this treason. I pray ye, therefore, my dear lord, be now agreed with Lancelot, and tell him, that although he gave me my death-wound, it was through my own seeking; wherefore I beseech him to come back to England, and here to visit my tomb, and pray for my soul."

When he had thus spoken, Sir Gawain gave up his ghost, and the king grievously mourned for him.

Then they told him that the enemy had camped on Barham Downs, whereat, with all his hosts, he straightway marched there, and fought again a bloody battle, and overthrew Sir Modred utterly. Howbeit, he raised yet another army, and retreating ever from before the king, increased his numbers as he went, till at the farthest west in Lyonesse, he once more made a stand.

Now, on the night of Trinity Sunday, being the eve of the battle, King Arthur had a vision, and saw Sir Gawain in a dream, who warned him not to fight with Modred on the morrow, else he would be surely slain; and prayed him to delay till Lancelot and his knights should come to aid him.

So when King Arthur woke he told his lords and knights that vision, and all agreed to wait the coming of Sir Lancelot. Then a herald was sent with a message of truce to Sir Modred, and a treaty was made that neither army should assail the other.

But when the treaty was agreed upon, and the heralds returned, King Arthur said to his knights, "Beware, lest Sir Modred deceive us, for I in no wise trust him, and if swords be drawn be ready to encounter!" And Sir Modred likewise gave an order, that if any man of the king's army drew his sword, they should begin to fight.

And as it chanced, a knight of the king's side was bitten by an adder in the foot, and hastily drew forth his sword to slay it. That saw Sir Modred, and forthwith commanded all his army to assail the king's.

So both sides rushed to battle, and fought passing fiercely. And when the king saw there was no hope to stay them, he did right mightily and nobly as a king should do, and ever, like a lion, raged in the thickest of the press, and slew on the right hand and on the left, till his horse went fetlock deep in blood. So all day long they fought, and stinted not till many a noble knight was slain.

But the king was passing sorrowful to see his trusty knights lie dead on every side. And at the last but two remained beside him, Sir Lucan, and his brother, Sir Bedivere, and both were sorely wounded.

"Now am I come to mine end," said King Arthur; "but, lo! that traitor Modred liveth yet, and I may not die till I have slain him. Now, give me my spear, Sir Lucan."

"Lord, let him be," replied Sir Lucan; "for if ye pass through this unhappy day, ye shall be right well revenged upon him. My good lord, remember well your dream, and what the spirit of Sir Gawain did fore-warn ye."

"Betide me life, betide me death," said the king; "now I see him yonder alone, he shall never escape my hands, for at a better vantage shall I never have him."

"God speed you well," said Sir Bedivere.

Then King Arthur got his spear in both his hands, and ran towards Sir Modred, crying, "Traitor, now is thy death-day come!" And when Sir Modred heard his words, and saw him come, he drew his sword and stood to meet him. Then King Arthur smote Sir Modred through the body more than a fathom. And when Sir Modred felt he had his death wound, he thrust himself with all his might up to the end of King Arthur's spear, and smote his father, Arthur, with his sword upon the head, so that it pierced both helm and brain-pan.

And therewith Sir Modred fell down stark dead to the earth, and King Arthur fell down also in a swoon, and swooned many times.

Then Sir Lucan and Sir Bedivere came and bare him away to a little chapel by the sea-shore. And there Sir Lucan sank down with the bleeding of his own wounds, and fell dead.

And King Arthur lay long in a swoon, and when he came to himself, he found Sir Lucan lying dead beside him, and Sir Bedivere weeping over the body of his brother.

Then said the king to Sir Bedivere, "Weeping will avail no longer, else would I grieve forevermore. Alas! now is the fellowship of the Round Table dissolved forever, and all my realm I have so loved is wasted with war. But my time hieth fast, wherefore take thou Excalibur, my good sword, and go therewith to yonder water-side and throw it in, and bring me word what thing thou seest."

So Sir Bedivere departed; but as he went he looked upon the sword, the hilt

whereof was all inlaid with precious stones exceeding rich. And presently he said within himself, "If I now throw this sword into the water, what good should come of it?" So he hid the sword among the reeds, and came again to the king.

"What sawest thou?" said he to Sir Bedivere.

"Lord," said he, "I saw nothing else but wind and waves."

"Thou hast untruly spoken," said the king; "wherefore go lightly back and throw it in, and spare not."

Then Sir Bedivere returned again, and took the sword up in his hand; but when he looked on it, he thought it sin and shame to throw away a thing so noble. Wherefore he hid it yet again, and went back to the king.

"What saw ye?" said King Arthur.

"Lord," answered he, "I saw nothing but the water ebbing and flowing."

"Oh, traitor and untrue!" cried out the king; "twice hast thou now betrayed me. Art thou called of men a noble knight, and wouldest betray me for a jewelled sword? Now, therefore, go again for the last time, for thy tarrying hath put me in sore peril of my life, and I fear my wound hath taken cold; and if thou do it not this time, by my faith I will arise and slay thee with my hands."

Then Sir Bedivere ran quickly and took up the sword, and went down to the water's edge, and bound the girdle round the hilt and threw it far into the water. And lo! an arm and hand came forth above the water, and caught the sword, and brandished it three times, and vanished.

So Sir Bedivere came again to the king and told him what he had seen.

"Help me from hence," said King Arthur; "for I dread me I have tarried over long."

Then Sir Bedivere took the king up in his arms, and bore him to the water's edge. And by the shore they saw a barge with three fair queens therein, all dressed in black, and when they saw King Arthur they wept and wailed.

"Now put me in the barge," said he to Sir Bedivere, and tenderly he did so.

Then the three queens received him, and he laid his head upon the lap of one of them, who cried, "Alas! dear brother, why have ye tarried so long, for your wound hath taken cold?"

With that the barge put from the land, and when Sir Bedivere saw it departing, he cried with a bitter cry, "Alas! my lord King Arthur, what shall become of me now ye have gone from me?"

"Comfort ye," said King Arthur, "and be strong, for I may no more help ye. I go to the Vale of Avilion to heal me of my grievous wound, and if ye see me no more, pray for my soul."

Then the three queens kneeled down around the king and sorely wept and wailed, and the barge went forth to sea, and departed slowly out of Sir Bedivere's

sight.

**GAWAIN AND THE GREEN  
KNIGHT:  
A FAIRY TALE**

**by Anonymous**

# Table of Contents

PREFACE  
CANTO I  
CANTO II  
CANTO III  
CANTO IV

## PREFACE



Arms and the man I sing,—not as of old  
The Mantuan bard his mighty verse unrolled,  
But in such humbler strains as may beseem  
Light changes rung on a fantastic theme.  
My tale is ancient, but the sense is new,—  
Replete with monstrous fictions, yet half true;—  
And, if you'll follow till the story's done,  
I promise much instruction, and some fun.



# CANTO I

---

## THE GREEN KNIGHT

King Arthur and his court were blithe and gay  
In high-towered Camelot, on Christmas day,  
For all the Table Round were back again,  
At peace with God and with their fellow-men.  
Their shields hung idly on the pictured wall;  
Their blood-stained banners decked the festal hall  
Light footsteps, rustling on the rush-strewn floors,  
And laughter, rippling down long corridors,  
Attested minds at ease and hearts at play,—  
Rude Mars unharnessed for love's holiday.  
In the great hall the Christmas feast was done.  
The level sunbeams from the setting sun  
Stretched through the mullioned casements to the wall,  
And wove fantastic shadows over all.  
The revelry was hushed. In tranquil ease  
The warriors grouped themselves by twos and threes  
About the dames and damsels of the court,  
And chattered careless words of small import;  
But in an alcove, unobserved, apart,  
Young Gawain sat with Lady Elfinhart,  
In Arthur's court no goodlier knight than he  
Wore shirt of mail, or Cupid's panoply;  
And Elfinhart, to Gawain's eager eyes.  
Of all heaven's treasures seemed the goodliest prize.  
Now daylight faded, and the twilight gloom  
Deepened the stillness in the vaulted room,  
Save where upon the hearth a fitful glow  
Blushed from the embers as the fire burned low.  
There is a certain subtle twilight mood,  
When two hearts meet in a dim solitude,

That thrills the soul e'en to the finger-tips,  
And brings the heart's dear secrets to the lips.  
In Gawain's corner, as the shades grew thicker,  
Four eyes waxed brighter, and two pulses quicker;  
Ten minutes more of quiet talk unbroken,  
And heaven alone can tell what might be spoken!  
But it was not to be, for fates unequal  
Compelled—but this anticipates the sequel.  
Just in the nick of time, King Arthur rose  
From his sedate post-prandial repose,  
And called for lights. Along the shadowy aisles  
His pages' footsteps pattered o'er the tiles,  
Speeding to do his errand, and at once  
Four tapers flickered from each silver sconce.  
The scene was changed, the dreamer's dream dispelled,  
And what might else have been his fate withheld  
From Gawain's grasp. So may one touch of chance  
Shatter the fragile fabric of romance,  
And all the heart's desire,—the joy, the trouble,—  
Flash to oblivion with the bursting bubble!

But Arthur, on his kingly dais-seat,  
Felt nothing of the passion and the heat  
That fire young blood. He raised his warlike head  
And glancing moodily around him, said:  
"So have ye feasted well, my knights, this day,  
And filled your hearts with revel and with play.  
But to my mind that day is basely spent  
Which passes by without accomplishment  
Of some bright deed of arms or chivalry.  
We rust in indolence. As well not be,  
As be the minions of an idle court  
Where all is gallantry and girlish sport!  
Some bold adventure let our thoughts devise,  
To stir our courage and to cheer our eyes."  
And lo! while yet he spoke, from far away  
In the thick shroud of the departed day,  
Upon the frosty air of evening borne,  
Came the faint challenge of a fairy horn!

King Arthur started up in mild surprise,

While knights and dames looked round with questioning eyes,  
And each to other spoke some hurried word,  
As, "Did you hear it?"—"What was that I heard?"  
But well they knew; for you must understand  
That Camelot lay close to Fairyland,  
And the wild blast of fairy horns, once known,  
Is straightway recognized as soon as blown,  
Being a sound unique, unearthly, shrill,—  
Between a screech-owl and a whip-poor-will.  
The mischief is, that no one e'er can tell  
Whether such heralding bodes ill or well!

The ladies of the palace looked faint fear,  
Dreading some perilous adventure near;  
For peril can the bravest spirits move,  
When threatening not ourselves, but those we love;  
But Lady Elfinhart clapped hands in glee,—  
In sooth, no sentimentalist seemed she,—  
And cried: "Now, brave Sir Gawain,—O what fun!  
Succor us, save us, else we are undone;  
Show us the prowess of your arm this night;  
I never saw a tilt by candle-light!"  
Gaily she spoke, and seemed all unconcerned;  
And yet a curious watcher might have learned  
From a slight quaver in her laughter free  
To doubt the frankness of her flippancy.  
Gawain, bewildered, looked the other way,  
And wondered what she meant; for in that day  
The ready wit of man was under muzzle,  
And woman's heart was still an unsolved puzzle;  
And Gawain, though in valor next to none,  
Wished that *her* heart had been a tenderer one.  
His sword was out for any foe on earth,  
And yet to face death for a lady's mirth  
Seemed scarce worth while. What honor bade, he'd do,  
But would have liked to see a tear or two.

While thus he pondered, came a sudden burst  
Of high-pitched fairy horn-calls, like the first,  
But nearer, clearer, deadlier than before,  
Blown seemingly from just outside the door.

The casements shook, the taper lights all trembled;  
The bravest knight's dismay was ill-dissembled;  
And as all sprang with one accord to win  
Their swords and shields, stern combat to begin,  
The great doors shot their bolts, and opened slowly in.

And now my laboring muse is hard beset,  
For something followed such as never yet  
Was writ or sung, by human voice or hand,  
Save those that tell old tales from Fairyland.  
"Miracles *do* not happen:"—'t is plain sense,  
If you italicize the present tense;  
But in those days, as rare old Chaucer tells,  
All Britain was fulfilled of miracles.  
So, as I said, the great doors opened wide.  
In rushed a blast of winter from outside,  
And with it, galloping on the empty air,  
A great green giant on a great green mare  
Plunged like a tempest-cleaving thunderbolt,  
And struck four-footed, with an earthquake's jolt,  
Plump on the hearthstone. There the uncouth wight  
Sat greenly laughing at the strange affright  
That paled all cheeks and opened wide all eyes;  
Till after the first shock of quick surprise  
The people circled round him, still in awe,  
And circling stared; and this is what they saw:  
Cassock and hood and hose, of plushy sheen  
Like close-cut grass upon a bowling-green,  
Covered his stature, from his verdant toes  
To the green brows that topped his emerald nose.  
His beard was glossy, like unripened corn;  
His eyes shot sparklets like the polar morn.  
But like in hue unto that deep-sea green  
Wherewith must shine those gems of ray serene  
The dark, unfathomed caves of ocean bear.  
Green was his raiment, green his monstrous mare.  
He rode unarmed, uncorseleted, unshielded,  
Except that in his huge right hand he wielded  
A frightful battle-axe, with blade as green  
As coppery rust;—but the long edge shone keen.

Such was the stranger, and he turned his head  
From one side to the other, and then said,  
With gentle voice, most like a summer breeze  
That rustles through the leaves of the green trees:  
"So this is Arthur's court! My noble lord,  
You said just now you felt a trifle bored,  
And wished, instead of dancing, feasting, flirting,  
Your gallant warriors might be exerting  
Their puissance upon some worthier thing.  
The wish, my lord, was worthy of a king!  
It pleased me; here I am; and I intend  
To serve your fancy as a faithful friend.  
I bring adventure,—no hard, tedious quest,  
But merely what I call a merry jest.  
Let some good knight, the doughtiest of you all,  
Swing this my battle-axe, and let it fall  
On whatsoever part of me he will;  
I will abide the blow, and hold me still;  
But let him, just a twelvemonth from this day,  
Come to me, if by any means he may,  
And let me, if I live, pay back my best,  
As he pays me. What think you of the jest?"  
He said; and made a courteous bow,—the while  
Lighting his features with a bright green smile;  
As when June breezes, after rain-clouds pass,  
Ripple in sunlight o'er the unmown grass.

The jest seemed fair indeed; but none the less  
No knight showed any undue forwardness  
To seize the offer. Some with laughter free  
Daffed it aside; while others carelessly  
Strolled to the farthest corners of the hall  
As if they had not heard his words at all,  
And whistled with an air of idle ease,  
Or studied figures in the tapestries.  
Not so Sir Gawain. Vexed in mind he stood  
With downcast eyes, and knew not what he would.  
Trained in the school of chivalry to prize  
His honor as the light of his dear eyes,  
He held his life, his fortunes, everything,

In sacred trust for knighthood and his king,  
And in the battle-field or tilting-yard  
He met his foe full-fronted, and struck hard.  
But now it seemed a foolish thing to throw  
One's whole life to the fortune of a blow.  
True valor breathes not in the braggart vaunt;  
True honor takes no shame from idle taunt;  
So let this wizard, if he wants to, scoff;  
Why should our hero have his head cut off?

While thus Sir Gawain, wrapped in thought intense,  
Debated honor versus common sense,  
The stranger knight was casting his green glance  
Around the circling throng,—until by chance  
He met the eyes of Lady Elfinhart,  
And—did she flush?—and did the Green Knight start?  
Surely a quiver twinkled in each eye;  
But what of that? It need not signify:  
Beneath his glance a brave man well might flush;  
What wonder then that a fair maid should blush?  
And as for him, no man that ever loved  
Could look upon her loveliness unmoved.

Could I but picture her—ah, you would deem  
My tale the figment of a poet's dream;  
And if you saw her, (could such bliss be given),  
You'd think *yourself* in dreamland—or in heaven.  
Not the red rapture of new-wakened roses,  
When morning dew their soul of love uncloses,  
(Roses that must be wooed,—nor may be won  
Save by the prince of lovers, the warm sun),  
Not the fair lily, nor the violet shy,  
Whose heart's love lurks deep in her still blue eye,  
Nor any flower, the loveliest and the best,  
Can image to you half the charm compressed  
In those dear eyes, those lips,—nay, every part  
That made that sum of witcheries—Elfinhart.

Her face was a dim dream of shadowy light,  
Like misty moonbeams on the fields of night,  
And in her voice sweet nature's sweetest tunes  
Sang the glad song of twenty cloudless Junes.

Her raiment,—nay; go, reader, if you please,  
To some sage Treatise on Antiquities,  
Whence writers of historical romances  
Cull old embroideries for their new-spun fancies;  
I care not for the trivial, nor the fleeting.  
Beneath her dress a woman's heart was beating  
The rhythm of love's eternal eloquence,  
And I confess to you, in confidence,  
Though flowers have grown a thousand years above her,  
Unseen, unknown, with all my soul I love her.

From these digressions upon love and glory,  
'Tis time we were returning to our story.  
I only meant, in a few words, to tell you  
(For fear my heroine's conduct should repel you)  
That if she jests, for instance, out of season,  
Perhaps there is a good substantial reason.  
Sir Gawain, had he seen the stranger wink  
And seen the lady blushing, you may think  
Might have been spared a most unhappy lot.  
Perhaps you're right;—but peradventure not.  
I give you but a hint, for half the art  
Of narrative is holding back a part,  
And if without reserve I gave my best  
In the first canto, who would read the rest?

But now Sir Gawain, with a troubled eye,  
Looked up, and saw his lady standing by.  
Quoth he: "And if this conjurer unblest  
Win no acceptance of his bitter jest,  
How then in after days shall Arthur's court  
Confront the calumny and foul report  
Of idle tongues?" The wrath in Gawain's eyes  
Hashed for an instant; then in humbler wise  
He spoke on: "Yet God grant I be not blind  
Where honor lights the way; for to my mind  
True honor bids us shun the devil's den,  
To fight God's battles in the world of men.  
Who takes this challenge up, I doubt will rue it."  
Quoth Elfinhart: "I'd like to see you do it!"  
She laughed a gay laugh, but by hard constraint:

Then turned and hid her face, all pale and faint,  
As one might be who stabs and turns the knife  
In the warm heart of one more dear than life.  
She turned and Gawain saw not; but he heard,  
And felt his heart-strings tighten at her word.  
"Nay, lady, if you wish it I will try;  
Be your least wish my will, although I die!  
Yet one thing, if I may, I fain would ask,  
Before I make the venture;—if this task  
Prove fateful as it threatens,—do you care?"  
"Perhaps," said Elfinhart, "you do not dare!"  
Lightly she laughed, and scoffing tossed her head,  
Yet spoke as one who knew not what she said,  
With random words, and with quick-taken breath;  
Then turned again, ere that same look of death  
Should steal upon her and betray her heart  
Despite all stratagems of woman's art.  
And Gawain heard but saw not; and the night  
Descended on him, and his face grew white  
With grief and passion. When all else is lost,  
The brave man gives life too, nor counts the cost.  
"I dreamt," he murmured to himself, "and dreaming  
I took for truth what was but sweetest seeming.  
My waking eyes find naught in life to keep;  
I take the venture, and so back—to sleep."

By this, the stranger had at last become  
Tired of long waiting, and of sitting dumb  
Upon his charger; so with greenest leer  
He vented his impatience in a sneer.  
"Is this," he said, "the glorious Table Round,  
And is its glory naught but empty sound?  
Braggarts! I put your bluster to the test,  
And find you quail before a merry jest!"  
Then the great king himself stood up in ire,  
With clenched hand raised, and eyes that gleamed dark fire,  
And fronting the Green Knight he cried: "Forbear!  
For by my sword Excalibur I swear,  
"Whate'er thou be, thou shalt not carry hence  
Unscathed the memory of thine insolence.



Such jests as thine please not; yet even so  
I take thine axe; kneel thou, and take my blow."

Across the Green Knight's features there was seen  
To pass a fleeting shade of deeper green,  
Whether of disappointment or resentment  
None knew; but straight a smile of bright contentment  
Followed, as through the throng of dazed beholders  
He saw Sir Gawain thrust his sturdy shoulders.  
The stranger winked at Elfinhart once more,  
Well pleased, and Gawain knelt down on the floor.  
"A boon," he cried, "a boon, my lord and king!  
If ever yet in any little thing  
These hands have served thee, hear my last request:  
Let *me* adventure this mad monster's jest!"  
King Arthur shook his head in dumb denial,  
Loth to withdraw his own hand from the trial,  
And leave the vengeance that himself had vowed;  
But all the people called to him aloud,  
"Sir Gawain! let Sir Gawain strike the blow!"  
And Guinevere, the queen, besought him low  
To leave this venture to the lesser man.  
He yielded, and the merry jest began.

The visitor, dismounting, made a bow  
To Arthur, then to all the court. "And now,"  
Said he to Gawain, "wheresoe'er you choose  
To strike your blow, strike on; I'll not refuse;  
Head, shoulders, chest, or waist, I little reck;  
Where shall it be?" Quoth Gawain, "In the neck!"

So Gawain took the axe. The stranger knelt  
Before him on the hearth and loosed his belt,  
And threw back his green cassock and his hood,  
To give his foe the fairest mark he could.  
Then thus to Gawain: "Ready! But remember  
To come the twenty-fifth of next December,  
And take from me the self-same stroke again!"  
"And where," asked Gawain, "may I find you then?"  
"We'll speak of that, please, when you've struck your blow;  
For if I can't speak, then you need not go!"  
He chuckled softly to himself; then turned

And waited for the blow, all unconcerned.

Not so the knights and ladies of the court;  
They pushed and craned their necks to see the sport;  
Not from the lust of blood, for few expected  
To see blood shed, or the Green Knight dissected,  
But knowing that some marvel was in store  
Unparalleled in all Arthurian lore,  
And fairly filled with wide-eyed wonderment.  
But Lady Elfinhart stayed not. She went  
Into the alcove where we saw her first  
And laid her sweet face in her arms, and burst  
Into—but none could tell, unless by peeping,  
Whether she shook with laughter or with weeping.

And Gawain rubbed his arms, his chest he beat,  
Then grasped the battle-axe and braced his feet,  
And swung the ponderous weapon high in air,  
And brought it down like lightning, fair and square  
Upon the stranger's neck. The axe flashed through,  
Cutting the Green Knight cleanly right in two,  
And split the hard stone floor like kindling wood.  
The head dropped off; out gushed the thick, hot blood  
Like—I can't find the simile I want,  
But let us say a flood of *crème de menthe*!  
And then the warriors standing round about  
Sent up from fifty throats a mighty shout,  
As when o'er blood-sprent fields the long cheers roll  
Cacophonous, for him who kicks a goal.

"O Gawain! Well done, Gawain!" they all cried;  
But straight the tumult and the shouting died,  
And deadly pallor overspread each face,  
For the knight's body stood up in its place  
And stepping nimbly forward seized the head  
That lay still on the hearthstone, seeming dead;  
Then vaulted lightly, with a careless air,  
Back to the saddle of his grass-green mare.  
He held the head up, and behold! it spoke.  
"My best congratulations on that stroke,  
Sir Gawain; it was delicately done!  
Our merry little jest is well begun,

But look you fail me not this day next year!  
At the Green Chapel by the Murmuring Mere  
I will await you when the sun sinks low,  
And pay you back full measure, blow for blow!"  
He wheeled about, the doors flew wide once more,  
The mare's hoofs struck green sparkles from the floor,  
And with a whirring flash of emerald light  
Both horse and rider vanished in the night.

Then all the lords and ladies rubbed their eyes  
And slowly roused themselves from dumb surprise.  
The great hall echoed once more with the clatter  
Of laughing men's and frightened women's chatter;  
But Gawain, with the axe in hand, stood still,  
Heedless of what was passing, with no will  
For life or death, for all that made life dear  
Was fled like summer when the leaves fall sere.  
And Arthur spoke, misreading Gawain's thought:  
"Heaven send we have not all too dearly bought  
Our evening's pastime, Gawain. You have done  
As fits a fearless knight, and nobly won  
Our thanks in equal measure with our praise.  
Be both remembered in the after days!"

So spoke the king, and, to confirm his word,  
From far away in the deep night was heard  
Once more the fairy horn-call, clear and shrill;  
It died upon the wind, and all was still.  
The hour was late. King Arthur, rising, said  
Good-night to all his court, and went to bed.

## CANTO II

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### ELFINHART

In Canto I. I followed the old rule  
We learned from Horace when we went to school,  
And took a headlong plunge *in medias res*,  
As Maro did, and blind Mæonides;  
And now, still following the ancient mode,  
I come to the time-honored "episode,"  
Retrace my way some twenty years or more,  
And tell you what I should have told before.  
It seems an awkward method, but it's art;—  
Besides, it brings us back to Elfinhart.

In those dark days before King Arthur came,  
When Britain was laid waste with sword and flame,  
When cut-throats lurked behind the blossoming thorn,  
And young maids cursed the day when they were born,  
A lady, widowed in one hideous night,  
Fled over heath and hill, and in her flight  
Came to the magic willow-woods that stand  
Beside the Murmuring Mere, in Fairyland;  
And there, untimely, by the forest-side,  
Clasping her infant in her arms, she died.  
Yet not all friendless,—for such mortal throes  
Pass not unpitied, though no mortal knows;—  
The spirits that infest the clearer air  
Looked down upon the innocent lady there,  
While troops of fairies smoothed her mossy bed  
And with sweet balsam pillowed her fair head.  
Her dim eyes could not see them, but she guessed  
Whose gentle ministrations thus had blessed  
Her travail; and when pitying fairies laid  
Upon her heart the child,—a blue-eyed maid,—

Ere yet her troubled spirit might depart,  
With one last word she named her "Elfinhart."

So with new-quicken'd love the fairy elves  
Took the forlorn child-maiden to themselves  
And reared her in the wildwood, where no jar  
Of alien discord, echoing from afar,  
Broke the sweet forest murmur, long years round.  
Her ears, attuned to every woodland sound,  
Translated to her soul the great world's voice,  
And the world-spirit made her heart rejoice.  
And love was hers,—perennial, intense,—  
The love that wells from joy and innocence  
And sanctifies the cloistered heart of youth,—  
The love of love, of beauty, and of truth.

So Elfinhart grew up. Each passing year  
Of forest life beside the Murmuring Mere  
Enriched tenfold the natural dower of grace  
That shone from the pure spirit in her face.  
I cannot tell why each revolving season  
Enhanced her beauty thus. Some say the reason  
Was in the stars; *I* think those luminaries  
Had less to do with it than had the fairies!  
The more they found of grace in her, the more  
Their silent influence added to her store;  
For they were always with her; they and she  
Still bore each other loving company.

And yet one further virtue,—not the least  
Of those that make life lovable,—increased  
In Elfinhart's sweet nature from her birth  
By fairy tutelage; and that was mirth.  
For fairy natures are compounded all  
Of whimsies and of freaks fantastical,  
And what the best of fairies loves the best  
(Except pure kindness) is an artless jest.  
And so wise men have argued, on the whole,  
That the misguided creatures have no soul;  
But as for me, if the bright fairy elf  
Has none, I'll get along without, myself!  
These fairies laughed and danced and sang sweet songs,

And did all else that to their craft belongs,—  
All tricks and pranks of whole-souled jollity  
That make life merry 'neath the greenwood tree.  
The youngest of them childishly beguiled  
The time when Elfinhart was still a child;  
They pinched her fingers, and they pulled her ears,  
Or sometimes, when her blue eyes dreamed of tears,  
Half smothered her with showers of four-leafed clover,—  
Then fled for refuge to some sweet-fern cover;  
But she pursued them through their tangled lair  
And caught them, and put fire-flies in their hair;  
And then they all joined hands, and round and round  
They danced a morris on the moonlit ground.

The years went by, and Elfinhart outgrew  
The madcap antics of the younger crew,  
(For fairies age but slowly: don't forget  
That at two hundred they are children yet!)  
But still she frolicked with them, though scarce *of* them,  
And learned each year more tenderly to love them.  
But most of all she loved with all her heart  
On quiet summer nights to walk apart  
And hold close converse with the fairies' queen,—  
A radiant maiden princess who had seen  
Some twenty centuries of revolving suns  
Pass over Fairyland,—all golden ones!  
Sometimes they sat still in the mild moon's light,  
Where chestnut blooms made sweet the breath of night,  
And talked of the great world beyond the wood,—  
Of death, or sin, or sorrow, understood  
Of neither,—till the twinkling stars were gone,  
And bustling Chanticleer proclaimed the dawn.  
And Elfinhart grew wise in fairy learning;  
But by degrees a half unconscious yearning  
For humankind stirred in her gentle heart,  
And woke a deep desire to bear her part  
Of love and sorrow in the larger life  
As sister, helper,—nay, perhaps as wife;—  
For such vague instincts, after all, are human,  
And Elfinhart herself was but a woman.

And yet, for all this new desire, I doubt  
If Elfinhart would e'er have spoken out,  
And told the fairies of her wish to leave them,  
(A wish her conscious heart well knew would grieve them),  
If in the ripening of her silent thought  
A still voice had not whispered that she ought  
To leave that world of love and mirth and beauty,  
To share man's burden in this world of duty.  
(There's anticlimax for you! Most provoking,  
Just when you thought that I was only joking,  
Or idly fingering the poet's laurel,  
To find my story threatens to be moral!  
But as for morals, though in verse we scout them,  
In life we somehow can't get on without them;  
So if I don't insert a moral distich  
Once in a while, I can't be realistic;—  
And in this tale, I solemnly aver,  
My one wish is to tell things as they were!  
But not *all* things; time flies, and art is long,  
And I must hurry onward with my song.)  
How Elfinhart at last told what she wanted,  
And what the fairies said, please take for granted.  
She prayed, they yielded; Elfinhart full loth  
To leave, as they to let her go, but both  
Agreeing that this bitter thing must be;  
For they were fairies, and a mortal she.  
But ere they yielded, they made imposition  
Of what then seemed to her a light condition.  
'Twas done in kindness, be it understood,  
With fairy foresight for the maiden's good.  
The elf-queen spoke for all: "Dear Elfinhart,  
We bind you to one promise ere we part.  
We fear naught from men's malice; hate and wrath  
And every evil thing will shun your path,  
And sunshine will go with you when you move;  
The only danger that we dread is love.  
If in the after days, when suitors woo you,  
Your heart makes choice of one, as dearest to you,  
Before you put your hand in his and own

The sacred trust reserved for him alone,  
Let us make trial of him, and approve  
His virtue, and his manhood, and his love.  
Send him to us; and if he bears the test,  
And if we find him worthy to be blest  
With love like yours, be sure we will befriend him;  
And may a life-long happiness attend him!  
But if he prove a traitor, or faint-hearted,  
Or if his love and he are lightly parted,  
In the deep willow-woods he shall remain,  
And never look upon your face again!"  
The maiden, fancy-free, was well content,  
And with light laughter gave her full consent;  
For when maids think of love (as maidens do)  
It seems a far-off thing; and well she knew  
Her lover, if she loved, would be both brave and true!  
Not long thereafter came an errant band  
Riding along the edge of Fairyland,—  
Stout men-at-arms, without reproach or spot,  
And in the lead the bold Sir Launcelot.  
He, riding on ahead, silent, alone,  
Was stopped by a beseeching ancient crone  
Who hobbled to his side, as if in pain,  
And clutched with palsied fingers at his rein.  
And there behind her, from the leafage green,  
The sweetest eyes his eyes had ever seen  
Were gazing at him with wide wonderment,  
Nor bold nor fearful; innocence unshent  
Shone from their blue depths, and old dreams awoke  
In Launcelot's breast, while thus the beldame spoke:  
"A boon, a boon, Sir Launcelot of the Lake!  
I Pray you of your courtesy to take  
This damsel to the King. Her enemies  
Have spoiled her of her birthright, and she flees  
An innocent outcast from her wasted lands,  
To lay her life and fortune in his hands."  
She spoke, and vanished in the woodland shade.  
Then Launcelot, leaning over helped the maid  
To mount behind and at an easy trot



They and the troop rode on to Camelot.  
He asked no questions for some fairy spell  
Made light his heart, and told him all was well;  
And as these two rode through the land together,  
By dappled greenwood shade and sunlit heather,  
Her soft voice in his ears, the innocent charm  
Of her light, steady touch upon his arm,  
Wrought magic in his soul. That day, I ween,  
Sir Launcelot well-nigh forgot his queen.  
And Elfinhart (you knew those eyes were hers!)  
Laughed with the silvery jingle of his spurs,  
And from her heart the new world's rapture drove  
All thought of Fairyland—excepting love.

And so to high-towered Camelot they came,  
The golden city,—now a shadowy name;  
For over heath-clad hills the wild-winds blow  
Where Arthur's halls, a thousand years ago  
Bright with all far-fetched gems of curious art,  
Shone brighter with the eyes of Elfinhart.  
She came to Camelot; the king receives her;  
And there for five glad years my story leaves her.  
Five glad years, and this "episode" is done,  
And we are back again at Canto I.

I write of merry jest and greenwood shade,  
But tales of chivalry are not my trade;  
So if you wish to read that five years' story  
Of lady-love, romance, and martial glory,—  
The mighty feats of arms that Gawain did,—  
The ever ripening love that Gawain hid  
Five long years in his breast, biding his time,—  
Go seek it in some abler poet's rime.

My tale begins with the young knight's brave soul  
All Elfinhart's. She thinks herself heart-whole.

But at that Christmas feast, in Arthur's hall,  
With night's soft mantle folded over all,  
The magic influence of the evening tide  
Stole on their two hearts beating side by side.  
And Gawain talked of troubles long ago,  
When each man's neighbor was his dearest foe,

And of the trials he himself had passed,  
And the high purpose that from first to last  
Had been his stay and spur, he scarce knew how,  
Since on Excalibur he took the vow.  
He told of his own hopes for future days,  
And how he wrought and fought not for men's praise,  
(Though like all good men Gawain held that dear),  
Yet trusting, when men laid him on his bier,  
They might remember, as they gathered round it,  
"He left this good world better than he found it."  
He talked as true men seldom talk, unless  
Swayed utterly by some pure passion's stress,  
And ever gently, though with heart on fire,  
Still hovered nearer to his soul's desire.  
And Elfinhart in gravest silence listened,  
But her sweet heart beat high, her blue eyes glistened;  
For as he bared his soul to her she dreamed  
A day-dream strange and new, wherein it seemed  
That in that soul's clear depth she saw her own,  
And his most secret thought (till then unknown)  
Seemed hers eternally. He spoke of death,  
And then her heart shrank, and she drew deep breath.  
Suddenly, ere she understood at all  
What new life dawned before her, came the call  
Of fairy horns; and so the Green Knight burst  
Upon the scene, as told in Canto First.

One jarring note, the tuneful chords among,  
May make mad discord of the sweetest song.  
E'en so with dissonant clamor through the breast  
Of Gawain rang the Green Knight's merry jest;  
But what wild meaning must it not impart  
To the vague fears of gentle Elfinhart?  
For she had heard in the first trumpet-blast  
A signal to her from the far-gone past;  
And now, of all the strange things that had been,  
Her half forgotten compact with the queen  
Flushed through her memory, and a swift thought came  
Like sudden fear, a thought without a name,  
An unvoiced question and a blind alarm;

And in sheer helplessness she reached an arm  
Toward Gawain scarcely knowing what she would;  
Her eyes beheld him, and she understood.  
And is it Gawain? He? Yes, Elfinhart,  
The hour has come, and you must play your part.

So now it's all explained; and I intend  
To go straight onward to the story's end.  
Sir Gawain had cut off the Green Knight's head,  
And Arthur and his court had gone to bed;  
In the great hall the dying embers shone  
With a faint ghostly gleam, and there, alone,  
While all the rest of Camelot was sleeping,  
In the dark alcove Elfinhart lay weeping.  
But as she lay there, all about her head  
There fell a checkered beam of moonlight, shed  
Through the barred casement; and she faintly stirred,  
For in her troubled soul it seemed she heard  
Vague music from some region far away!  
She raised her head and, turning where she lay,  
Saw in the silver moonlight the serene  
And tranquil beauty of the fairy queen!

"We sent before you called us, Elfinhart,  
For love lent keener magic to our art,  
And warned us of the thoughts that in your breast  
Awoke new rapture, trembling unconfessed."  
And Elfinhart moved closer to her knees  
And hid her face in the white draperies  
That veiled the fairy form, till, nestling there,  
Her heart recovered from that blank despair,  
And whispered her that whatsoe'er befell  
Love ruled the world, and all would yet be well.  
And the good fairy stroked the maiden's head  
And kissed her tear-starred eyes, and smiling said:  
"Fie on you women's hearts! Consistency  
Hides her shamed head where mortal women be!  
True love breeds faith and trust, it makes hearts strong;  
The heart's anointed king can do no wrong!  
And yet you weep as if you feared to prove him;—  
Upon my word, I don't believe you love him!"

And Elfinhart replied: "Laugh if you will,  
My queen, but let me be a woman still.  
You fairies love where love is wise and just;  
We mortal women love because we must:  
And if I feared to prove him, I confess  
I fear I still must love him none the less."  
She paused, for once again her eyes grew dim:  
"Think you I love his virtues? I love him!  
But yet you judged me wrongly, for believe me,  
(And then laugh once again, and so forgive me),  
If at the first I feared what you might do,  
My doubts were not of Gawain, but of you!"  
And so both laughed, and for a little space  
Folded each other in a glad embrace;  
(For fairies, bathed the whole year round in bliss,  
May yet be gladdened by a fair maid's kiss);  
And Elfinhart spoke on: "Do what you will,  
I trust you with my all, and fear no ill.  
But oh, my friend, to wait the long, long year,—  
To keep my heart in silence, not to hear  
The words my whole soul hungers for, nor say  
One syllable to brighten his dark day!  
Must it be so, my queen? And how shall I  
School eyes and lips to act this year-long lie?  
From the dear teacher-guardian of my youth  
The only ways I learned were ways of truth!  
I tried my skill this night, and learned to know  
That there are deeps below the deeps of woe;  
Hearts may be bruised and broken, yet still live;—  
The wounds that kill us are the wounds we give!"

And so these two talked on, until the night  
Began to shiver with the gray dawn's light,  
And in the deep-dyed casement they might see  
New life flush through old dreams of chivalry.  
And then they parted. What the queen had said  
I know not, but the lady, comforted,  
Bade farewell with calm voice and tranquil eyes,  
And saw with new-born strength the new sun rise.  
Perhaps in Fairyland there chanced to be

For them that grieve some sovereign alchemy  
To turn the worst to best, and the good queen  
Applied this soothing balm. Such things have been;  
But yet I doubt if any fairy art  
Was needed in the case of Elfinhart;  
The medicine that charmed away her dole  
Nature had planted in her own sweet soul.  
Of all sure things, this thing I'm surest of,—  
That the best cure for love's own ills is love.

## CANTO III

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### GAWAIN

O Muse!—But no: heaven knows I need a muse;  
But which of all the nine, pray, should I choose?  
Thalia, Clio, and Melpomene,  
I love them all, but none, alas, loves me;  
For if you want a muse to take your part  
You must be solely hers with all your heart;  
And I have mingled since my earliest youth  
My smiles and tears, my fictions and my truth;  
Nay, in this very tale, scarce yet half done,  
I've courted all the nine, and so won none!  
Not for me, therefore, the Parnassian lyre,  
Or winged war-horse shod with heavenly fire;  
Harsh numbers flow from throats whose thirst has been  
A whole life long unslaked of Hippocrene;  
But I will e'en go on as best I can  
And let the story end as it began,—  
A plain, straightforward man's unvarnished word,  
Part sad, part sweet,—and part of it absurd.

A year passed by, as years are wont to do,  
Winter and spring, summer and autumn too,  
Till mid-December's flaw-blown flakes of snow  
Warned Gawain that the time was come to go  
To the Green Chapel by the Murmuring Mere,  
And take again the blow he gave last year.  
In the great court his charger stamped the ground,  
While knights and weeping ladies thronged around  
To arm him (as the custom was of yore)  
And bid him sad farewell for evermore.  
One face alone in all that bustling throng  
Our hero's eyes sought eagerly, and long

Sought vainly; for the lady Elfinhart,  
Debating with herself, stood yet apart;  
But as Sir Gawain gathered up his reins  
And bade the draw-bridge warden loose the chains,  
Suddenly Elfinhart stood by his side,  
Her fair face flushed with love, and joy, and pride.  
She plucked a sprig of holly from her gown  
And looked up, questioning; and he leaned down,  
And so she placed it in his helm. No word  
Might Gawain's lips then utter, but he heard  
The voice that was his music, and could feel  
The touch of gentle fingers through the steel.  
"Wear this, Sir Gawain, for a loyal friend  
Whose hopes and prayers go with you to the end."  
And, staying not for answer, she withdrew,  
And in the throng was lost to Gawain's view.  
He roused himself, and waving high his hand,  
Struck spur, and so rode off toward Fairyland.

Long time he traveled by an unknown way,  
Unhoused at night, companionless by day.  
The cold sleet stung him through his shirt of mail,  
But, underneath, his stout heart would not fail,  
But beat full measure through the fiercest storm,  
And kept his head clear and his brave soul warm.  
No need to tell the perils that he passed;  
He conquered all, and came unscathed at last  
To where a high-embattled castle stood  
Deep in the heart of a dense willow-wood.  
And Gawain called aloud, and to the gate  
A smiling porter came, who opened straight,  
And bade him enter in and take his rest;  
And Gawain entered, and the people pressed  
About him with fair speeches; and he laid  
His armor off, and gave it them, and prayed  
That they would take his message to their lord,—  
prayer for friendly shelter, bed and board.  
He told them whence he was, his birth and name;  
And the bold baron of the castle came,  
A mighty man, huge-limbed, with flashing eyes,

And welcomed him with old-time courtesies;  
For manners, in those days, were held of worth,  
And gentle breeding went with gentle birth.  
He heartily was glad his guest had come,  
And made Sir Gawain feel himself at home;  
And as they walked in, side by side, each knew  
The other for an honest man and true.

That night our hero and the baron ate  
A sumptuous dinner in the hall of state,  
And all the household, ranged along the board,  
Made good cheer with Sir Gawain and their lord,  
And passed the brimming bowl right merrily  
With friendly banter and quick repartee.  
And Gawain asked if they had chanced to hear  
Of a Green Chapel by a Murmuring Mere,  
And straightway all grew grave. Within his breast  
Sir Gawain felt a tremor of unrest,  
But told his story with a gay outside,  
And asked for some good man to be his guide  
To find his foe. "I promise him," said he,  
"No golden guerdon;—his reward shall be  
The consciousness that unto him 't was given  
To show a parting soul the way to heaven!"

Up jumped his host. "My friend, I like your attitude,  
And know no surer way to win heaven's gratitude  
Than sending thither just such men as you;  
I'll be your guide. But since you are not due  
At the Green Chapel till three nights from now,  
And since the way is short, I'll tell you how  
The interim may be disposed of best:—  
In short, let me propose a merry jest!"  
At this Sir Gawain gave a sudden start,  
For some old memory seemed to clutch his heart,  
And in the baron's eyes he seemed to see  
A twinkling gleam of green benignity  
Not wholly strange; but like a flash 't was gone.  
Gawain sank back, and his good host went on:  
"Two days you sojourn here, and while I take  
My daily hunting in the wood, you make



My house and castle yours; and then, each night,  
We'll meet together here at candle-light,  
And all my winnings in the wood, and all  
That comes to you at home, whate'er befall,  
We'll give each other in exchange; in fine,  
My fortune shall be yours, and yours be mine."  
To Gawain this seemed generous indeed.  
And with most cordial laughter he agreed.  
They clasped hands o'er the bargain with good zest,  
And then all said good-night, and went to rest.

Next morning Gawain was awakened early  
From a deep slumber by the hurly-burly  
Of footman, horseman, seneschal, and groom,  
Bustling beneath the windows of his room.  
He rose and looked out, just in time to see  
The baron and a goodly company  
Of huntsmen, armed with cross-bow, axe, and spear,  
Ride through the castle gate and disappear.  
And then, while Gawain dressed, there came a knock  
Upon his chamber door. He threw the lock,  
And a boy page brought robes of ermine fur  
And Tarsic silk,—black, white, and lavender,—  
For his array, and with them a kind message,  
Which the good knight received with no ill presage:  
"Will brave Sir Gawain spare an idle hour  
For quiet converse in my lady's bower?"  
The boy led on, and Gawain followed him  
Through crooked corridors and archways dim,  
Along low galleries echoing from afar,  
And down a winding stair; then "Here we are!"  
The page cried cheerily, and paused before  
The massive carvings of an antique door.  
This he swung open; and the knight passed through  
Into a garden, fresh with summer dew!  
A lady's bower in Fairyland! What pen  
Could make that strange enchantment live again?  
Not he who drew Acrasia's Bower of Bliss  
And Phædria's happy isle could picture this.  
That sweet-souled Puritan discerned too well

The serpent's coil behind the witch's spell;  
And he who saw—when the dark veil was torn—  
The rose of Paradise without the thorn,  
(Sublimest prophet, whose immortal verse  
Lent mightier thunders to the primal curse),  
Even he too sternly, in the soul's defense,  
Repressed the still importunate cries of sense.  
Bid me not, therefore, task my feebler pen  
With dreams beyond the limits of their ken;  
The phantom conjurings of the magic hour  
That Gawain passed in that enchanted bower  
Must be from mortal eyes forever hid.  
But yet some part of what he felt and did  
These lines must needs disclose. As he stood there,  
Breathing soft odors from the mellow air,  
All hopes, all aims of noble knighthood seemed  
Like the dim yesterdays of one who dreamed,  
In starless caves of memory sunken deep,  
And, like lost music, folded in strange sleep.

"How long, O mortal man, wilt thou give heed  
To the world's phantom voices? The hours speed,  
And fame and fortune yield to moth and rust,  
And good and evil crumble into dust.  
Even now the sands are running in the glass;  
Set not your heart upon vain things that pass;  
Ambitions, honors, toils, are but the snare  
Where lurks for aye the blind old world's despair.  
Nay, quiet the bootless striving in your breast  
And let your tired heart here at last find rest.  
In vain have joy, love, beauty, struck deep root  
In your heart's heart, unless you pluck the fruit;  
Then put away the cheating soul's pretense,  
Heap high the press, fill full the cup of sense;  
Shatter the idols of blind yesterday,  
And let love, joy, and beauty reign alway!"

Such thoughts as these, confused and unexpressed,  
Flooded the silence in Sir Gawain's breast.  
Meanwhile a brasier filled the scented air  
With wreaths of magic mist, and he was ware

That the mist drew together like a shroud;  
And then the veil was rent, and in the cloud  
Stood one who seemed, in features, form, and dress,  
The perfect image of all loveliness.

The wonders of that vision none could tell  
Save one whose heart had felt the mystic spell.  
Once and once only, in the golden days  
When youth made melody for love's sweet lays,  
In two dark eyes (yet oh, how bright, how bright!)  
I saw the wakening rapture of love's light,  
And, in the hush of that still dawning, heard  
From two sweet trembling lips love's whispered word.  
The twilight deepens when the sun has set;  
In memory golden glories linger yet;  
But these avail not. Though my soul lay bare,  
With all those memories sanctuaried there,  
That spell was human. But the unseen power  
That wove the witchery of this fairy bower,  
In Gawain's heart such subtle magic wrought  
That past and future were well-nigh forgot,  
And all that earth holds else, or heaven above,  
Seemed naught worth keeping, save this dream of love.

And now, as the strange cloud of incense broke,  
The vision, if it were a vision, spoke,—  
If it were speech that filled the quivering air  
With low harmonious music. Let none dare  
In the rude jargons of this world to fashion  
That sweet, wild anthem of unearthly passion.  
Could I from the broad-billowing ocean borrow  
Of Tristan's love and of Isolde's sorrow,  
The flood of those world-darkening surges, wrought  
With thoughts that lie beyond the reach of thought,  
Might bring me succor where weak words must fail.  
But Gawain saw and heard, and passion-pale  
Shrank back, and made a darkness of his face;  
(As though the unplumbed deeps of starless space  
Could quench those lustrous eyes, or close his ears  
To the eternal music of love's spheres!)

But the voice changed, and Gawain, listening there,

Heard now a heart's low cry of wild despair.  
He turned again, and lo! the vision knelt  
And drew a jeweled poniard from her belt,  
To arm herself against her own dear life;  
But as she bared her white breast to the knife  
He started quickly forward, and he grasped  
The hand that held the hilt; and then she clasped  
Her soft arms round his neck, and as their lips  
Met in the shadowing fold of love's eclipse,  
All earth, all heaven, all knightly hopes of grace,  
Died in the darkness of one blind embrace.

Died? Nay; for Gawain, ere the moment passed,  
Broke from the arms that strove to bind him fast,  
And turned away once more; and, as he pressed  
A trembling hand against his throbbing breast,  
His aimless fingers touched a treasured part  
Of the green holly-branch of Elfinhart,  
Laid in his breast when he put off his arms.  
What perils now are left in fairy charms?  
For poets fable when they call love blind;  
Love's habitation is the purer mind,  
Whence with his keen eyes he may penetrate  
All mists and fogs that baser spells create.  
Love? What is love? Not the wild feverish thrill,  
When heart to heart the thronging pulses fill,  
And lips that close in parching kisses find  
No speech but those;—the best remains behind.  
The tranquil spirit—the divine assurance  
That this life's seemings have a high endurance—  
Thoughts that allay this restless striving, calm  
The passionate heart, and fill old wounds with balm;—  
These are the choirs invisible that move  
In white processions up the aisles of love.

Such love was Gawain's,—love that sanctifies  
The heart's most secret altar; and his eyes  
Their old true rhythm. And so the strife was o'er,  
And all the perilous wiles of magic art  
Were foiled by Gawain—and by Elfinhart.

But time flies, and 't were tedious to delay

My song for all the trials of that day.  
Light summer breezes, skurrying o'er the deep,  
Ripple and foam and flash,—then sink to sleep;  
But underneath, serene and changing never,  
The mighty heart of ocean beats forever,  
And his deep streams renew from pole to pole  
The living world's indomitable soul.  
Enough, then, of the spells that vexed the brain  
Of Gawain; love and knighthood made all  
vain.

And in the afternoon, when Gawain learned  
That his good host, the baron, had returned,  
He met him in the hall at candle-light,  
According to his promise of last night.  
And then the baron motioned to a page,  
And straightway six tall men, of lusty age  
And mighty sinews, entered the great door,  
Bearing the carcass of a huge wild boar,  
In all its uncouth ugliness complete,  
And dropped it quivering at our hero's feet.  
"What do you say to that, Sir Gawain?" cried  
The baron, swelling with true sportsman's pride  
"But come: your promise, now, of yester-eve;  
'T is blesseder to give than to receive!  
Though I'll be sworn you'll find it hard to pay  
Full value for the winnings of this day."  
"Not so," said Gawain; "you will rest my debtor;  
Your gift is good, but mine will be far better."  
And then he strode with solemn steps along  
The echoing hall, and through the listening throng,  
And with the words, "My noble lord, take this!"  
He gave the baron a resounding kiss.  
The baron jumped up in ecstatic glee.  
"Now by my great-great-grandsire's beard," quoth he,  
"Better than all dead boars in Christendom  
Is one sweet loving kiss!—Whence did it come?"  
"Nay, there," Sir Gawain said, "you step beyond  
The terms we stipulated in our bond.  
Take you my kiss in peace, as I your boar;

Be glad; give thanks;—and seek to know no more."  
Loud laughter made the baron's eyes grow bright  
And glitter with green sparkles of delight;  
And then he chuckled: "Sir, I'm proud of you;  
I drink your best of health; *I think you'll do!*"

And now the board was laid and dressed, and all  
Sat down to dinner at the baron's call;  
And Gawain looked along the room askance,  
Seeking the lady; and he caught one glance  
Of laughing eyes—then looked away in haste,  
But turned again, and wondered why his taste  
Had erred so strangely, for the lady seemed  
Not fairer now than others. Had he dreamed?  
He rubbed his eyes and pondered,—though in sooth  
Without one glimmering presage of the truth,—  
Till all passed lightly from his puzzled mind,  
Leaving contentment and good cheer behind.  
So all the company feasted well, and sped  
The flying hours, till it was time for bed.

One whole day longer must our hero rest  
Within doors, to fulfill the merry jest.  
So when, next morning, Gawain once more heard  
The hunt's-up in the court, he never stirred,  
But let the merry horsemen ride away  
While he slept soundly well into the day.  
Later he rose, and strolled from room to room,  
Through vaulted twilights of ancestral gloom,  
Until, descending a long stair, he found  
The dim-lit castle crypt, deep under ground,  
Where sculptured effigies forever kept  
Their long last marble silence as they slept,  
And iron sentinels, on bended knees,  
Held eyeless vigil in old panoplies.

Sir Gawain, wandering on in aimless mood,  
Pondered the tomb-stone legends, quaint and rude,  
Wherein the pensive dreamer might divine  
A tragic history in every line;  
For so does fate, with bitterest irony,  
Epitomize fame's immortality,

Perpetuating for all after days  
Mute lamentations and unnoted praise.  
And Gawain, reading here and there the story  
Of fame obscure and unremembered glory,  
Found on a tablet these words: "Where he lies,  
The gray wave breaks and the wild sea-mew flies:  
If any be that loved him, seek not here,  
But in the lone hills by the Murmuring Mere."  
A nameless cenotaph!—perhaps of one  
Like Gawain's self deluded and undone  
By the green stranger; and the legend brought  
A tide of passion flooding Gawain's thought;  
A flood-tide, not of fear,—for Gawain's breast  
Shrank never at the perilous behest  
Of noble knighthood,—but the love of life,  
Compassion, and soul-sickness of the strife.  
"If any be that loved him!" Oh, to die  
Far from green-swarded Camelot, and lie  
Among these bleak and barren hills alone,  
His end unwept for and his grave unknown,—  
Never again to see the glad sunrise  
That brightened all his world in those dear eyes!

Half suffocating in the charneled air  
Of that low vault, he staggered up the stair,  
Out of the dim-lit halls of silent death  
Into the living light, and drew quick breath  
Where, through a casement-arch of ivied stone,  
Bright from the clear blue sky the warm sun shone.  
The whole of life's glad rapture thrilled his heart;  
Till a quick step behind him made him start,  
And there, deep-veiled, in muffling cloak and hood,  
Once more the lady of the castle stood.

Low-voiced she spoke, as if with studied care  
Weighing the syllables of her parting prayer.  
"Sir Gawain—nay, I pray you, turn not yet,  
But hear me;—though my heart may not forget  
That once, for one sweet moment, you were kind,  
I come not to recall that to your mind;—  
Between us two be love's words aye unspoken!

Yet ere you go, I pray you, leave some token  
That in the long, long years may comfort me  
For the dear face I nevermore shall see."

"Nay, lady," said the knight, "I have no gifts  
To give you. Errant knighthood ever drifts  
From shore to shore, by wandering breezes blown,  
With naught save its good name to call its own.  
In friendship, then, I pray you keep for me  
My name untarnished in your memory."

"Ah, sir," she said, "my memory bears that name  
Burnt in with characters of living flame.  
But though you give me naught, I pray you take  
This girdle from me;—wear it for my sake;  
Nay, but refuse me not; you little know  
Its magic power. I had it long ago  
From Fairyland; and its encircling charm  
Keeps scathless him who wears it from all harm;  
No evil thing can touch him. Gird it on,  
If but to ease my heart when you are gone."

She held a plain green girdle in her hand,  
In outward seeming just a narrow band  
Of silk, with silver clasps; but in those days  
The strangest things were wrought in simplest ways,  
As Gawain knew full well; and he could see  
That all the lady said was verity.  
He took the girdle, held it, fingered it,  
Then clasped it round his waist to try the fit,  
Irresolutely dallying with temptation,  
Till conscience grew too weak for inclination;  
For at the last he threw one wandering glance  
Out at the casement, and the merry dance  
Of sparkling sunbeams on the fields of snow  
Wrought havoc in his wavering heart; and so,  
Repeating to himself one word: "Life, life!"  
He took the token from the baron's wife.

That evening, when the baron and our knight  
Met to exchange their gifts at candle-light,  
The baron, looking graver than before,  
Said: "Sir, my luck has left me; not a boar



Did we get wind of, all this blessed day.  
I come with empty hands, only to pray  
Your pardon. What good fortune do *you* bring?"  
And Gawain answered firmly: "Not a thing!"

## CANTO IV

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### CONCLUSION

By noon the next day, Gawain and his host  
Rode side by side along the perilous coast  
Of the gray Mere, from whose unquiet sleep  
Reverberating murmurs of the deep  
Startled the still December's listening air.  
The baron, shuddering, pointed seaward. "There,"  
He said, "year in, year out, these voices haunt  
That fearful water; heaven knows what they want!  
Men tell me—and I have no doubt it's true—  
They are knights-errant whom the Green Knight slew!  
Woe unto him, the over-bold, who dares  
Adventure near that uncouth monster's snares!"  
Quoth Gawain: "How have *you* escaped the net?"  
The baron answered: "I? We never met!  
When I'm about, he seems to shun the place,  
And where he is, I never show my face;  
But if we did meet, 't would be safe to say  
Not more than one of us would get away!"

And then the baron told tales by the score  
About the Green Knight's quenchless thirst for gore,  
And kept repeating that no magic charm  
Was proof against the prowess of his arm;  
At his first blow each vain defense must fall,  
For he was arch-magician over all.  
And as from tale to tale the baron ran,  
Sir Gawain, had he been another man,  
Would certainly have felt his heart's blood curdle,  
Despite his secret wearing of the girdle;  
But when the baron finally suggested  
Abandoning the venture, and protested

That the whole monstrous business was absurd,  
Sir Gawain simply said: "I gave my word."  
And when the baron saw he would not bend,  
He seemed to lose all patience. "Well, my friend,  
I'll go no further with you. On your head  
Shall be your own mad blood when you are dead.  
Yonder your two roads fork; pause there, I pray,  
And ponder well before you choose your way.  
One takes the hills, one winds along the wave;  
To Camelot this,—the other to your grave!  
Choose the high road, Sir Gawain; shun the danger!  
Say you were misdirected by a stranger;—  
I swear by all that's sacred, I'll not tell  
One syllable to a soul:—and so farewell!"  
He galloped off without another word,  
And vanished where the road turned. Gawain heard,  
Long after he had disappeared, the sound  
Of iron hoof-beats on the frozen ground,  
Till all died into silence, save those drear  
And hollow voices from the Murmuring Mere.

But Gawain chose the lower road, and passed  
Along the desolate shore. The die was cast.  
The western skies, as the red sun sank low,  
Cast purple shades across the drifted snow,  
And Gawain knew that the dread hour was come  
For the fulfillment of his martyrdom.

And now, from just beyond a jutting hill,  
Came hideous sounds, as of a giant mill  
That hisses, roars, and sputters, clicks and clacks;—  
It was the Green Knight sharpening his axe!  
And Gawain, coming past the corner, found him,  
With ghastly mouldering skulls and bones strewn round him,  
In joyous fury urging the keen steel  
Against the surface of his grinding wheel.  
The place was a wild hollow, circled round  
With barren hills, and on the bottom ground  
Stood the Green Chapel, moss-grown, solitary;—  
In sooth, it seemed the devil's mortuary!  
The Green Knight's back was turned, and he stirred not

Till Gawain hailed him sharply; then he shot  
One glance—as when, o'erhead, a living wire  
Startles the night with flashes of green fire;—  
Then hurried forward, bland as bland could be,  
And greeted Gawain with green courtesy.  
"Dear sir, I ask a thousand pardons; pray  
Forgive me. You are punctual to the day;  
That's good! Of course I knew you would not fail.  
How do you do? You look a trifle pale;  
I trust, with all my heart, you are not ill?  
Just the cold air? It does blow rather chill!  
What can I do to cheer you? Let me see;—  
Suppose I brew a cup of hot green tea?  
You'd rather not? You're pressed for time? Of course,  
I understand; then just get off your horse,  
And I'll do all I can to expedite  
Our little business for you. There, that's right;  
And now your helmet? Thanks; and if you please  
Perhaps you'll kindly kneel down on your knees,  
As I did when I came to Camelot; So!  
Are you all ready? Will you bide the blow?"  
And Gawain said "I will," in such soft notes  
As happy bridegrooms utter, when their throats  
Are paralyzed with blest anticipation;—  
(What Gawain looked for was decapitation!)  
And then the Green Knight swung his axe in air  
With a loud whirr; and Gawain, kneeling there,  
Shrank back an inch; and the green giant stayed  
His threatening hand, and with a cold sneer said:  
"You shrink, sir, from the axe; I can't hit true  
Unless you hold still, as I did for you."  
"Your pardon," Gawain said, with bated breath;  
"This time I swear to hold as still as death."  
He did so, and the Green Knight swung again  
His axe, and whirled it round his head, and then,  
Pausing a second time, said: "Very good!  
You're holding quite still now; I knew you would!"  
Gawain, in anger, said: "Jest, if you like,  
After the blow; tarry no longer; strike!"

So once again the ponderous axe was raised;  
But this time down it came, and lightly grazed  
Sir Gawain's neck. He felt the hot blood flow,  
And saw red drops that sank deep in the snow,  
And then he jumped up, faced his foe, and cried:  
"Enough: you owed me one blow, though I died;  
But be you man or beast or devil abhorred,  
I yield no further; with my mortal sword  
I do defy you; and if mortal man  
May hope against" ...  
But the Green Knight began  
A low melodious laugh, like running brooks  
Whose pebbly babble fills the shadowy nooks  
Of green-aisled woodlands, when the winds are still.  
"My friend, we bear each other no ill will.  
When first I swung my axe, you showed some fear;  
I owed you that much for your blow last year.  
The second time I swung,—yet spared your life,—  
That paid you for the kiss you gave my wife!"  
"Your wife!" "My wife, Sir Gawain; 't was my word;  
And when I swung my weapon for the third  
And last time, then I made the red blood spirt  
For that green girdle underneath your shirt!  
You played me false, my friend!"  
And Gawain knelt  
Once more, and casting off the magic belt,  
In bitter broken words confessed his shame,  
And begged the Green Knight to avenge the name  
Of injured knighthood, and with one last blow  
To end his guilty life. "Nay, nay, not so,"  
The other softly said. "Be of good cheer;  
Your fault was small, for all men hold life dear.  
We tempted you, my friend, with all our might,  
And proved you in good sooth a noble knight;  
A veritable Joseph, sir, you are!"  
Quoth Gawain drily, "Thanks, Lord Potiphar!  
But may I ask you why you played this part?"  
The other said: "Ask Lady Elfinhart!"

He smiled, and from his smile a genial glow

Of green mid-summer seemed to overflow,  
Filling with verdure all that barren place.  
The warm red blood rushed to Sir Gawain's face;  
He caught his breath, and in his eager eyes  
There shone a sudden flash of dark surmise,  
And then he stood a long while pondering;  
But in his breast his heart began to sing  
The old, old music whose still echoes roll  
Forever voiceless through the listening soul.  
He said farewell to his good fairy friend  
As in a dream, where real and unreal blend  
In phantom unison, and with the light  
Of love to lead him home, rode through the night,  
Beside the tranquil murmurs of the Mere,  
And through the silence of the passing year;  
And earth and sea and starlit sky took part  
In the still exaltation of his heart,  
While all but love and wonder was forgot,  
Until he came to high-towered Camelot.

To Camelot he came, and there he found  
The good King Arthur and his Table Round  
Awaiting his return in anxious doubt;  
But ere he passed the gates a mighty shout  
Rose from the watchmen on the outward wall  
And bore the tidings to the inmost hall.  
From every window flaunting flags were flung;  
From the high battlements brass trumpets sung;  
And great bells, chiming in the topmost tower,  
Pealed salutation to the joyous hour,  
As Gawain, riding through the cullis-port,  
Faced the glad throng that filled the palace court.

And with this tribute paid to knightly glory  
It seems most fitting to conclude my story.  
Entreat me not, dear reader, to impart  
Further of Gawain, or of Elfinhart.  
Let your own fancy round the story out  
Whatever way you please; I cannot doubt  
The sequel; but when I, in silent thought,  
Had brought Sir Gawain back to her, and sought

With hand profane to lift the veil, behind  
Whose secret shelter their two hearts enshrined  
The mutual covenant of love's mystery,  
That pure fane would not desecrated be.  
But this alone I know: the power that wove  
Through human lives the warp and woof of love  
Wrought not in darkness, nor with hand unsure;—  
His fabric must forevermore endure.  
And hence I doubt not that these two were blest  
As none may be, save they who have confessed  
Allegiance to that mighty spirit's law,  
And trod his holy ground with reverent awe.

# **A CONNECTICUT YANKEE IN KING ARTHUR'S COURT**

**by Mark Twain**



# Table of Contents

PREFACE

CHAPTER I. CAMELOT

CHAPTER II. KING ARTHUR'S COURT

CHAPTER III. KNIGHTS OF THE TABLE ROUND

CHAPTER IV. SIR DINADAN THE HUMORIST

CHAPTER V. AN INSPIRATION

CHAPTER VI. THE ECLIPSE

CHAPTER VII. MERLIN'S TOWER

CHAPTER VIII. THE BOSS

CHAPTER IX. THE TOURNAMENT

CHAPTER X. BEGINNINGS OF CIVILIZATION

CHAPTER XI. THE YANKEE IN SEARCH OF ADVENTURES

CHAPTER XII. SLOW TORTURE

CHAPTER XIII. FREEMEN!

CHAPTER XIV. "DEFEND THEE, LORD!"

CHAPTER XV. SANDY'S TALE

CHAPTER XVI. MORGAN LE FAY

CHAPTER XVII. A ROYAL BANQUET

CHAPTER XVIII. IN THE QUEEN'S DUNGEONS

CHAPTER XIX. KNIGHT ERRANTRY AS A TRADE

CHAPTER XX. THE OGRE'S CASTLE

CHAPTER XXI. THE PILGRIMS

CHAPTER XXII. THE HOLY FOUNTAIN

CHAPTER XXIII. RESTORATION OF THE FOUNTAIN

CHAPTER XXIV. A RIVAL MAGICIAN

CHAPTER XXV. A COMPETITIVE EXAMINATION

CHAPTER XXVI. THE FIRST NEWSPAPER

CHAPTER XXVII. THE YANKEE AND THE KING TRAVEL INCOGNITO

CHAPTER XXVIII. DRILLING THE KING

CHAPTER XXIX. THE SMALL-POX HUT

CHAPTER XXX. THE TRAGEDY OF THE MANOR-HOUSE

CHAPTER XXXI. MARCO

CHAPTER XXXII. DOWLEY'S HUMILIATION

CHAPTER XXXIII. SIXTH CENTURY POLITICAL ECONOMY

CHAPTER XXXIV. THE YANKEE AND THE KING SOLD AS SLAVES

CHAPTER XXXV. A PITIFUL INCIDENT

CHAPTER XXXVI. AN ENCOUNTER IN THE DARK

CHAPTER XXXVII. AN AWFUL PREDICAMENT

CHAPTER XXXVIII. SIR LAUNCELOT AND KNIGHTS TO THE RESCUE

CHAPTER XXXIX. THE YANKEE'S FIGHT WITH THE KNIGHTS

CHAPTER XL. THREE YEARS LATER

CHAPTER XLI. THE INTERDICT

CHAPTER XLII. WAR!

CHAPTER XLIII. THE BATTLE OF THE SAND-BELT

CHAPTER XLIV. A POSTSCRIPT BY CLARENCE

# PREFACE

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The ungentle laws and customs touched upon in this tale are historical, and the episodes which are used to illustrate them are also historical. It is not pretended that these laws and customs existed in England in the sixth century; no, it is only pretended that inasmuch as they existed in the English and other civilizations of far later times, it is safe to consider that it is no libel upon the sixth century to suppose them to have been in practice in that day also. One is quite justified in inferring that whatever one of these laws or customs was lacking in that remote time, its place was competently filled by a worse one.

The question as to whether there is such a thing as divine right of kings is not settled in this book. It was found too difficult. That the executive head of a nation should be a person of lofty character and extraordinary ability, was manifest and indisputable; that none but the Deity could select that head unerringly, was also manifest and indisputable; that the Deity ought to make that selection, then, was likewise manifest and indisputable; consequently, that He does make it, as claimed, was an unavoidable deduction. I mean, until the author of this book encountered the Pompadour, and Lady Castlemaine, and some other executive heads of that kind; these were found so difficult to work into the scheme, that it was judged better to take the other tack in this book (which must be issued this fall), and then go into training and settle the question in another book. It is, of course, a thing which ought to be settled, and I am not going to have anything particular to do next winter anyway.

## A WORD OF EXPLANATION

It was in Warwick Castle that I came across the curious stranger whom I am going to talk about. He attracted me by three things: his candid simplicity, his marvelous familiarity with ancient armor, and the restfulness of his company—for he did all the talking. We fell together, as modest people will, in the tail of the herd that was being shown through, and he at once began to say things which interested me. As he talked along, softly, pleasantly, flowingly, he seemed to drift away imperceptibly out of this world and time, and into some remote era and old forgotten country; and so he gradually wove such a spell about me that I

seemed to move among the specters and shadows and dust and mold of a gray antiquity, holding speech with a relic of it! Exactly as I would speak of my nearest personal friends or enemies, or my most familiar neighbors, he spoke of Sir Bedivere, Sir Bors de Ganis, Sir Launcelot of the Lake, Sir Galahad, and all the other great names of the Table Round—and how old, old, unspeakably old and faded and dry and musty and ancient he came to look as he went on! Presently he turned to me and said, just as one might speak of the weather, or any other common matter—

"You know about transmigration of souls; do you know about transposition of epochs—and bodies?"

I said I had not heard of it. He was so little interested—just as when people speak of the weather—that he did not notice whether I made him any answer or not. There was half a moment of silence, immediately interrupted by the droning voice of the salaried cicerone:

"Ancient hauberk, date of the sixth century, time of King Arthur and the Round Table; said to have belonged to the knight Sir Sagramor le Desirous; observe the round hole through the chain-mail in the left breast; can't be accounted for; supposed to have been done with a bullet since invention of firearms—perhaps maliciously by Cromwell's soldiers."

My acquaintance smiled—not a modern smile, but one that must have gone out of general use many, many centuries ago—and muttered apparently to himself:

"Wit ye well, *I saw it done* ." Then, after a pause, added: "I did it myself."

By the time I had recovered from the electric surprise of this remark, he was gone.

All that evening I sat by my fire at the Warwick Arms, steeped in a dream of the olden time, while the rain beat upon the windows, and the wind roared about the eaves and corners. From time to time I dipped into old Sir Thomas Malory's enchanting book, and fed at its rich feast of prodigies and adventures, breathed in the fragrance of its obsolete names, and dreamed again. Midnight being come at length, I read another tale, for a nightcap—this which here follows, to wit:

## **HOW SIR LAUNCELOT SLEW TWO GIANTS, AND MADE A CASTLE FREE**

Anon withal came there upon him two great giants,

well armed, all save the heads, with two horrible clubs in their hands. Sir Launcelot put his shield afore him, and put the stroke away of the one giant, and with his sword he clave his head asunder. When his fellow saw that, he ran away as he were wood [\*demented], for fear of the horrible strokes, and Sir Launcelot after him with all his might, and smote him on the shoulder, and clave him to the middle. Then Sir Launcelot went into the hall, and there came afore him three score ladies and damsels, and all kneeled unto him, and thanked God and him of their deliverance. For, sir, said they, the most part of us have been here this seven year their prisoners, and we have worked all manner of silk works for our meat, and we are all great gentle-women born, and blessed be the time, knight, that ever thou wert born; for thou hast done the most worship that ever did knight in the world, that will we bear record, and we all pray you to tell us your name, that we may tell our friends who delivered us out of prison. Fair damsels, he said, my name is Sir Launcelot du Lake. And so he departed from them and betaught them unto God. And then he mounted upon his horse, and rode into many strange and wild countries, and through many waters and valleys, and evil was he lodged. And at the last by fortune him happened against a night to come to a fair courtilage, and therein he found an old gentle-woman that lodged him with a good-will, and there he had good cheer for him and his horse. And when time was, his host brought him into a fair garret over the gate to his bed. There Sir Launcelot unarmed him, and set his harness by him, and went to bed, and anon he fell on sleep. So, soon after there came one on horseback, and knocked at the gate in great haste. And when Sir Launcelot heard this he rose up, and looked out at the window, and saw by the

moonlight three knights come riding after that one man, and all three lashed on him at once with swords, and that one knight turned on them knightly again and defended him. Truly, said Sir Launcelot, yonder one knight shall I help, for it were shame for me to see three knights on one, and if he be slain I am partner of his death. And therewith he took his harness and went out at a window by a sheet down to the four knights, and then Sir Launcelot said on high, Turn you knights unto me, and leave your fighting with that knight. And then they all three left Sir Kay, and turned unto Sir Launcelot, and there began great battle, for they alight all three, and strake many strokes at Sir Launcelot, and assailed him on every side. Then Sir Kay dressed him for to have holpen Sir Launcelot. Nay, sir, said he, I will none of your help, therefore as ye will have my help let me alone with them. Sir Kay for the pleasure of the knight suffered him for to do his will, and so stood aside. And then anon within six strokes Sir Launcelot had stricken them to the earth.

And then they all three cried, Sir Knight, we yield us unto you as man of might matchless. As to that, said Sir Launcelot, I will not take your yielding unto me, but so that ye yield you unto Sir Kay the seneschal, on that covenant I will save your lives and else not. Fair knight, said they, that were we loath to do; for as for Sir Kay we chased him hither, and had overcome him had ye not been; therefore, to yield us unto him it were no reason. Well, as to that, said Sir Launcelot, advise you well, for ye may choose whether ye will die or live, for an ye be yelden, it shall be unto Sir Kay. Fair knight, then they said, in saving our lives we will do as thou commandest us. Then shall ye, said Sir

Launcelot, on Whitsunday next coming go unto the court of King Arthur, and there shall ye yield you unto Queen Guenever, and put you all three in her grace and mercy, and say that Sir Kay sent you thither to be her prisoners. On the morn Sir Launcelot arose early, and left Sir Kay sleeping; and Sir Launcelot took Sir Kay's armor and his shield and armed him, and so he went to the stable and took his horse, and took his leave of his host, and so he departed. Then soon after arose Sir Kay and missed Sir Launcelot; and then he espied that he had his armor and his horse. Now by my faith I know well that he will grieve some of the court of King Arthur; for on him knights will be bold, and deem that it is I, and that will beguile them; and because of his armor and shield I am sure I shall ride in peace. And then soon after departed Sir Kay, and thanked his host.

As I laid the book down there was a knock at the door, and my stranger came in. I gave him a pipe and a chair, and made him welcome. I also comforted him with a hot Scotch whisky; gave him another one; then still another—hoping always for his story. After a fourth persuader, he drifted into it himself, in a quite simple and natural way:

### **THE STRANGER'S HISTORY**

I am an American. I was born and reared in Hartford, in the State of Connecticut—anyway, just over the river, in the country. So I am a Yankee of the Yankees—and practical; yes, and nearly barren of sentiment, I suppose—or poetry, in other words. My father was a blacksmith, my uncle was a horse doctor, and I was both, along at first. Then I went over to the great arms factory and learned my real trade; learned all there was to it; learned to make everything: guns, revolvers, cannon, boilers, engines, all sorts of labor-saving machinery. Why, I could make anything a body wanted—anything in the world, it didn't make any difference what; and if there wasn't any quick new-fangled way to make a thing, I could invent one—and do it as easy as rolling off a log. I became head superintendent; had a couple of thousand men under me.

Well, a man like that is a man that is full of fight—that goes without saying.

With a couple of thousand rough men under one, one has plenty of that sort of amusement. I had, anyway. At last I met my match, and I got my dose. It was during a misunderstanding conducted with crowbars with a fellow we used to call Hercules. He laid me out with a crusher alongside the head that made everything crack, and seemed to spring every joint in my skull and made it overlap its neighbor. Then the world went out in darkness, and I didn't feel anything more, and didn't know anything at all—at least for a while.

When I came to again, I was sitting under an oak tree, on the grass, with a whole beautiful and broad country landscape all to myself—nearly. Not entirely; for there was a fellow on a horse, looking down at me—a fellow fresh out of a picture-book. He was in old-time iron armor from head to heel, with a helmet on his head the shape of a nail-keg with slits in it; and he had a shield, and a sword, and a prodigious spear; and his horse had armor on, too, and a steel horn projecting from his forehead, and gorgeous red and green silk trappings that hung down all around him like a bedquilt, nearly to the ground.

"Fair sir, will ye just?" said this fellow.

"Will I which?"

"Will ye try a passage of arms for land or lady or for—"

"What are you giving me?" I said. "Get along back to your circus, or I'll report you."

Now what does this man do but fall back a couple of hundred yards and then come rushing at me as hard as he could tear, with his nail-keg bent down nearly to his horse's neck and his long spear pointed straight ahead. I saw he meant business, so I was up the tree when he arrived.

He allowed that I was his property, the captive of his spear. There was argument on his side—and the bulk of the advantage—so I judged it best to humor him. We fixed up an agreement whereby I was to go with him and he was not to hurt me. I came down, and we started away, I walking by the side of his horse. We marched comfortably along, through glades and over brooks which I could not remember to have seen before—which puzzled me and made me wonder—and yet we did not come to any circus or sign of a circus. So I gave up the idea of a circus, and concluded he was from an asylum. But we never came to an asylum—so I was up a stump, as you may say. I asked him how far we were from Hartford. He said he had never heard of the place; which I took to be a lie, but allowed it to go at that. At the end of an hour we saw a far-away town sleeping in a valley by a winding river; and beyond it on a hill, a vast gray fortress, with towers and turrets, the first I had ever seen out of a picture.

"Bridgeport?" said I, pointing.

"Camelot," said he.



My stranger had been showing signs of sleepiness. He caught himself nodding, now, and smiled one of those pathetic, obsolete smiles of his, and said:

"I find I can't go on; but come with me, I've got it all written out, and you can read it if you like."

In his chamber, he said: "First, I kept a journal; then by and by, after years, I took the journal and turned it into a book. How long ago that was!"

He handed me his manuscript, and pointed out the place where I should begin:

"Begin here—I've already told you what goes before." He was steeped in drowsiness by this time. As I went out at his door I heard him murmur sleepily: "Give you good den, fair sir."

I sat down by my fire and examined my treasure. The first part of it—the great bulk of it—was parchment, and yellow with age. I scanned a leaf particularly and saw that it was a palimpsest. Under the old dim writing of the Yankee historian appeared traces of a penmanship which was older and dimmer still—Latin words and sentences: fragments from old monkish legends, evidently. I turned to the place indicated by my stranger and began to read—as follows.

## CHAPTER I. CAMELOT

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"Camelot—Camelot," said I to myself. "I don't seem to remember hearing of it before. Name of the asylum, likely."

It was a soft, reposeful summer landscape, as lovely as a dream, and as lonesome as Sunday. The air was full of the smell of flowers, and the buzzing of insects, and the twittering of birds, and there were no people, no wagons, there was no stir of life, nothing going on. The road was mainly a winding path with hoof-prints in it, and now and then a faint trace of wheels on either side in the grass—wheels that apparently had a tire as broad as one's hand.

Presently a fair slip of a girl, about ten years old, with a cataract of golden hair streaming down over her shoulders, came along. Around her head she wore a hoop of flame-red poppies. It was as sweet an outfit as ever I saw, what there was of it. She walked indolently along, with a mind at rest, its peace reflected in her innocent face. The circus man paid no attention to her; didn't even seem to see her. And she—she was no more startled at his fantastic make-up than if she was used to his like every day of her life. She was going by as indifferently as she might have gone by a couple of cows; but when she happened to notice me, *then* there was a change! Up went her hands, and she was turned to stone; her mouth dropped open, her eyes stared wide and timorously, she was the picture of astonished curiosity touched with fear. And there she stood gazing, in a sort of stupefied fascination, till we turned a corner of the wood and were lost to her view. That she should be startled at me instead of at the other man, was too many for me; I couldn't make head or tail of it. And that she should seem to consider me a spectacle, and totally overlook her own merits in that respect, was another puzzling thing, and a display of magnanimity, too, that was surprising in one so young. There was food for thought here. I moved along as one in a dream.

As we approached the town, signs of life began to appear. At intervals we passed a wretched cabin, with a thatched roof, and about it small fields and garden patches in an indifferent state of cultivation. There were people, too; brawny men, with long, coarse, uncombed hair that hung down over their faces and made them look like animals. They and the women, as a rule, wore a coarse

tow-linen robe that came well below the knee, and a rude sort of sandal, and many wore an iron collar. The small boys and girls were always naked; but nobody seemed to know it. All of these people stared at me, talked about me, ran into the huts and fetched out their families to gape at me; but nobody ever noticed that other fellow, except to make him humble salutation and get no response for their pains.

In the town were some substantial windowless houses of stone scattered among a wilderness of thatched cabins; the streets were mere crooked alleys, and unpaved; troops of dogs and nude children played in the sun and made life and noise; hogs roamed and rooted contentedly about, and one of them lay in a reeking wallow in the middle of the main thoroughfare and suckled her family. Presently there was a distant blare of military music; it came nearer, still nearer, and soon a noble cavalcade wound into view, glorious with plumed helmets and flashing mail and flaunting banners and rich doublets and horse-cloths and gilded spearheads; and through the muck and swine, and naked brats, and joyous dogs, and shabby huts, it took its gallant way, and in its wake we followed.

Followed through one winding alley and then another,—and climbing, always climbing—till at last we gained the breezy height where the huge castle stood. There was an exchange of bugle blasts; then a parley from the walls, where men-at-arms, in hauberk and morion, marched back and forth with halberd at shoulder under flapping banners with the rude figure of a dragon displayed upon them; and then the great gates were flung open, the drawbridge was lowered, and the head of the cavalcade swept forward under the frowning arches; and we, following, soon found ourselves in a great paved court, with towers and turrets stretching up into the blue air on all the four sides; and all about us the dismount was going on, and much greeting and ceremony, and running to and fro, and a gay display of moving and intermingling colors, and an altogether pleasant stir and noise and confusion.

## CHAPTER II. KING ARTHUR'S COURT

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The moment I got a chance I slipped aside privately and touched an ancient common looking man on the shoulder and said, in an insinuating, confidential way:

"Friend, do me a kindness. Do you belong to the asylum, or are you just on a visit or something like that?"

He looked me over stupidly, and said:

"Marry, fair sir, me seemeth—"

"That will do," I said; "I reckon you are a patient."

I moved away, cogitating, and at the same time keeping an eye out for any chance passenger in his right mind that might come along and give me some light. I judged I had found one, presently; so I drew him aside and said in his ear:

"If I could see the head keeper a minute—only just a minute—"

"Prithee do not let me."

"Let you *what*?"

"*Hinder* me, then, if the word please thee better. Then he went on to say he was an under-cook and could not stop to gossip, though he would like it another time; for it would comfort his very liver to know where I got my clothes. As he started away he pointed and said yonder was one who was idle enough for my purpose, and was seeking me besides, no doubt. This was an airy slim boy in shrimp-colored tights that made him look like a forked carrot, the rest of his gear was blue silk and dainty laces and ruffles; and he had long yellow curls, and wore a plumed pink satin cap tilted complacently over his ear. By his look, he was good-natured; by his gait, he was satisfied with himself. He was pretty enough to frame. He arrived, looked me over with a smiling and impudent curiosity; said he had come for me, and informed me that he was a page.

"Go 'long," I said; "you ain't more than a paragraph."

It was pretty severe, but I was nettled. However, it never phazed him; he didn't appear to know he was hurt. He began to talk and laugh, in happy, thoughtless, boyish fashion, as we walked along, and made himself old friends with me at once; asked me all sorts of questions about myself and about my

clothes, but never waited for an answer—always chattered straight ahead, as if he didn't know he had asked a question and wasn't expecting any reply, until at last he happened to mention that he was born in the beginning of the year 513.

It made the cold chills creep over me! I stopped and said, a little faintly:

"Maybe I didn't hear you just right. Say it again—and say it slow. What year was it?"

"513."

"513! You don't look it! Come, my boy, I am a stranger and friendless; be honest and honorable with me. Are you in your right mind?"

He said he was.

"Are these other people in their right minds?"

He said they were.

"And this isn't an asylum? I mean, it isn't a place where they cure crazy people?"

He said it wasn't.

"Well, then," I said, "either I am a lunatic, or something just as awful has happened. Now tell me, honest and true, where am I?"

"*In King Arthur's Court.*"

I waited a minute, to let that idea shudder its way home, and then said:

"And according to your notions, what year is it now?"

"528—nineteenth of June."

I felt a mournful sinking at the heart, and muttered: "I shall never see my friends again—never, never again. They will not be born for more than thirteen hundred years yet."

I seemed to believe the boy, I didn't know why. *Something* in me seemed to believe him—my consciousness, as you may say; but my reason didn't. My reason straightway began to clamor; that was natural. I didn't know how to go about satisfying it, because I knew that the testimony of men wouldn't serve—my reason would say they were lunatics, and throw out their evidence. But all of a sudden I stumbled on the very thing, just by luck. I knew that the only total eclipse of the sun in the first half of the sixth century occurred on the 21st of June, A.D. 528, O.S., and began at 3 minutes after 12 noon. I also knew that no total eclipse of the sun was due in what to *me* was the present year—i.e., 1879. So, if I could keep my anxiety and curiosity from eating the heart out of me for forty-eight hours, I should then find out for certain whether this boy was telling me the truth or not.

Wherefore, being a practical Connecticut man, I now shoved this whole problem clear out of my mind till its appointed day and hour should come, in order that I might turn all my attention to the circumstances of the present

moment, and be alert and ready to make the most out of them that could be made. One thing at a time, is my motto—and just play that thing for all it is worth, even if it's only two pair and a jack. I made up my mind to two things: if it was still the nineteenth century and I was among lunatics and couldn't get away, I would presently boss that asylum or know the reason why; and if, on the other hand, it was really the sixth century, all right, I didn't want any softer thing:

I would boss the whole country inside of three months; for I judged I would have the start of the best-educated man in the kingdom by a matter of thirteen hundred years and upward. I'm not a man to waste time after my mind's made up and there's work on hand; so I said to the page:

"Now, Clarence, my boy—if that might happen to be your name—I'll get you to post me up a little if you don't mind. What is the name of that apparition that brought me here?"

"My master and thine? That is the good knight and great lord Sir Kay the Seneschal, foster brother to our liege the king."

"Very good; go on, tell me everything."

He made a long story of it; but the part that had immediate interest for me was this: He said I was Sir Kay's prisoner, and that in the due course of custom I would be flung into a dungeon and left there on scant commons until my friends ransomed me—unless I chanced to rot, first. I saw that the last chance had the best show, but I didn't waste any bother about that; time was too precious. The page said, further, that dinner was about ended in the great hall by this time, and that as soon as the sociability and the heavy drinking should begin, Sir Kay would have me in and exhibit me before King Arthur and his illustrious knights seated at the Table Round, and would brag about his exploit in capturing me, and would probably exaggerate the facts a little, but it wouldn't be good form for me to correct him, and not over safe, either; and when I was done being exhibited, then ho for the dungeon; but he, Clarence, would find a way to come and see me every now and then, and cheer me up, and help me get word to my friends.

Get word to my friends! I thanked him; I couldn't do less; and about this time a lackey came to say I was wanted; so Clarence led me in and took me off to one side and sat down by me.

Well, it was a curious kind of spectacle, and interesting. It was an immense place, and rather naked—yes, and full of loud contrasts. It was very, very lofty; so lofty that the banners depending from the arched beams and girders away up there floated in a sort of twilight; there was a stone-railed gallery at each end, high up, with musicians in the one, and women, clothed in stunning colors, in the other. The floor was of big stone flags laid in black and white squares, rather battered by age and use, and needing repair. As to ornament, there wasn't any,

strictly speaking; though on the walls hung some huge tapestries which were probably taxed as works of art; battle-pieces, they were, with horses shaped like those which children cut out of paper or create in gingerbread; with men on them in scale armor whose scales are represented by round holes—so that the man's coat looks as if it had been done with a biscuit-punch. There was a fireplace big enough to camp in; and its projecting sides and hood, of carved and pillared stonework, had the look of a cathedral door. Along the walls stood men-at-arms, in breastplate and morion, with halberds for their only weapon—rigid as statues; and that is what they looked like.

In the middle of this groined and vaulted public square was an oaken table which they called the Table Round. It was as large as a circus ring; and around it sat a great company of men dressed in such various and splendid colors that it hurt one's eyes to look at them. They wore their plumed hats, right along, except that whenever one addressed himself directly to the king, he lifted his hat a trifle just as he was beginning his remark.

Mainly they were drinking—from entire ox horns; but a few were still munching bread or gnawing beef bones. There was about an average of two dogs to one man; and these sat in expectant attitudes till a spent bone was flung to them, and then they went for it by brigades and divisions, with a rush, and there ensued a fight which filled the prospect with a tumultuous chaos of plunging heads and bodies and flashing tails, and the storm of howlings and barkings deafened all speech for the time; but that was no matter, for the dog-fight was always a bigger interest anyway; the men rose, sometimes, to observe it the better and bet on it, and the ladies and the musicians stretched themselves out over their balusters with the same object; and all broke into delighted ejaculations from time to time. In the end, the winning dog stretched himself out comfortably with his bone between his paws, and proceeded to growl over it, and gnaw it, and grease the floor with it, just as fifty others were already doing; and the rest of the court resumed their previous industries and entertainments.

As a rule, the speech and behavior of these people were gracious and courtly; and I noticed that they were good and serious listeners when anybody was telling anything—I mean in a dog-fightless interval. And plainly, too, they were a childlike and innocent lot; telling lies of the stateliest pattern with a most gentle and winning naivety, and ready and willing to listen to anybody else's lie, and believe it, too. It was hard to associate them with anything cruel or dreadful; and yet they dealt in tales of blood and suffering with a guileless relish that made me almost forget to shudder.

I was not the only prisoner present. There were twenty or more. Poor devils, many of them were maimed, hacked, carved, in a frightful way; and their hair,

their faces, their clothing, were caked with black and stiffened drenchings of blood. They were suffering sharp physical pain, of course; and weariness, and hunger and thirst, no doubt; and at least none had given them the comfort of a wash, or even the poor charity of a lotion for their wounds; yet you never heard them utter a moan or a groan, or saw them show any sign of restlessness, or any disposition to complain. The thought was forced upon me: "The rascals—*they* have served other people so in their day; it being their own turn, now, they were not expecting any better treatment than this; so their philosophical bearing is not an outcome of mental training, intellectual fortitude, reasoning; it is mere animal training; they are white Indians."



## CHAPTER III. KNIGHTS OF THE TABLE ROUND

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Mainly the Round Table talk was monologues—narrative accounts of the adventures in which these prisoners were captured and their friends and backers killed and stripped of their steeds and armor. As a general thing—as far as I could make out—these murderous adventures were not forays undertaken to avenge injuries, nor to settle old disputes or sudden fallings out; no, as a rule they were simply duels between strangers—duels between people who had never even been introduced to each other, and between whom existed no cause of offense whatever. Many a time I had seen a couple of boys, strangers, meet by chance, and say simultaneously, "I can lick you," and go at it on the spot; but I had always imagined until now that that sort of thing belonged to children only, and was a sign and mark of childhood; but here were these big boobies sticking to it and taking pride in it clear up into full age and beyond. Yet there was something very engaging about these great simple-hearted creatures, something attractive and lovable. There did not seem to be brains enough in the entire nursery, so to speak, to bait a fish-hook with; but you didn't seem to mind that, after a little, because you soon saw that brains were not needed in a society like that, and indeed would have marred it, hindered it, spoiled its symmetry—perhaps rendered its existence impossible.

There was a fine manliness observable in almost every face; and in some a certain loftiness and sweetness that rebuked your belittling criticisms and stilled them. A most noble benignity and purity reposed in the countenance of him they called Sir Galahad, and likewise in the king's also; and there was majesty and greatness in the giant frame and high bearing of Sir Launcelot of the Lake.

There was presently an incident which centered the general interest upon this Sir Launcelot. At a sign from a sort of master of ceremonies, six or eight of the prisoners rose and came forward in a body and knelt on the floor and lifted up their hands toward the ladies' gallery and begged the grace of a word with the queen. The most conspicuously situated lady in that massed flower-bed of feminine show and finery inclined her head by way of assent, and then the spokesman of the prisoners delivered himself and his fellows into her hands for free pardon, ransom, captivity, or death, as she in her good pleasure might elect;

and this, as he said, he was doing by command of Sir Kay the Seneschal, whose prisoners they were, he having vanquished them by his single might and prowess in sturdy conflict in the field.

Surprise and astonishment flashed from face to face all over the house; the queen's gratified smile faded out at the name of Sir Kay, and she looked disappointed; and the page whispered in my ear with an accent and manner expressive of extravagant derision—

"Sir *Kay*, forsooth! Oh, call me pet names, dearest, call me a marine! In twice a thousand years shall the unholy invention of man labor at odds to beget the fellow to this majestic lie!"

Every eye was fastened with severe inquiry upon Sir Kay. But he was equal to the occasion. He got up and played his hand like a major—and took every trick. He said he would state the case exactly according to the facts; he would tell the simple straightforward tale, without comment of his own; "and then," said he, "if ye find glory and honor due, ye will give it unto him who is the mightiest man of his hands that ever bare shield or strake with sword in the ranks of Christian battle—even him that sitteth there!" and he pointed to Sir Launcelot.

Ah, he fetched them; it was a rattling good stroke. Then he went on and told how Sir Launcelot, seeking adventures, some brief time gone by, killed seven giants at one sweep of his sword, and set a hundred and forty-two captive maidens free; and then went further, still seeking adventures, and found him (Sir Kay) fighting a desperate fight against nine foreign knights, and straightway took the battle solely into his own hands, and conquered the nine; and that night Sir Launcelot rose quietly, and dressed him in Sir Kay's armor and took Sir Kay's horse and gat him away into distant lands, and vanquished sixteen knights in one pitched battle and thirty-four in another; and all these and the former nine he made to swear that about Whitsuntide they would ride to Arthur's court and yield them to Queen Guenever's hands as captives of Sir Kay the Seneschal, spoil of his knightly prowess; and now here were these half dozen, and the rest would be along as soon as they might be healed of their desperate wounds.

Well, it was touching to see the queen blush and smile, and look embarrassed and happy, and fling furtive glances at Sir Launcelot that would have got him shot in Arkansas, to a dead certainty.

Everybody praised the valor and magnanimity of Sir Launcelot; and as for me, I was perfectly amazed, that one man, all by himself, should have been able to beat down and capture such battalions of practiced fighters. I said as much to Clarence; but this mocking featherhead only said:

"An Sir Kay had had time to get another skin of sour wine into him, ye had seen the accmpt doubled."

I looked at the boy in sorrow; and as I looked I saw the cloud of a deep despondency settle upon his countenance. I followed the direction of his eye, and saw that a very old and white-bearded man, clothed in a flowing black gown, had risen and was standing at the table upon unsteady legs, and feebly swaying his ancient head and surveying the company with his watery and wandering eye. The same suffering look that was in the page's face was observable in all the faces around—the look of dumb creatures who know that they must endure and make no moan.

"Marry, we shall have it again," sighed the boy; "that same old weary tale that he hath told a thousand times in the same words, and that he *will* tell till he dieth, every time he hath gotten his barrel full and feeleth his exaggeration-mill a-working. Would God I had died or I saw this day!"

"Who is it?"

"Merlin, the mighty liar and magician, perdition singe him for the weariness he worketh with his one tale! But that men fear him for that he hath the storms and the lightnings and all the devils that be in hell at his beck and call, they would have dug his entrails out these many years ago to get at that tale and squelch it. He telleth it always in the third person, making believe he is too modest to glorify himself—maledictions light upon him, misfortune be his dole! Good friend, prithee call me for evensong."

The boy nestled himself upon my shoulder and pretended to go to sleep. The old man began his tale; and presently the lad was asleep in reality; so also were the dogs, and the court, the lackeys, and the files of men-at-arms. The droning voice droned on; a soft snoring arose on all sides and supported it like a deep and subdued accompaniment of wind instruments. Some heads were bowed upon folded arms, some lay back with open mouths that issued unconscious music; the flies buzzed and bit, unmolested, the rats swarmed softly out from a hundred holes, and pattered about, and made themselves at home everywhere; and one of them sat up like a squirrel on the king's head and held a bit of cheese in its hands and nibbled it, and dribbled the crumbs in the king's face with naive and impudent irreverence. It was a tranquil scene, and restful to the weary eye and the jaded spirit.

This was the old man's tale. He said:

"Right so the king and Merlin departed, and went until an hermit that was a good man and a great leech. So the hermit searched all his wounds and gave him good salves; so the king was there three days, and then were his wounds well amended that he might ride and go, and so departed. And as they rode, Arthur said, I have no sword. No force,\* [\*Footnote from M.T.: No matter.] said Merlin, hereby is a sword that shall be yours and I may. So they rode till

they came to a lake, the which was a fair water and broad, and in the midst of the lake Arthur was ware of an arm clothed in white samite, that held a fair sword in that hand. Lo, said Merlin, yonder is that sword that I spake of. With that they saw a damsel going upon the lake. What damsel is that? said Arthur. That is the Lady of the lake, said Merlin; and within that lake is a rock, and therein is as fair a place as any on earth, and richly beseen, and this damsel will come to you anon, and then speak ye fair to her that she will give you that sword. Anon withal came the damsel unto Arthur and saluted him, and he her again. Damsel, said Arthur, what sword is that, that yonder the arm holdeth above the water? I would it were mine, for I have no sword. Sir Arthur King, said the damsel, that sword is mine, and if ye will give me a gift when I ask it you, ye shall have it. By my faith, said Arthur, I will give you what gift ye will ask. Well, said the damsel, go ye into yonder barge and row yourself to the sword, and take it and the scabbard with you, and I will ask my gift when I see my time. So Sir Arthur and Merlin alight, and tied their horses to two trees, and so they went into the ship, and when they came to the sword that the hand held, Sir Arthur took it up by the handles, and took it with him.

And the arm and the hand went under the water; and so they came unto the land and rode forth. And then Sir Arthur saw a rich pavilion. What signifieth yonder pavilion? It is the knight's pavilion, said Merlin, that ye fought with last, Sir Pellinore, but he is out, he is not there; he hath ado with a knight of yours, that hight Egglame, and they have fought together, but at the last Egglame fled, and else he had been dead, and he hath chased him even to Carlion, and we shall meet with him anon in the highway. That is well said, said Arthur, now have I a sword, now will I wage battle with him, and be avenged on him. Sir, ye shall not so, said Merlin, for the knight is weary of fighting and chasing, so that ye shall have no worship to have ado with him; also, he will not lightly be matched of one knight living; and therefore it is my counsel, let him pass, for he shall do you good service in short time, and his sons, after his days. Also ye shall see that day in short space ye shall be right glad to give him your sister to wed.

When I see him, I will do as ye advise me, said Arthur. Then Sir Arthur looked on the sword, and liked it passing well. Whether liketh you better, said Merlin, the sword or the scabbard? Me liketh better the sword, said Arthur. Ye are more unwise, said Merlin, for the scabbard is worth ten of the sword, for while ye have the scabbard upon you ye shall never lose no blood, be ye never so sore wounded; therefore, keep well the scabbard always with you. So they rode into Carlion, and by the way they met with Sir Pellinore; but Merlin had done such a craft that Pellinore saw not Arthur, and he passed by without any words. I marvel, said Arthur, that the knight would not speak. Sir, said Merlin, he saw

you not; for and he had seen you ye had not lightly departed. So they came unto Carlion, whereof his knights were passing glad. And when they heard of his adventures they marveled that he would jeopard his person so alone. But all men of worship said it was merry to be under such a chieftain that would put his person in adventure as other poor knights did."

## CHAPTER IV. SIR DINADAN THE HUMORIST

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It seemed to me that this quaint lie was most simply and beautifully told; but then I had heard it only once, and that makes a difference; it was pleasant to the others when it was fresh, no doubt.

Sir Dinadan the Humorist was the first to awake, and he soon roused the rest with a practical joke of a sufficiently poor quality. He tied some metal mugs to a dog's tail and turned him loose, and he tore around and around the place in a frenzy of fright, with all the other dogs bellowing after him and battering and crashing against everything that came in their way and making altogether a chaos of confusion and a most deafening din and turmoil; at which every man and woman of the multitude laughed till the tears flowed, and some fell out of their chairs and wallowed on the floor in ecstasy. It was just like so many children. Sir Dinadan was so proud of his exploit that he could not keep from telling over and over again, to weariness, how the immortal idea happened to occur to him; and as is the way with humorists of his breed, he was still laughing at it after everybody else had got through.

He was so set up that he concluded to make a speech—of course a humorous speech. I think I never heard so many old played-out jokes strung together in my life. He was worse than the minstrels, worse than the clown in the circus. It seemed peculiarly sad to sit here, thirteen hundred years before I was born, and listen again to poor, flat, worm-eaten jokes that had given me the dry gripes when I was a boy thirteen hundred years afterwards. It about convinced me that there isn't any such thing as a new joke possible. Everybody laughed at these antiquities—but then they always do; I had noticed that, centuries later. However, of course the scoffer didn't laugh—I mean the boy. No, he scoffed; there wasn't anything he wouldn't scoff at. He said the most of Sir Dinadan's jokes were rotten and the rest were petrified. I said "petrified" was good; as I believed, myself, that the only right way to classify the majestic ages of some of those jokes was by geologic periods. But that neat idea hit the boy in a blank place, for geology hadn't been invented yet. However, I made a note of the remark, and calculated to educate the commonwealth up to it if I pulled through. It is no use to throw a good thing away merely because the market isn't ripe yet.

Now Sir Kay arose and began to fire up on his history-mill with me for fuel. It was time for me to feel serious, and I did. Sir Kay told how he had encountered me in a far land of barbarians, who all wore the same ridiculous garb that I did—a garb that was a work of enchantment, and intended to make the wearer secure from hurt by human hands. However he had nullified the force of the enchantment by prayer, and had killed my thirteen knights in a three hours' battle, and taken me prisoner, sparing my life in order that so strange a curiosity as I was might be exhibited to the wonder and admiration of the king and the court. He spoke of me all the time, in the blindest way, as "this prodigious giant," and "this horrible sky-towering monster," and "this tusked and taloned man-devouring ogre", and everybody took in all this bosh in the naivest way, and never smiled or seemed to notice that there was any discrepancy between these watered statistics and me. He said that in trying to escape from him I sprang into the top of a tree two hundred cubits high at a single bound, but he dislodged me with a stone the size of a cow, which "all-to brast" the most of my bones, and then swore me to appear at Arthur's court for sentence. He ended by condemning me to die at noon on the 21st; and was so little concerned about it that he stopped to yawn before he named the date.

I was in a dismal state by this time; indeed, I was hardly enough in my right mind to keep the run of a dispute that sprung up as to how I had better be killed, the possibility of the killing being doubted by some, because of the enchantment in my clothes. And yet it was nothing but an ordinary suit of fifteen-dollar slop-shops. Still, I was sane enough to notice this detail, to wit: many of the terms used in the most matter-of-fact way by this great assemblage of the first ladies and gentlemen in the land would have made a Comanche blush.

Indelicacy is too mild a term to convey the idea. However, I had read "Tom Jones," and "Roderick Random," and other books of that kind, and knew that the highest and first ladies and gentlemen in England had remained little or no cleaner in their talk, and in the morals and conduct which such talk implies, clear up to a hundred years ago; in fact clear into our own nineteenth century—in which century, broadly speaking, the earliest samples of the real lady and real gentleman discoverable in English history—or in European history, for that matter—may be said to have made their appearance. Suppose Sir Walter, instead of putting the conversations into the mouths of his characters, had allowed the characters to speak for themselves? We should have had talk from Rebecca and Ivanhoe and the soft lady Rowena which would embarrass a tramp in our day. However, to the unconsciously indelicate all things are delicate. King Arthur's people were not aware that they were indecent and I had presence of mind enough not to mention it.

They were so troubled about my enchanted clothes that they were mightily relieved, at last, when old Merlin swept the difficulty away for them with a common-sense hint. He asked them why they were so dull—why didn't it occur to them to strip me. In half a minute I was as naked as a pair of tongs! And dear, dear, to think of it: I was the only embarrassed person there. Everybody discussed me; and did it as unconcernedly as if I had been a cabbage. Queen Guenever was as naively interested as the rest, and said she had never seen anybody with legs just like mine before. It was the only compliment I got—if it was a compliment.

Finally I was carried off in one direction, and my perilous clothes in another. I was shoved into a dark and narrow cell in a dungeon, with some scant remnants for dinner, some moldy straw for a bed, and no end of rats for company.



## CHAPTER V. AN INSPIRATION

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I was so tired that even my fears were not able to keep me awake long.

When I next came to myself, I seemed to have been asleep a very long time. My first thought was, "Well, what an astonishing dream I've had! I reckon I've waked only just in time to keep from being hanged or drowned or burned or something.... I'll nap again till the whistle blows, and then I'll go down to the arms factory and have it out with Hercules."

But just then I heard the harsh music of rusty chains and bolts, a light flashed in my eyes, and that butterfly, Clarence, stood before me! I gasped with surprise; my breath almost got away from me.

"What!" I said, "you here yet? Go along with the rest of the dream! scatter!"

But he only laughed, in his light-hearted way, and fell to making fun of my sorry plight.

"All right," I said resignedly, "let the dream go on; I'm in no hurry."

"Prithee what dream?"

"What dream? Why, the dream that I am in Arthur's court—a person who never existed; and that I am talking to you, who are nothing but a work of the imagination."

"Oh, la, indeed! and is it a dream that you're to be burned to-morrow? Ho-ho—answer me that!"

The shock that went through me was distressing. I now began to reason that my situation was in the last degree serious, dream or no dream; for I knew by past experience of the lifelike intensity of dreams, that to be burned to death, even in a dream, would be very far from being a jest, and was a thing to be avoided, by any means, fair or foul, that I could contrive. So I said beseechingly:

"Ah, Clarence, good boy, only friend I've got,—for you *are* my friend, aren't you?—don't fail me; help me to devise some way of escaping from this place!"

"Now do but hear thyself! Escape? Why, man, the corridors are in guard and keep of men-at-arms."

"No doubt, no doubt. But how many, Clarence? Not many, I hope?"

"Full a score. One may not hope to escape." After a pause—hesitatingly:

"and there be other reasons—and weightier."

"Other ones? What are they?"

"Well, they say—oh, but I daren't, indeed daren't!"

"Why, poor lad, what is the matter? Why do you blench? Why do you tremble so?"

"Oh, in sooth, there is need! I do want to tell you, but—"

"Come, come, be brave, be a man—speak out, there's a good lad!"

He hesitated, pulled one way by desire, the other way by fear; then he stole to the door and peeped out, listening; and finally crept close to me and put his mouth to my ear and told me his fearful news in a whisper, and with all the cowering apprehension of one who was venturing upon awful ground and speaking of things whose very mention might be freighted with death.

"Merlin, in his malice, has woven a spell about this dungeon, and there bides not the man in these kingdoms that would be desperate enough to essay to cross its lines with you! Now God pity me, I have told it! Ah, be kind to me, be merciful to a poor boy who means thee well; for an thou betray me I am lost!"

I laughed the only really refreshing laugh I had had for some time; and shouted:

"Merlin has wrought a spell! *Merlin*, forsooth! That cheap old humbug, that maundering old ass? Bosh, pure bosh, the silliest bosh in the world! Why, it does seem to me that of all the childish, idiotic, chuckle-headed, chicken-livered superstitions that ev—oh, damn Merlin!"

But Clarence had slumped to his knees before I had half finished, and he was like to go out of his mind with fright.

"Oh, beware! These are awful words! Any moment these walls may crumble upon us if you say such things. Oh call them back before it is too late!"

Now this strange exhibition gave me a good idea and set me to thinking. If everybody about here was so honestly and sincerely afraid of Merlin's pretended magic as Clarence was, certainly a superior man like me ought to be shrewd enough to contrive some way to take advantage of such a state of things. I went on thinking, and worked out a plan. Then I said:

"Get up. Pull yourself together; look me in the eye. Do you know why I laughed?"

"No—but for our blessed Lady's sake, do it no more."

"Well, I'll tell you why I laughed. Because I'm a magician myself."

"Thou!" The boy recoiled a step, and caught his breath, for the thing hit him rather sudden; but the aspect which he took on was very, very respectful. I took quick note of that; it indicated that a humbug didn't need to have a reputation in this asylum; people stood ready to take him at his word, without that. I resumed.

"I've known Merlin seven hundred years, and he—"

"Seven hun—"

"Don't interrupt me. He has died and come alive again thirteen times, and traveled under a new name every time: Smith, Jones, Robinson, Jackson, Peters, Haskins, Merlin—a new alias every time he turns up. I knew him in Egypt three hundred years ago; I knew him in India five hundred years ago—he is always blethering around in my way, everywhere I go; he makes me tired. He don't amount to shucks, as a magician; knows some of the old common tricks, but has never got beyond the rudiments, and never will. He is well enough for the provinces—one-night stands and that sort of thing, you know—but dear me, *he* oughtn't to set up for an expert—anyway not where there's a real artist. Now look here, Clarence, I am going to stand your friend, right along, and in return you must be mine. I want you to do me a favor. I want you to get word to the king that I am a magician myself—and the Supreme Grand High-yu-Muck-amuck and head of the tribe, at that; and I want him to be made to understand that I am just quietly arranging a little calamity here that will make the fur fly in these realms if Sir Kay's project is carried out and any harm comes to me. Will you get that to the king for me?"

The poor boy was in such a state that he could hardly answer me. It was pitiful to see a creature so terrified, so unnerved, so demoralized. But he promised everything; and on my side he made me promise over and over again that I would remain his friend, and never turn against him or cast any enchantments upon him. Then he worked his way out, staying himself with his hand along the wall, like a sick person.

Presently this thought occurred to me: how heedless I have been! When the boy gets calm, he will wonder why a great magician like me should have begged a boy like him to help me get out of this place; he will put this and that together, and will see that I am a humbug.

I worried over that heedless blunder for an hour, and called myself a great many hard names, meantime. But finally it occurred to me all of a sudden that these animals didn't reason; that *they* never put this and that together; that all their talk showed that they didn't know a discrepancy when they saw it. I was at rest, then.

But as soon as one is at rest, in this world, off he goes on something else to worry about. It occurred to me that I had made another blunder: I had sent the boy off to alarm his betters with a threat—I intending to invent a calamity at my leisure; now the people who are the readiest and eagerest and willingest to swallow miracles are the very ones who are hungriest to see you perform them; suppose I should be called on for a sample? Suppose I should be asked to name

my calamity? Yes, I had made a blunder; I ought to have invented my calamity first. "What shall I do? what can I say, to gain a little time?" I was in trouble again; in the deepest kind of trouble...

"There's a footstep!—they're coming. If I had only just a moment to think... Good, I've got it. I'm all right."

You see, it was the eclipse. It came into my mind in the nick of time, how Columbus, or Cortez, or one of those people, played an eclipse as a saving trump once, on some savages, and I saw my chance. I could play it myself, now, and it wouldn't be any plagiarism, either, because I should get it in nearly a thousand years ahead of those parties.

Clarence came in, subdued, distressed, and said:

"I hasted the message to our liege the king, and straightway he had me to his presence. He was frightened even to the marrow, and was minded to give order for your instant enlargement, and that you be clothed in fine raiment and lodged as befitted one so great; but then came Merlin and spoiled all; for he persuaded the king that you are mad, and know not whereof you speak; and said your threat is but foolishness and idle vapping. They disputed long, but in the end, Merlin, scoffing, said, 'Wherefore hath he not *named* his brave calamity? Verily it is because he cannot.' This thrust did in a most sudden sort close the king's mouth, and he could offer naught to turn the argument; and so, reluctant, and full loth to do you the discourtesy, he yet prayeth you to consider his perplexed case, as noting how the matter stands, and name the calamity—if so be you have determined the nature of it and the time of its coming. Oh, prithee delay not; to delay at such a time were to double and treble the perils that already compass thee about. Oh, be thou wise—name the calamity!"

I allowed silence to accumulate while I got my impressiveness together, and then said:

"How long have I been shut up in this hole?"

"Ye were shut up when yesterday was well spent. It is 9 of the morning now."

"No! Then I have slept well, sure enough. Nine in the morning now! And yet it is the very complexion of midnight, to a shade. This is the 20th, then?"

"The 20th—yes."

"And I am to be burned alive to-morrow." The boy shuddered.

"At what hour?"

"At high noon."

"Now then, I will tell you what to say." I paused, and stood over that cowering lad a whole minute in awful silence; then, in a voice deep, measured, charged with doom, I began, and rose by dramatically graded stages to my

colossal climax, which I delivered in as sublime and noble a way as ever I did such a thing in my life: "Go back and tell the king that at that hour I will smother the whole world in the dead blackness of midnight; I will blot out the sun, and he shall never shine again; the fruits of the earth shall rot for lack of light and warmth, and the peoples of the earth shall famish and die, to the last man!"

I had to carry the boy out myself, he sunk into such a collapse. I handed him over to the soldiers, and went back.

## CHAPTER VI. THE ECLIPSE

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In the stillness and the darkness, realization soon began to supplement knowledge. The mere knowledge of a fact is pale; but when you come to *realize* your fact, it takes on color. It is all the difference between hearing of a man being stabbed to the heart, and seeing it done. In the stillness and the darkness, the knowledge that I was in deadly danger took to itself deeper and deeper meaning all the time; a something which was realization crept inch by inch through my veins and turned me cold.

But it is a blessed provision of nature that at times like these, as soon as a man's mercury has got down to a certain point there comes a revulsion, and he rallies. Hope springs up, and cheerfulness along with it, and then he is in good shape to do something for himself, if anything can be done. When my rally came, it came with a bound. I said to myself that my eclipse would be sure to save me, and make me the greatest man in the kingdom besides; and straightway my mercury went up to the top of the tube, and my solitudes all vanished. I was as happy a man as there was in the world. I was even impatient for to-morrow to come, I so wanted to gather in that great triumph and be the center of all the nation's wonder and reverence. Besides, in a business way it would be the making of me; I knew that.

Meantime there was one thing which had got pushed into the background of my mind. That was the half-conviction that when the nature of my proposed calamity should be reported to those superstitious people, it would have such an effect that they would want to compromise. So, by and by when I heard footsteps coming, that thought was recalled to me, and I said to myself, "As sure as anything, it's the compromise. Well, if it is good, all right, I will accept; but if it isn't, I mean to stand my ground and play my hand for all it is worth."

The door opened, and some men-at-arms appeared. The leader said:

"The stake is ready. Come!"

The stake! The strength went out of me, and I almost fell down. It is hard to get one's breath at such a time, such lumps come into one's throat, and such gaspings; but as soon as I could speak, I said:

"But this is a mistake—the execution is to-morrow."

"Order changed; been set forward a day. Haste thee!"

I was lost. There was no help for me. I was dazed, stupefied; I had no command over myself, I only wandered purposely about, like one out of his mind; so the soldiers took hold of me, and pulled me along with them, out of the cell and along the maze of underground corridors, and finally into the fierce glare of daylight and the upper world. As we stepped into the vast enclosed court of the castle I got a shock; for the first thing I saw was the stake, standing in the center, and near it the piled fagots and a monk. On all four sides of the court the seated multitudes rose rank above rank, forming sloping terraces that were rich with color. The king and the queen sat in their thrones, the most conspicuous figures there, of course.

To note all this, occupied but a second. The next second Clarence had slipped from some place of concealment and was pouring news into my ear, his eyes beaming with triumph and gladness. He said:

"Tis through *me* the change was wrought! And main hard have I worked to do it, too. But when I revealed to them the calamity in store, and saw how mighty was the terror it did engender, then saw I also that this was the time to strike! Wherefore I diligently pretended, unto this and that and the other one, that your power against the sun could not reach its full until the morrow; and so if any would save the sun and the world, you must be slain to-day, while your enchantments are but in the weaving and lack potency. Odsbodikins, it was but a dull lie, a most indifferent invention, but you should have seen them seize it and swallow it, in the frenzy of their fright, as it were salvation sent from heaven; and all the while was I laughing in my sleeve the one moment, to see them so cheaply deceived, and glorifying God the next, that He was content to let the meanest of His creatures be His instrument to the saving of thy life. Ah how happy has the matter sped! You will not need to do the sun a *real* hurt—ah, forget not that, on your soul forget it not! Only make a little darkness—only the littlest little darkness, mind, and cease with that. It will be sufficient. They will see that I spoke falsely,—being ignorant, as they will fancy—and with the falling of the first shadow of that darkness you shall see them go mad with fear; and they will set you free and make you great! Go to thy triumph, now! But remember—ah, good friend, I implore thee remember my supplication, and do the blessed sun no hurt. For *my* sake, thy true friend."

I choked out some words through my grief and misery; as much as to say I would spare the sun; for which the lad's eyes paid me back with such deep and loving gratitude that I had not the heart to tell him his good-hearted foolishness had ruined me and sent me to my death.

As the soldiers assisted me across the court the stillness was so profound that

if I had been blindfold I should have supposed I was in a solitude instead of walled in by four thousand people. There was not a movement perceptible in those masses of humanity; they were as rigid as stone images, and as pale; and dread sat upon every countenance. This hush continued while I was being chained to the stake; it still continued while the fagots were carefully and tediously piled about my ankles, my knees, my thighs, my body. Then there was a pause, and a deeper hush, if possible, and a man knelt down at my feet with a blazing torch; the multitude strained forward, gazing, and parting slightly from their seats without knowing it; the monk raised his hands above my head, and his eyes toward the blue sky, and began some words in Latin; in this attitude he droned on and on, a little while, and then stopped. I waited two or three moments; then looked up; he was standing there petrified. With a common impulse the multitude rose slowly up and stared into the sky. I followed their eyes, as sure as guns, there was my eclipse beginning! The life went boiling through my veins; I was a new man! The rim of black spread slowly into the sun's disk, my heart beat higher and higher, and still the assemblage and the priest stared into the sky, motionless. I knew that this gaze would be turned upon me, next. When it was, I was ready. I was in one of the most grand attitudes I ever struck, with my arm stretched up pointing to the sun. It was a noble effect. You could *see* the shudder sweep the mass like a wave. Two shouts rang out, one close upon the heels of the other:

"Apply the torch!"

"I forbid it!"

The one was from Merlin, the other from the king. Merlin started from his place—to apply the torch himself, I judged. I said:

"Stay where you are. If any man moves—even the king—before I give him leave, I will blast him with thunder, I will consume him with lightnings!"

The multitude sank meekly into their seats, and I was just expecting they would. Merlin hesitated a moment or two, and I was on pins and needles during that little while. Then he sat down, and I took a good breath; for I knew I was master of the situation now. The king said:

"Be merciful, fair sir, and essay no further in this perilous matter, lest disaster follow. It was reported to us that your powers could not attain unto their full strength until the morrow; but—"

"Your Majesty thinks the report may have been a lie? *It was a lie.*"

That made an immense effect; up went appealing hands everywhere, and the king was assailed with a storm of supplications that I might be bought off at any price, and the calamity stayed. The king was eager to comply. He said:

"Name any terms, reverend sir, even to the halving of my kingdom; but



banish this calamity, spare the sun!"

My fortune was made. I would have taken him up in a minute, but I couldn't stop an eclipse; the thing was out of the question. So I asked time to consider.

The king said:

"How long—ah, how long, good sir? Be merciful; look, it groweth darker, moment by moment. Prithee how long?"

"Not long. Half an hour—maybe an hour."

There were a thousand pathetic protests, but I couldn't shorten up any, for I couldn't remember how long a total eclipse lasts. I was in a puzzled condition, anyway, and wanted to think. Something was wrong about that eclipse, and the fact was very unsettling. If this wasn't the one I was after, how was I to tell whether this was the sixth century, or nothing but a dream? Dear me, if I could only prove it was the latter! Here was a glad new hope. If the boy was right about the date, and this was surely the 20th, it *wasn't* the sixth century. I reached for the monk's sleeve, in considerable excitement, and asked him what day of the month it was.

Hang him, he said it was the *twenty-first* ! It made me turn cold to hear him.

I begged him not to make any mistake about it; but he was sure; he knew it was the 21st. So, that feather-headed boy had botched things again! The time of the day was right for the eclipse; I had seen that for myself, in the beginning, by the dial that was near by. Yes, I was in King Arthur's court, and I might as well make the most out of it I could.

The darkness was steadily growing, the people becoming more and more distressed. I now said:

"I have reflected, Sir King. For a lesson, I will let this darkness proceed, and spread night in the world; but whether I blot out the sun for good, or restore it, shall rest with you. These are the terms, to wit: You shall remain king over all your dominions, and receive all the glories and honors that belong to the kingship; but you shall appoint me your perpetual minister and executive, and give me for my services one per cent of such actual increase of revenue over and above its present amount as I may succeed in creating for the state. If I can't live on that, I sha'n't ask anybody to give me a lift. Is it satisfactory?"

There was a prodigious roar of applause, and out of the midst of it the king's voice rose, saying:

"Away with his bonds, and set him free! and do him homage, high and low, rich and poor, for he is become the king's right hand, is clothed with power and authority, and his seat is upon the highest step of the throne! Now sweep away this creeping night, and bring the light and cheer again, that all the world may bless thee."

But I said:

"That a common man should be shamed before the world, is nothing; but it were dishonor to the *king* if any that saw his minister naked should not also see him delivered from his shame. If I might ask that my clothes be brought again —"

"They are not meet," the king broke in. "Fetch raiment of another sort; clothe him like a prince!"

My idea worked. I wanted to keep things as they were till the eclipse was total, otherwise they would be trying again to get me to dismiss the darkness, and of course I couldn't do it. Sending for the clothes gained some delay, but not enough. So I had to make another excuse. I said it would be but natural if the king should change his mind and repent to some extent of what he had done under excitement; therefore I would let the darkness grow a while, and if at the end of a reasonable time the king had kept his mind the same, the darkness should be dismissed. Neither the king nor anybody else was satisfied with that arrangement, but I had to stick to my point.

It grew darker and darker and blacker and blacker, while I struggled with those awkward sixth-century clothes. It got to be pitch dark, at last, and the multitude groaned with horror to feel the cold uncanny night breezes fan through the place and see the stars come out and twinkle in the sky. At last the eclipse was total, and I was very glad of it, but everybody else was in misery; which was quite natural. I said:

"The king, by his silence, still stands to the terms." Then I lifted up my hands—stood just so a moment—then I said, with the most awful solemnity: "Let the enchantment dissolve and pass harmless away!"

There was no response, for a moment, in that deep darkness and that graveyard hush. But when the silver rim of the sun pushed itself out, a moment or two later, the assemblage broke loose with a vast shout and came pouring down like a deluge to smother me with blessings and gratitude; and Clarence was not the last of the wash, to be sure.

## CHAPTER VII. MERLIN'S TOWER

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Inasmuch as I was now the second personage in the Kingdom, as far as political power and authority were concerned, much was made of me. My raiment was of silks and velvets and cloth of gold, and by consequence was very showy, also uncomfortable. But habit would soon reconcile me to my clothes; I was aware of that. I was given the choicest suite of apartments in the castle, after the king's. They were aglow with loud-colored silken hangings, but the stone floors had nothing but rushes on them for a carpet, and they were misfit rushes at that, being not all of one breed. As for conveniences, properly speaking, there weren't any. I mean *little* conveniences; it is the little conveniences that make the real comfort of life. The big oaken chairs, graced with rude carvings, were well enough, but that was the stopping place. There was no soap, no matches, no looking-glass—except a metal one, about as powerful as a pail of water. And not a chromo. I had been used to chromos for years, and I saw now that without my suspecting it a passion for art had got worked into the fabric of my being, and was become a part of me.

It made me homesick to look around over this proud and gaudy but heartless barrenness and remember that in our house in East Hartford, all unpretending as it was, you couldn't go into a room but you would find an insurance-chromo, or at least a three-color God-Bless-Our-Home over the door; and in the parlor we had nine. But here, even in my grand room of state, there wasn't anything in the nature of a picture except a thing the size of a bedquilt, which was either woven or knitted (it had darned places in it), and nothing in it was the right color or the right shape; and as for proportions, even Raphael himself couldn't have botched them more formidably, after all his practice on those nightmares they call his "celebrated Hampton Court cartoons." Raphael was a bird. We had several of his chromos; one was his "Miraculous Draught of Fishes," where he puts in a miracle of his own—puts three men into a canoe which wouldn't have held a dog without upsetting. I always admired to study R.'s art, it was so fresh and unconventional.

There wasn't even a bell or a speaking-tube in the castle. I had a great many servants, and those that were on duty lolled in the anteroom; and when I wanted

one of them I had to go and call for him. There was no gas, there were no candles; a bronze dish half full of boarding-house butter with a blazing rag floating in it was the thing that produced what was regarded as light. A lot of these hung along the walls and modified the dark, just toned it down enough to make it dismal. If you went out at night, your servants carried torches. There were no books, pens, paper or ink, and no glass in the openings they believed to be windows. It is a little thing—glass is—until it is absent, then it becomes a big thing. But perhaps the worst of all was, that there wasn't any sugar, coffee, tea, or tobacco. I saw that I was just another Robinson Crusoe cast away on an uninhabited island, with no society but some more or less tame animals, and if I wanted to make life bearable I must do as he did—invent, contrive, create, reorganize things; set brain and hand to work, and keep them busy. Well, that was in my line.

One thing troubled me along at first—the immense interest which people took in me. Apparently the whole nation wanted a look at me. It soon transpired that the eclipse had scared the British world almost to death; that while it lasted the whole country, from one end to the other, was in a pitiable state of panic, and the churches, hermitages, and monkeries overflowed with praying and weeping poor creatures who thought the end of the world was come. Then had followed the news that the producer of this awful event was a stranger, a mighty magician at Arthur's court; that he could have blown out the sun like a candle, and was just going to do it when his mercy was purchased, and he then dissolved his enchantments, and was now recognized and honored as the man who had by his unaided might saved the globe from destruction and its peoples from extinction.

Now if you consider that everybody believed that, and not only believed it, but never even dreamed of doubting it, you will easily understand that there was not a person in all Britain that would not have walked fifty miles to get a sight of me. Of course I was all the talk—all other subjects were dropped; even the king became suddenly a person of minor interest and notoriety. Within twenty-four hours the delegations began to arrive, and from that time onward for a fortnight they kept coming. The village was crowded, and all the countryside. I had to go out a dozen times a day and show myself to these reverent and awe-stricken multitudes.

It came to be a great burden, as to time and trouble, but of course it was at the same time compensatingly agreeable to be so celebrated and such a center of homage. It turned Brer Merlin green with envy and spite, which was a great satisfaction to me. But there was one thing I couldn't understand—nobody had asked for an autograph. I spoke to Clarence about it. By George! I had to explain to him what it was. Then he said nobody in the country could read or

write but a few dozen priests. Land! think of that.

There was another thing that troubled me a little. Those multitudes presently began to agitate for another miracle. That was natural. To be able to carry back to their far homes the boast that they had seen the man who could command the sun, riding in the heavens, and be obeyed, would make them great in the eyes of their neighbors, and envied by them all; but to be able to also say they had seen him work a miracle themselves—why, people would come a distance to see *them*. The pressure got to be pretty strong. There was going to be an eclipse of the moon, and I knew the date and hour, but it was too far away. Two years. I would have given a good deal for license to hurry it up and use it now when there was a big market for it. It seemed a great pity to have it wasted so, and come lagging along at a time when a body wouldn't have any use for it, as like as not. If it had been booked for only a month away, I could have sold it short; but, as matters stood, I couldn't seem to cipher out any way to make it do me any good, so I gave up trying. Next, Clarence found that old Merlin was making himself busy on the sly among those people. He was spreading a report that I was a humbug, and that the reason I didn't accommodate the people with a miracle was because I couldn't. I saw that I must do something. I presently thought out a plan.

By my authority as executive I threw Merlin into prison—the same cell I had occupied myself. Then I gave public notice by herald and trumpet that I should be busy with affairs of state for a fortnight, but about the end of that time I would take a moment's leisure and blow up Merlin's stone tower by fires from heaven; in the meantime, whoso listened to evil reports about me, let him beware. Furthermore, I would perform but this one miracle at this time, and no more; if it failed to satisfy and any murmured, I would turn the murmurers into horses, and make them useful. Quiet ensued.

I took Clarence into my confidence, to a certain degree, and we went to work privately. I told him that this was a sort of miracle that required a trifle of preparation, and that it would be sudden death to ever talk about these preparations to anybody. That made his mouth safe enough. Clandestinely we made a few bushels of first-rate blasting powder, and I superintended my armorers while they constructed a lightning-rod and some wires. This old stone tower was very massive—and rather ruinous, too, for it was Roman, and four hundred years old. Yes, and handsome, after a rude fashion, and clothed with ivy from base to summit, as with a shirt of scale mail. It stood on a lonely eminence, in good view from the castle, and about half a mile away.

Working by night, we stowed the powder in the tower—dug stones out, on the inside, and buried the powder in the walls themselves, which were fifteen

feet thick at the base. We put in a peck at a time, in a dozen places. We could have blown up the Tower of London with these charges. When the thirteenth night was come we put up our lightning-rod, bedded it in one of the batches of powder, and ran wires from it to the other batches. Everybody had shunned that locality from the day of my proclamation, but on the morning of the fourteenth I thought best to warn the people, through the heralds, to keep clear away—a quarter of a mile away. Then added, by command, that at some time during the twenty-four hours I would consummate the miracle, but would first give a brief notice; by flags on the castle towers if in the daytime, by torch-baskets in the same places if at night.

Thunder-showers had been tolerably frequent of late, and I was not much afraid of a failure; still, I shouldn't have cared for a delay of a day or two; I should have explained that I was busy with affairs of state yet, and the people must wait.

Of course, we had a blazing sunny day—almost the first one without a cloud for three weeks; things always happen so. I kept secluded, and watched the weather. Clarence dropped in from time to time and said the public excitement was growing and growing all the time, and the whole country filling up with human masses as far as one could see from the battlements. At last the wind sprang up and a cloud appeared—in the right quarter, too, and just at nightfall.

For a little while I watched that distant cloud spread and blacken, then I judged it was time for me to appear. I ordered the torch-baskets to be lit, and Merlin liberated and sent to me. A quarter of an hour later I ascended the parapet and there found the king and the court assembled and gazing off in the darkness toward Merlin's Tower. Already the darkness was so heavy that one could not see far; these people and the old turrets, being partly in deep shadow and partly in the red glow from the great torch-baskets overhead, made a good deal of a picture.

Merlin arrived in a gloomy mood. I said:

"You wanted to burn me alive when I had not done you any harm, and latterly you have been trying to injure my professional reputation. Therefore I am going to call down fire and blow up your tower, but it is only fair to give you a chance; now if you think you can break my enchantments and ward off the fires, step to the bat, it's your innings."

"I can, fair sir, and I will. Doubt it not."

He drew an imaginary circle on the stones of the roof, and burnt a pinch of powder in it, which sent up a small cloud of aromatic smoke, whereat everybody fell back and began to cross themselves and get uncomfortable. Then he began to mutter and make passes in the air with his hands. He worked himself up

slowly and gradually into a sort of frenzy, and got to thrashing around with his arms like the sails of a windmill. By this time the storm had about reached us; the gusts of wind were flaring the torches and making the shadows swash about, the first heavy drops of rain were falling, the world abroad was black as pitch, the lightning began to wink fitfully. Of course, my rod would be loading itself now. In fact, things were imminent. So I said:

"You have had time enough. I have given you every advantage, and not interfered. It is plain your magic is weak. It is only fair that I begin now."

I made about three passes in the air, and then there was an awful crash and that old tower leaped into the sky in chunks, along with a vast volcanic fountain of fire that turned night to noonday, and showed a thousand acres of human beings groveling on the ground in a general collapse of consternation. Well, it rained mortar and masonry the rest of the week. This was the report; but probably the facts would have modified it.

It was an effective miracle. The great bothersome temporary population vanished. There were a good many thousand tracks in the mud the next morning, but they were all outward bound. If I had advertised another miracle I couldn't have raised an audience with a sheriff.

Merlin's stock was flat. The king wanted to stop his wages; he even wanted to banish him, but I interfered. I said he would be useful to work the weather, and attend to small matters like that, and I would give him a lift now and then when his poor little parlor-magic soured on him. There wasn't a rag of his tower left, but I had the government rebuild it for him, and advised him to take boarders; but he was too high-toned for that. And as for being grateful, he never even said thank you. He was a rather hard lot, take him how you might; but then you couldn't fairly expect a man to be sweet that had been set back so.

## CHAPTER VIII. THE BOSS

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To be vested with enormous authority is a fine thing; but to have the on-looking world consent to it is a finer. The tower episode solidified my power, and made it impregnable. If any were perchance disposed to be jealous and critical before that, they experienced a change of heart, now. There was not any one in the kingdom who would have considered it good judgment to meddle with my matters.

I was fast getting adjusted to my situation and circumstances. For a time, I used to wake up, mornings, and smile at my "dream," and listen for the Colt's factory whistle; but that sort of thing played itself out, gradually, and at last I was fully able to realize that I was actually living in the sixth century, and in Arthur's court, not a lunatic asylum. After that, I was just as much at home in that century as I could have been in any other; and as for preference, I wouldn't have traded it for the twentieth. Look at the opportunities here for a man of knowledge, brains, pluck, and enterprise to sail in and grow up with the country. The grandest field that ever was; and all my own; not a competitor; not a man who wasn't a baby to me in acquirements and capacities; whereas, what would I amount to in the twentieth century? I should be foreman of a factory, that is about all; and could drag a seine down street any day and catch a hundred better men than myself.

What a jump I had made! I couldn't keep from thinking about it, and contemplating it, just as one does who has struck oil. There was nothing back of me that could approach it, unless it might be Joseph's case; and Joseph's only approached it, it didn't equal it, quite. For it stands to reason that as Joseph's splendid financial ingenuities advantaged nobody but the king, the general public must have regarded him with a good deal of disfavor, whereas I had done my entire public a kindness in sparing the sun, and was popular by reason of it.

I was no shadow of a king; I was the substance; the king himself was the shadow. My power was colossal; and it was not a mere name, as such things have generally been, it was the genuine article. I stood here, at the very spring and source of the second great period of the world's history; and could see the trickling stream of that history gather and deepen and broaden, and roll its



mighty tides down the far centuries; and I could note the upspringing of adventurers like myself in the shelter of its long array of thrones: De Montforts, Gavestons, Mortimers, Villierses; the war-making, campaign-directing wantons of France, and Charles the Second's scepter-wielding drabs; but nowhere in the procession was my full-sized fellow visible. I was a Unique; and glad to know that that fact could not be dislodged or challenged for thirteen centuries and a half, for sure. Yes, in power I was equal to the king. At the same time there was another power that was a trifle stronger than both of us put together. That was the Church. I do not wish to disguise that fact. I couldn't, if I wanted to. But never mind about that, now; it will show up, in its proper place, later on. It didn't cause me any trouble in the beginning—at least any of consequence.

Well, it was a curious country, and full of interest. And the people! They were the quaintest and simplest and trustingest race; why, they were nothing but rabbits. It was pitiful for a person born in a wholesome free atmosphere to listen to their humble and hearty outpourings of loyalty toward their king and Church and nobility; as if they had any more occasion to love and honor king and Church and noble than a slave has to love and honor the lash, or a dog has to love and honor the stranger that kicks him! Why, dear me, *any* kind of royalty, howsoever modified, *any* kind of aristocracy, howsoever pruned, is rightly an insult; but if you are born and brought up under that sort of arrangement you probably never find it out for yourself, and don't believe it when somebody else tells you. It is enough to make a body ashamed of his race to think of the sort of froth that has always occupied its thrones without shadow of right or reason, and the seventh-rate people that have always figured as its aristocracies—a company of monarchs and nobles who, as a rule, would have achieved only poverty and obscurity if left, like their betters, to their own exertions.

The most of King Arthur's British nation were slaves, pure and simple, and bore that name, and wore the iron collar on their necks; and the rest were slaves in fact, but without the name; they imagined themselves men and freemen, and called themselves so. The truth was, the nation as a body was in the world for one object, and one only: to grovel before king and Church and noble; to slave for them, sweat blood for them, starve that they might be fed, work that they might play, drink misery to the dregs that they might be happy, go naked that they might wear silks and jewels, pay taxes that they might be spared from paying them, be familiar all their lives with the degrading language and postures of adulation that they might walk in pride and think themselves the gods of this world. And for all this, the thanks they got were cuffs and contempt; and so poor-spirited were they that they took even this sort of attention as an honor.

Inherited ideas are a curious thing, and interesting to observe and examine. I

had mine, the king and his people had theirs. In both cases they flowed in ruts worn deep by time and habit, and the man who should have proposed to divert them by reason and argument would have had a long contract on his hands. For instance, those people had inherited the idea that all men without title and a long pedigree, whether they had great natural gifts and acquirements or hadn't, were creatures of no more consideration than so many animals, bugs, insects; whereas I had inherited the idea that human daws who can consent to masquerade in the peacock-shams of inherited dignities and unearned titles, are of no good but to be laughed at. The way I was looked upon was odd, but it was natural. You know how the keeper and the public regard the elephant in the menagerie: well, that is the idea. They are full of admiration of his vast bulk and his prodigious strength; they speak with pride of the fact that he can do a hundred marvels which are far and away beyond their own powers; and they speak with the same pride of the fact that in his wrath he is able to drive a thousand men before him. But does that make him one of *them* ? No; the raggedest tramp in the pit would smile at the idea. He couldn't comprehend it; couldn't take it in; couldn't in any remote way conceive of it. Well, to the king, the nobles, and all the nation, down to the very slaves and tramps, I was just that kind of an elephant, and nothing more. I was admired, also feared; but it was as an animal is admired and feared. The animal is not revered, neither was I; I was not even respected. I had no pedigree, no inherited title; so in the king's and nobles' eyes I was mere dirt; the people regarded me with wonder and awe, but there was no reverence mixed with it; through the force of inherited ideas they were not able to conceive of anything being entitled to that except pedigree and lordship. There you see the hand of that awful power, the Roman Catholic Church. In two or three little centuries it had converted a nation of men to a nation of worms. Before the day of the Church's supremacy in the world, men were men, and held their heads up, and had a man's pride and spirit and independence; and what of greatness and position a person got, he got mainly by achievement, not by birth. But then the Church came to the front, with an axe to grind; and she was wise, subtle, and knew more than one way to skin a cat—or a nation; she invented "divine right of kings," and propped it all around, brick by brick, with the Beatitudes—wrenching them from their good purpose to make them fortify an evil one; she preached (to the commoner) humility, obedience to superiors, the beauty of self-sacrifice; she preached (to the commoner) meekness under insult; preached (still to the commoner, always to the commoner) patience, meanness of spirit, non-resistance under oppression; and she introduced heritable ranks and aristocracies, and taught all the Christian populations of the earth to bow down to them and worship them.

Even down to my birth-century that poison was still in the blood of Christendom, and the best of English commoners was still content to see his inferiors impudently continuing to hold a number of positions, such as lordships and the throne, to which the grotesque laws of his country did not allow him to aspire; in fact, he was not merely contented with this strange condition of things, he was even able to persuade himself that he was proud of it. It seems to show that there isn't anything you can't stand, if you are only born and bred to it. Of course that taint, that reverence for rank and title, had been in our American blood, too—I know that; but when I left America it had disappeared—at least to all intents and purposes. The remnant of it was restricted to the dudes and dudesses. When a disease has worked its way down to that level, it may fairly be said to be out of the system.

But to return to my anomalous position in King Arthur's kingdom. Here I was, a giant among pigmies, a man among children, a master intelligence among intellectual moles: by all rational measurement the one and only actually great man in that whole British world; and yet there and then, just as in the remote England of my birth-time, the sheep-witted earl who could claim long descent from a king's leman, acquired at second-hand from the slums of London, was a better man than I was. Such a personage was fawned upon in Arthur's realm and reverently looked up to by everybody, even though his dispositions were as mean as his intelligence, and his morals as base as his lineage. There were times when *he* could sit down in the king's presence, but I couldn't. I could have got a title easily enough, and that would have raised me a large step in everybody's eyes; even in the king's, the giver of it. But I didn't ask for it; and I declined it when it was offered. I couldn't have enjoyed such a thing with my notions; and it wouldn't have been fair, anyway, because as far back as I could go, our tribe had always been short of the bar sinister. I couldn't have felt really and satisfactorily fine and proud and set-up over any title except one that should come from the nation itself, the only legitimate source; and such an one I hoped to win; and in the course of years of honest and honorable endeavor, I did win it and did wear it with a high and clean pride. This title fell casually from the lips of a blacksmith, one day, in a village, was caught up as a happy thought and tossed from mouth to mouth with a laugh and an affirmative vote; in ten days it had swept the kingdom, and was become as familiar as the king's name. I was never known by any other designation afterward, whether in the nation's talk or in grave debate upon matters of state at the council-board of the sovereign. This title, translated into modern speech, would be THE BOSS. Elected by the nation. That suited me. And it was a pretty high title. There were very few *the's*, and I was one of them. If you spoke of the duke, or the earl, or the bishop, how

could anybody tell which one you meant? But if you spoke of The King or The Queen or The Boss, it was different.

Well, I liked the king, and as king I respected him—respected the office; at least respected it as much as I was capable of respecting any unearned supremacy; but as *men* I looked down upon him and his nobles—privately. And he and they liked me, and respected my office; but as an animal, without birth or sham title, they looked down upon me—and were not particularly private about it, either. I didn't charge for my opinion about them, and they didn't charge for their opinion about me: the account was square, the books balanced, everybody was satisfied.

## CHAPTER IX. THE TOURNAMENT

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They were always having grand tournaments there at Camelot; and very stirring and picturesque and ridiculous human bull-fights they were, too, but just a little wearisome to the practical mind. However, I was generally on hand—for two reasons: a man must not hold himself aloof from the things which his friends and his community have at heart if he would be liked—especially as a statesman; and both as business man and statesman I wanted to study the tournament and see if I couldn't invent an improvement on it. That reminds me to remark, in passing, that the very first official thing I did, in my administration—and it was on the very first day of it, too—was to start a patent office; for I knew that a country without a patent office and good patent laws was just a crab, and couldn't travel any way but sideways or backwards.

Things ran along, a tournament nearly every week; and now and then the boys used to want me to take a hand—I mean Sir Launcelot and the rest—but I said I would by and by; no hurry yet, and too much government machinery to oil up and set to rights and start a-going.

We had one tournament which was continued from day to day during more than a week, and as many as five hundred knights took part in it, from first to last. They were weeks gathering. They came on horseback from everywhere; from the very ends of the country, and even from beyond the sea; and many brought ladies, and all brought squires and troops of servants. It was a most gaudy and gorgeous crowd, as to costumery, and very characteristic of the country and the time, in the way of high animal spirits, innocent indecencies of language, and happy-hearted indifference to morals. It was fight or look on, all day and every day; and sing, gamble, dance, carouse half the night every night.

They had a most noble good time. You never saw such people. Those banks of beautiful ladies, shining in their barbaric splendors, would see a knight sprawl from his horse in the lists with a lanceshaft the thickness of your ankle clean through him and the blood spouting, and instead of fainting they would clap their hands and crowd each other for a better view; only sometimes one would dive into her handkerchief, and look ostentatiously broken-hearted, and then you could lay two to one that there was a scandal there somewhere and she was

afraid the public hadn't found it out.

The noise at night would have been annoying to me ordinarily, but I didn't mind it in the present circumstances, because it kept me from hearing the quacks detaching legs and arms from the day's cripples. They ruined an uncommon good old cross-cut saw for me, and broke the saw-buck, too, but I let it pass. And as for my axe—well, I made up my mind that the next time I lent an axe to a surgeon I would pick my century.

I not only watched this tournament from day to day, but detailed an intelligent priest from my Department of Public Morals and Agriculture, and ordered him to report it; for it was my purpose by and by, when I should have gotten the people along far enough, to start a newspaper. The first thing you want in a new country, is a patent office; then work up your school system; and after that, out with your paper. A newspaper has its faults, and plenty of them, but no matter, it's hark from the tomb for a dead nation, and don't you forget it. You can't resurrect a dead nation without it; there isn't any way. So I wanted to sample things, and be finding out what sort of reporter-material I might be able to rake together out of the sixth century when I should come to need it.

Well, the priest did very well, considering. He got in all the details, and that is a good thing in a local item: you see, he had kept books for the undertaker-department of his church when he was younger, and there, you know, the money's in the details; the more details, the more swag: bearers, mutes, candles, prayers—everything counts; and if the bereaved don't buy prayers enough you mark up your candles with a forked pencil, and your bill shows up all right. And he had a good knack at getting in the complimentary thing here and there about a knight that was likely to advertise—no, I mean a knight that had influence; and he also had a neat gift of exaggeration, for in his time he had kept door for a pious hermit who lived in a sty and worked miracles.

Of course this novice's report lacked whoop and crash and lurid description, and therefore wanted the true ring; but its antique wording was quaint and sweet and simple, and full of the fragrances and flavors of the time, and these little merits made up in a measure for its more important lacks. Here is an extract from it:

Then Sir Brian de les Isles and Grummore Grummorsum,  
knights of the castle, encountered with Sir Aglovale and  
Sir Tor, and Sir Tor smote down Sir Grummore Grummorsum  
to the earth. Then came Sir Carados of the dolorous  
tower, and Sir Turquine, knights of the castle, and  
there encountered with them Sir Percivale de Galis  
and Sir Lamorak de Galis, that were two brethren, and

there encountered Sir Percivale with Sir Carados, and either brake their spears unto their hands, and then Sir Turquine with Sir Lamorak, and either of them smote down other, horse and all, to the earth, and either parties rescued other and horsed them again. And Sir Arnold, and Sir Gauter, knights of the castle, encountered with Sir Brandiles and Sir Kay, and these four knights encountered mightily, and brake their spears to their hands. Then came Sir Pertolope from the castle, and there encountered with him Sir Lionel, and there Sir Pertolope the green knight smote down Sir Lionel, brother to Sir Launcelot. All this was marked by noble heralds, who bare him best, and their names. Then Sir Bleobaris brake his spear upon Sir Gareth, but of that stroke Sir Bleobaris fell to the earth. When Sir Galihodin saw that, he bad Sir Gareth keep him, and Sir Gareth smote him to the earth. Then Sir Galihud gat a spear to avenge his brother, and in the same wise Sir Gareth served him, and Sir Dinadan and his brother La Cote Male Taile, and Sir Sagramore le Disirous, and Sir Dodinas le Savage; all these he bare down with one spear. When King Aswisance of Ireland saw Sir Gareth fare so he marvelled what he might be, that one time seemed green, and another time, at his again coming, he seemed blue. And thus at every course that he rode to and fro he changed his color, so that there might neither king nor knight have ready cognizance of him. Then Sir Agwisance the King of Ireland encountered with Sir Gareth, and there Sir Gareth smote him from his horse, saddle and all. And then came King Carados of Scotland, and Sir Gareth smote him down horse and man. And in the same wise he served King Uriens of the land of Gore. And then there came in Sir Bagdemagus, and Sir Gareth smote him down horse and man to the earth. And Bagdemagus's son Meliganus brake a spear upon Sir Gareth mightily and knightly. And then Sir Galahault the noble prince cried on high, Knight with the many colors, well hast thou justed; now make thee ready that I may just with thee. Sir Gareth heard him,

and he gat a great spear, and so they encountered together, and there the prince brake his spear; but Sir Gareth smote him upon the left side of the helm, that he reeled here and there, and he had fallen down had not his men recovered him. Truly, said King Arthur, that knight with the many colors is a good knight. Wherefore the king called unto him Sir Launcelot, and prayed him to encounter with that knight. Sir, said Launcelot, I may as well find in my heart for to forbear him at this time, for he hath had travail enough this day, and when a good knight doth so well upon some day, it is no good knight's part to let him of his worship, and, namely, when he seeth a knight hath done so great labour; for peradventure, said Sir Launcelot, his quarrel is here this day, and peradventure he is best beloved with this lady of all that be here, for I see well he paineth himself and enforceth him to do great deeds, and therefore, said Sir Launcelot, as for me, this day he shall have the honour; though it lay in my power to put him from it, I would not.

There was an unpleasant little episode that day, which for reasons of state I struck out of my priest's report. You will have noticed that Garry was doing some great fighting in the engagement. When I say Garry I mean Sir Gareth.

Garry was my private pet name for him; it suggests that I had a deep affection for him, and that was the case. But it was a private pet name only, and never spoken aloud to any one, much less to him; being a noble, he would not have endured a familiarity like that from me. Well, to proceed: I sat in the private box set apart for me as the king's minister. While Sir Dinadan was waiting for his turn to enter the lists, he came in there and sat down and began to talk; for he was always making up to me, because I was a stranger and he liked to have a fresh market for his jokes, the most of them having reached that stage of wear where the teller has to do the laughing himself while the other person looks sick.

I had always responded to his efforts as well as I could, and felt a very deep and real kindness for him, too, for the reason that if by malice of fate he knew the one particular anecdote which I had heard oftenest and had most hated and most loathed all my life, he had at least spared it me. It was one which I had heard attributed to every humorous person who had ever stood on American soil, from Columbus down to Artemus Ward. It was about a humorous lecturer who flooded an ignorant audience with the killingest jokes for an hour and never got



a laugh; and then when he was leaving, some gray simpletons wrung him gratefully by the hand and said it had been the funniest thing they had ever heard, and "it was all they could do to keep from laughin' right out in meetin'."

That anecdote never saw the day that it was worth the telling; and yet I had sat under the telling of it hundreds and thousands and millions and billions of times, and cried and cursed all the way through. Then who can hope to know what my feelings were, to hear this armor-plated ass start in on it again, in the murky twilight of tradition, before the dawn of history, while even Lactantius might be referred to as "the late Lactantius," and the Crusades wouldn't be born for five hundred years yet? Just as he finished, the call-boy came; so, haw-hawing like a demon, he went rattling and clanking out like a crate of loose castings, and I knew nothing more. It was some minutes before I came to, and then I opened my eyes just in time to see Sir Gareth fetch him an awful welt, and I unconsciously out with the prayer, "I hope to gracious he's killed!" But by ill-luck, before I had got half through with the words, Sir Gareth crashed into Sir Sagramor le Desirous and sent him thundering over his horse's crupper, and Sir Sagramor caught my remark and thought I meant it for *him* .

Well, whenever one of those people got a thing into his head, there was no getting it out again. I knew that, so I saved my breath, and offered no explanations. As soon as Sir Sagramor got well, he notified me that there was a little account to settle between us, and he named a day three or four years in the future; place of settlement, the lists where the offense had been given. I said I would be ready when he got back. You see, he was going for the Holy Grail. The boys all took a flier at the Holy Grail now and then. It was a several years' cruise. They always put in the long absence snooping around, in the most conscientious way, though none of them had any idea where the Holy Grail really was, and I don't think any of them actually expected to find it, or would have known what to do with it if he *had* run across it. You see, it was just the Northwest Passage of that day, as you may say; that was all. Every year expeditions went out holy grailing, and next year relief expeditions went out to hunt for *them* . There was worlds of reputation in it, but no money. Why, they actually wanted *me* to put in! Well, I should smile.

## CHAPTER X. BEGINNINGS OF CIVILIZATION

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The Round Table soon heard of the challenge, and of course it was a good deal discussed, for such things interested the boys. The king thought I ought now to set forth in quest of adventures, so that I might gain renown and be the more worthy to meet Sir Sagramor when the several years should have rolled away. I excused myself for the present; I said it would take me three or four years yet to get things well fixed up and going smoothly; then I should be ready; all the chances were that at the end of that time Sir Sagramor would still be out grailing, so no valuable time would be lost by the postponement; I should then have been in office six or seven years, and I believed my system and machinery would be so well developed that I could take a holiday without its working any harm.

I was pretty well satisfied with what I had already accomplished. In various quiet nooks and corners I had the beginnings of all sorts of industries under way—nuclei of future vast factories, the iron and steel missionaries of my future civilization. In these were gathered together the brightest young minds I could find, and I kept agents out raking the country for more, all the time. I was training a crowd of ignorant folk into experts—experts in every sort of handiwork and scientific calling. These nurseries of mine went smoothly and privately along undisturbed in their obscure country retreats, for nobody was allowed to come into their precincts without a special permit—for I was afraid of the Church.

I had started a teacher-factory and a lot of Sunday-schools the first thing; as a result, I now had an admirable system of graded schools in full blast in those places, and also a complete variety of Protestant congregations all in a prosperous and growing condition. Everybody could be any kind of a Christian he wanted to; there was perfect freedom in that matter. But I confined public religious teaching to the churches and the Sunday-schools, permitting nothing of it in my other educational buildings. I could have given my own sect the preference and made everybody a Presbyterian without any trouble, but that would have been to affront a law of human nature: spiritual wants and instincts are as various in the human family as are physical appetites, complexions, and features, and a man is only at his best, morally, when he is equipped with the

religious garment whose color and shape and size most nicely accommodate themselves to the spiritual complexion, angularities, and stature of the individual who wears it; and, besides, I was afraid of a united Church; it makes a mighty power, the mightiest conceivable, and then when it by and by gets into selfish hands, as it is always bound to do, it means death to human liberty and paralysis to human thought.

All mines were royal property, and there were a good many of them. They had formerly been worked as savages always work mines—holes grubbed in the earth and the mineral brought up in sacks of hide by hand, at the rate of a ton a day; but I had begun to put the mining on a scientific basis as early as I could.

Yes, I had made pretty handsome progress when Sir Sagramor's challenge struck me.

Four years rolled by—and then! Well, you would never imagine it in the world. Unlimited power is the ideal thing when it is in safe hands. The despotism of heaven is the one absolutely perfect government. An earthly despotism would be the absolutely perfect earthly government, if the conditions were the same, namely, the despot the perfectest individual of the human race, and his lease of life perpetual. But as a perishable perfect man must die, and leave his despotism in the hands of an imperfect successor, an earthly despotism is not merely a bad form of government, it is the worst form that is possible.

My works showed what a despot could do with the resources of a kingdom at his command. Unsuspected by this dark land, I had the civilization of the nineteenth century booming under its very nose! It was fenced away from the public view, but there it was, a gigantic and unassailable fact—and to be heard from, yet, if I lived and had luck. There it was, as sure a fact and as substantial a fact as any serene volcano, standing innocent with its smokeless summit in the blue sky and giving no sign of the rising hell in its bowels. My schools and churches were children four years before; they were grown-up now; my shops of that day were vast factories now; where I had a dozen trained men then, I had a thousand now; where I had one brilliant expert then, I had fifty now. I stood with my hand on the cock, so to speak, ready to turn it on and flood the midnight world with light at any moment. But I was not going to do the thing in that sudden way. It was not my policy. The people could not have stood it; and, moreover, I should have had the Established Roman Catholic Church on my back in a minute.

No, I had been going cautiously all the while. I had had confidential agents trickling through the country some time, whose office was to undermine knighthood by imperceptible degrees, and to gnaw a little at this and that and the other superstition, and so prepare the way gradually for a better order of things.

I was turning on my light one-candle-power at a time, and meant to continue to do so.

I had scattered some branch schools secretly about the kingdom, and they were doing very well. I meant to work this racket more and more, as time wore on, if nothing occurred to frighten me. One of my deepest secrets was my West Point—my military academy. I kept that most jealously out of sight; and I did the same with my naval academy which I had established at a remote seaport. Both were prospering to my satisfaction.

Clarence was twenty-two now, and was my head executive, my right hand. He was a darling; he was equal to anything; there wasn't anything he couldn't turn his hand to. Of late I had been training him for journalism, for the time seemed about right for a start in the newspaper line; nothing big, but just a small weekly for experimental circulation in my civilization-nurseries. He took to it like a duck; there was an editor concealed in him, sure. Already he had doubled himself in one way; he talked sixth century and wrote nineteenth. His journalistic style was climbing, steadily; it was already up to the back settlement Alabama mark, and couldn't be told from the editorial output of that region either by matter or flavor.

We had another large departure on hand, too. This was a telegraph and a telephone; our first venture in this line. These wires were for private service only, as yet, and must be kept private until a riper day should come. We had a gang of men on the road, working mainly by night. They were stringing ground wires; we were afraid to put up poles, for they would attract too much inquiry. Ground wires were good enough, in both instances, for my wires were protected by an insulation of my own invention which was perfect. My men had orders to strike across country, avoiding roads, and establishing connection with any considerable towns whose lights betrayed their presence, and leaving experts in charge. Nobody could tell you how to find any place in the kingdom, for nobody ever went intentionally to any place, but only struck it by accident in his wanderings, and then generally left it without thinking to inquire what its name was. At one time and another we had sent out topographical expeditions to survey and map the kingdom, but the priests had always interfered and raised trouble. So we had given the thing up, for the present; it would be poor wisdom to antagonize the Church.

As for the general condition of the country, it was as it had been when I arrived in it, to all intents and purposes. I had made changes, but they were necessarily slight, and they were not noticeable. Thus far, I had not even meddled with taxation, outside of the taxes which provided the royal revenues. I had systematized those, and put the service on an effective and righteous basis.

As a result, these revenues were already quadrupled, and yet the burden was so much more equably distributed than before, that all the kingdom felt a sense of relief, and the praises of my administration were hearty and general.

Personally, I struck an interruption, now, but I did not mind it, it could not have happened at a better time. Earlier it could have annoyed me, but now everything was in good hands and swimming right along. The king had reminded me several times, of late, that the postponement I had asked for, four years before, had about run out now. It was a hint that I ought to be starting out to seek adventures and get up a reputation of a size to make me worthy of the honor of breaking a lance with Sir Sagamor, who was still out grailing, but was being hunted for by various relief expeditions, and might be found any year, now. So you see I was expecting this interruption; it did not take me by surprise.

## CHAPTER XI. THE YANKEE IN SEARCH OF ADVENTURES

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There never was such a country for wandering liars; and they were of both sexes. Hardly a month went by without one of these tramps arriving; and generally loaded with a tale about some princess or other wanting help to get her out of some far-away castle where she was held in captivity by a lawless scoundrel, usually a giant. Now you would think that the first thing the king would do after listening to such a novelette from an entire stranger, would be to ask for credentials—yes, and a pointer or two as to locality of castle, best route to it, and so on. But nobody ever thought of so simple and common-sense a thing at that. No, everybody swallowed these people's lies whole, and never asked a question of any sort or about anything. Well, one day when I was not around, one of these people came along—it was a she one, this time—and told a tale of the usual pattern. Her mistress was a captive in a vast and gloomy castle, along with forty-four other young and beautiful girls, pretty much all of them princesses; they had been languishing in that cruel captivity for twenty-six years; the masters of the castle were three stupendous brothers, each with four arms and one eye—the eye in the center of the forehead, and as big as a fruit. Sort of fruit not mentioned; their usual slovenliness in statistics.

Would you believe it? The king and the whole Round Table were in raptures over this preposterous opportunity for adventure. Every knight of the Table jumped for the chance, and begged for it; but to their vexation and chagrin the king conferred it upon me, who had not asked for it at all.

By an effort, I contained my joy when Clarence brought me the news. But he—he could not contain his. His mouth gushed delight and gratitude in a steady discharge—delight in my good fortune, gratitude to the king for this splendid mark of his favor for me. He could keep neither his legs nor his body still, but pirouetted about the place in an airy ecstasy of happiness.

On my side, I could have cursed the kindness that conferred upon me this benefaction, but I kept my vexation under the surface for policy's sake, and did what I could to let on to be glad. Indeed, I *said* I was glad. And in a way it was true; I was as glad as a person is when he is scalped.

Well, one must make the best of things, and not waste time with useless fretting, but get down to business and see what can be done. In all lies there is wheat among the chaff; I must get at the wheat in this case: so I sent for the girl and she came. She was a comely enough creature, and soft and modest, but, if signs went for anything, she didn't know as much as a lady's watch. I said:

"My dear, have you been questioned as to particulars?"

She said she hadn't.

"Well, I didn't expect you had, but I thought I would ask, to make sure; it's the way I've been raised. Now you mustn't take it unkindly if I remind you that as we don't know you, we must go a little slow. You may be all right, of course, and we'll hope that you are; but to take it for granted isn't business. *You* understand that. I'm obliged to ask you a few questions; just answer up fair and square, and don't be afraid. Where do you live, when you are at home?"

"In the land of Moder, fair sir."

"Land of Moder. I don't remember hearing of it before. Parents living?"

"As to that, I know not if they be yet on live, sith it is many years that I have lain shut up in the castle."

"Your name, please?"

"I hight the Demoiselle Alisande la Carteloise, an it please you."

"Do you know anybody here who can identify you?"

"That were not likely, fair lord, I being come hither now for the first time."

"Have you brought any letters—any documents—any proofs that you are trustworthy and truthful?"

"Of a surety, no; and wherefore should I? Have I not a tongue, and cannot I say all that myself?"

"But *your* saying it, you know, and somebody else's saying it, is different."

"Different? How might that be? I fear me I do not understand."

"Don't *understand*? Land of—why, you see—you see—why, great Scott, can't you understand a little thing like that? Can't you understand the difference between your—*why* do you look so innocent and idiotic!"

"I? In truth I know not, but an it were the will of God."

"Yes, yes, I reckon that's about the size of it. Don't mind my seeming excited; I'm not. Let us change the subject. Now as to this castle, with forty-five princesses in it, and three ogres at the head of it, tell me—where is this harem?"

"Harem?"

"The *castle*, you understand; where is the castle?"

"Oh, as to that, it is great, and strong, and well beseen, and lieth in a far country. Yes, it is many leagues."

"*How* many?"

"Ah, fair sir, it were woundily hard to tell, they are so many, and do so lap the one upon the other, and being made all in the same image and tinted with the same color, one may not know the one league from its fellow, nor how to count them except they be taken apart, and ye wit well it were God's work to do that, being not within man's capacity; for ye will note—"

"Hold on, hold on, never mind about the distance; *whereabouts* does the castle lie? What's the direction from here?"

"Ah, please you sir, it hath no direction from here; by reason that the road lieth not straight, but turneth evermore; wherefore the direction of its place abideth not, but is some time under the one sky and anon under another, whereso if ye be minded that it is in the east, and wend thitherward, ye shall observe that the way of the road doth yet again turn upon itself by the space of half a circle, and this marvel happening again and yet again and still again, it will grieve you that you had thought by vanities of the mind to thwart and bring to naught the will of Him that giveth not a castle a direction from a place except it pleaseth Him, and if it please Him not, will the rather that even all castles and all directions thereunto vanish out of the earth, leaving the places wherein they tarried desolate and vacant, so warning His creatures that where He will He will, and where He will not He—"

"Oh, that's all right, that's all right, give us a rest; never mind about the direction, *hang* the direction—I beg pardon, I beg a thousand pardons, I am not well to-day; pay no attention when I soliloquize, it is an old habit, an old, bad habit, and hard to get rid of when one's digestion is all disordered with eating food that was raised forever and ever before he was born; good land! a man can't keep his functions regular on spring chickens thirteen hundred years old. But come—never mind about that; let's—have you got such a thing as a map of that region about you? Now a good map—"

"Is it peradventure that manner of thing which of late the unbelievers have brought from over the great seas, which, being boiled in oil, and an onion and salt added thereto, doth—"

"What, a map? What are you talking about? Don't you know what a map is? There, there, never mind, don't explain, I hate explanations; they fog a thing up so that you can't tell anything about it. Run along, dear; good-day; show her the way, Clarence."

Oh, well, it was reasonably plain, now, why these donkeys didn't prospect these liars for details. It may be that this girl had a fact in her somewhere, but I don't believe you could have sluiced it out with a hydraulic; nor got it with the earlier forms of blasting, even; it was a case for dynamite. Why, she was a perfect ass; and yet the king and his knights had listened to her as if she had been



a leaf out of the gospel. It kind of sizes up the whole party. And think of the simple ways of this court: this wandering wench hadn't any more trouble to get access to the king in his palace than she would have had to get into the poorhouse in my day and country. In fact, he was glad to see her, glad to hear her tale; with that adventure of hers to offer, she was as welcome as a corpse is to a coroner.

Just as I was ending-up these reflections, Clarence came back. I remarked upon the barren result of my efforts with the girl; hadn't got hold of a single point that could help me to find the castle. The youth looked a little surprised, or puzzled, or something, and intimated that he had been wondering to himself what I had wanted to ask the girl all those questions for.

"Why, great guns," I said, "don't I want to find the castle? And how else would I go about it?"

"La, sweet your worship, one may lightly answer that, I ween. She will go with thee. They always do. She will ride with thee."

"Ride with me? Nonsense!"

"But of a truth she will. She will ride with thee. Thou shalt see."

"What? She browse around the hills and scour the woods with me—alone—and I as good as engaged to be married? Why, it's scandalous. Think how it would look."

My, the dear face that rose before me! The boy was eager to know all about this tender matter. I swore him to secrecy and then whispered her name—"Puss Flanagan." He looked disappointed, and said he didn't remember the countess. How natural it was for the little courtier to give her a rank. He asked me where she lived.

"In East Har—" I came to myself and stopped, a little confused; then I said, "Never mind, now; I'll tell you some time."

And might he see her? Would I let him see her some day?

It was but a little thing to promise—thirteen hundred years or so—and he so eager; so I said Yes. But I sighed; I couldn't help it. And yet there was no sense in sighing, for she wasn't born yet. But that is the way we are made: we don't reason, where we feel; we just feel.

My expedition was all the talk that day and that night, and the boys were very good to me, and made much of me, and seemed to have forgotten their vexation and disappointment, and come to be as anxious for me to hive those ogres and set those ripe old virgins loose as if it were themselves that had the contract. Well, they *were* good children—but just children, that is all. And they gave me no end of points about how to scout for giants, and how to scoop them in; and they told me all sorts of charms against enchantments, and gave me

salves and other rubbish to put on my wounds. But it never occurred to one of them to reflect that if I was such a wonderful necromancer as I was pretending to be, I ought not to need salves or instructions, or charms against enchantments, and, least of all, arms and armor, on a foray of any kind—even against fire-spouting dragons, and devils hot from perdition, let alone such poor adversaries as these I was after, these commonplace ogres of the back settlements.

I was to have an early breakfast, and start at dawn, for that was the usual way; but I had the demon's own time with my armor, and this delayed me a little.

It is troublesome to get into, and there is so much detail. First you wrap a layer or two of blanket around your body, for a sort of cushion and to keep off the cold iron; then you put on your sleeves and shirt of chain mail—these are made of small steel links woven together, and they form a fabric so flexible that if you toss your shirt onto the floor, it slumps into a pile like a peck of wet fish-net; it is very heavy and is nearly the uncomfortablest material in the world for a night shirt, yet plenty used it for that—tax collectors, and reformers, and one-horse kings with a defective title, and those sorts of people; then you put on your shoes—flat-boats roofed over with interleaving bands of steel—and screw your clumsy spurs into the heels. Next you buckle your greaves on your legs, and your cuisses on your thighs; then come your backplate and your breastplate, and you begin to feel crowded; then you hitch onto the breastplate the half-petticoat of broad overlapping bands of steel which hangs down in front but is scolloped out behind so you can sit down, and isn't any real improvement on an inverted coal scuttle, either for looks or for wear, or to wipe your hands on; next you belt on your sword; then you put your stove-pipe joints onto your arms, your iron gauntlets onto your hands, your iron rat-trap onto your head, with a rag of steel web hitched onto it to hang over the back of your neck—and there you are, snug as a candle in a candle-mould. This is no time to dance. Well, a man that is packed away like that is a nut that isn't worth the cracking, there is so little of the meat, when you get down to it, by comparison with the shell.

The boys helped me, or I never could have got in. Just as we finished, Sir Bedivere happened in, and I saw that as like as not I hadn't chosen the most convenient outfit for a long trip. How stately he looked; and tall and broad and grand. He had on his head a conical steel casque that only came down to his ears, and for visor had only a narrow steel bar that extended down to his upper lip and protected his nose; and all the rest of him, from neck to heel, was flexible chain mail, trousers and all. But pretty much all of him was hidden under his outside garment, which of course was of chain mail, as I said, and hung straight from his shoulders to his ankles; and from his middle to the bottom, both before and behind, was divided, so that he could ride and let the skirts hang down on

each side. He was going grailing, and it was just the outfit for it, too. I would have given a good deal for that ulster, but it was too late now to be fooling around. The sun was just up, the king and the court were all on hand to see me off and wish me luck; so it wouldn't be etiquette for me to tarry. You don't get on your horse yourself; no, if you tried it you would get disappointed. They carry you out, just as they carry a sun-struck man to the drug store, and put you on, and help get you to rights, and fix your feet in the stirrups; and all the while you do feel so strange and stuffy and like somebody else—like somebody that has been married on a sudden, or struck by lightning, or something like that, and hasn't quite fetched around yet, and is sort of numb, and can't just get his bearings. Then they stood up the mast they called a spear, in its socket by my left foot, and I gripped it with my hand; lastly they hung my shield around my neck, and I was all complete and ready to up anchor and get to sea. Everybody was as good to me as they could be, and a maid of honor gave me the stirrup-cup her own self. There was nothing more to do now, but for that damsel to get up behind me on a pillion, which she did, and put an arm or so around me to hold on.

And so we started, and everybody gave us a goodbye and waved their handkerchiefs or helmets. And everybody we met, going down the hill and through the village was respectful to us, except some shabby little boys on the outskirts. They said:

"Oh, what a guy!" And hove clods at us.

In my experience boys are the same in all ages. They don't respect anything, they don't care for anything or anybody. They say "Go up, baldhead" to the prophet going his unoffending way in the gray of antiquity; they sass me in the holy gloom of the Middle Ages; and I had seen them act the same way in Buchanan's administration; I remember, because I was there and helped. The prophet had his bears and settled with his boys; and I wanted to get down and settle with mine, but it wouldn't answer, because I couldn't have got up again. I hate a country without a derrick.

## CHAPTER XII. SLOW TORTURE

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Straight off, we were in the country. It was most lovely and pleasant in those sylvan solitudes in the early cool morning in the first freshness of autumn. From hilltops we saw fair green valleys lying spread out below, with streams winding through them, and island groves of trees here and there, and huge lonely oaks scattered about and casting black blots of shade; and beyond the valleys we saw the ranges of hills, blue with haze, stretching away in billowy perspective to the horizon, with at wide intervals a dim fleck of white or gray on a wave-summit, which we knew was a castle. We crossed broad natural lawns sparkling with dew, and we moved like spirits, the cushioned turf giving out no sound of footfall; we dreamed along through glades in a mist of green light that got its tint from the sun-drenched roof of leaves overhead, and by our feet the clearest and coldest of runlets went frisking and gossiping over its reefs and making a sort of whispering music, comfortable to hear; and at times we left the world behind and entered into the solemn great deeps and rich gloom of the forest, where furtive wild things whisked and scurried by and were gone before you could even get your eye on the place where the noise was; and where only the earliest birds were turning out and getting to business with a song here and a quarrel yonder and a mysterious far-off hammering and drumming for worms on a tree trunk away somewhere in the impenetrable remotenesses of the woods. And by and by out we would swing again into the glare.

About the third or fourth or fifth time that we swung out into the glare—it was along there somewhere, a couple of hours or so after sun-up—it wasn't as pleasant as it had been. It was beginning to get hot. This was quite noticeable. We had a very long pull, after that, without any shade. Now it is curious how progressively little frets grow and multiply after they once get a start. Things which I didn't mind at all, at first, I began to mind now—and more and more, too, all the time. The first ten or fifteen times I wanted my handkerchief I didn't seem to care; I got along, and said never mind, it isn't any matter, and dropped it out of my mind. But now it was different; I wanted it all the time; it was nag, nag, nag, right along, and no rest; I couldn't get it out of my mind; and so at last I lost my temper and said hang a man that would make a suit of armor without any

pockets in it. You see I had my handkerchief in my helmet; and some other things; but it was that kind of a helmet that you can't take off by yourself. That hadn't occurred to me when I put it there; and in fact I didn't know it. I supposed it would be particularly convenient there. And so now, the thought of its being there, so handy and close by, and yet not get-at-able, made it all the worse and the harder to bear. Yes, the thing that you can't get is the thing that you want, mainly; every one has noticed that. Well, it took my mind off from everything else; took it clear off, and centered it in my helmet; and mile after mile, there it stayed, imagining the handkerchief, picturing the handkerchief; and it was bitter and aggravating to have the salt sweat keep trickling down into my eyes, and I couldn't get at it. It seems like a little thing, on paper, but it was not a little thing at all; it was the most real kind of misery. I would not say it if it was not so. I made up my mind that I would carry along a reticule next time, let it look how it might, and people say what they would. Of course these iron dudes of the Round Table would think it was scandalous, and maybe raise Sheol about it, but as for me, give me comfort first, and style afterwards. So we jogged along, and now and then we struck a stretch of dust, and it would tumble up in clouds and get into my nose and make me sneeze and cry; and of course I said things I oughtn't to have said, I don't deny that. I am not better than others.

We couldn't seem to meet anybody in this lonesome Britain, not even an ogre; and, in the mood I was in then, it was well for the ogre; that is, an ogre with a handkerchief. Most knights would have thought of nothing but getting his armor; but so I got his bandanna, he could keep his hardware, for all of me.

Meantime, it was getting hotter and hotter in there. You see, the sun was beating down and warming up the iron more and more all the time. Well, when you are hot, that way, every little thing irritates you. When I trotted, I rattled like a crate of dishes, and that annoyed me; and moreover I couldn't seem to stand that shield slatting and banging, now about my breast, now around my back; and if I dropped into a walk my joints creaked and screeched in that wearisome way that a wheelbarrow does, and as we didn't create any breeze at that gait, I was like to get fried in that stove; and besides, the quieter you went the heavier the iron settled down on you and the more and more tons you seemed to weigh every minute. And you had to be always changing hands, and passing your spear over to the other foot, it got so irksome for one hand to hold it long at a time.

Well, you know, when you perspire that way, in rivers, there comes a time when you—when you—well, when you itch. You are inside, your hands are outside; so there you are; nothing but iron between. It is not a light thing, let it sound as it may. First it is one place; then another; then some more; and it goes

on spreading and spreading, and at last the territory is all occupied, and nobody can imagine what you feel like, nor how unpleasant it is. And when it had got to the worst, and it seemed to me that I could not stand anything more, a fly got in through the bars and settled on my nose, and the bars were stuck and wouldn't work, and I couldn't get the visor up; and I could only shake my head, which was baking hot by this time, and the fly—well, you know how a fly acts when he has got a certainty—he only minded the shaking enough to change from nose to lip, and lip to ear, and buzz and buzz all around in there, and keep on lighting and biting, in a way that a person, already so distressed as I was, simply could not stand. So I gave in, and got Alisande to unship the helmet and relieve me of it.

Then she emptied the conveniences out of it and fetched it full of water, and I drank and then stood up, and she poured the rest down inside the armor. One cannot think how refreshing it was. She continued to fetch and pour until I was well soaked and thoroughly comfortable.

It was good to have a rest—and peace. But nothing is quite perfect in this life, at any time. I had made a pipe a while back, and also some pretty fair tobacco; not the real thing, but what some of the Indians use: the inside bark of the willow, dried. These comforts had been in the helmet, and now I had them again, but no matches.

Gradually, as the time wore along, one annoying fact was borne in upon my understanding—that we were weather-bound. An armed novice cannot mount his horse without help and plenty of it. Sandy was not enough; not enough for me, anyway. We had to wait until somebody should come along. Waiting, in silence, would have been agreeable enough, for I was full of matter for reflection, and wanted to give it a chance to work. I wanted to try and think out how it was that rational or even half-rational men could ever have learned to wear armor, considering its inconveniences; and how they had managed to keep up such a fashion for generations when it was plain that what I had suffered to-day they had had to suffer all the days of their lives. I wanted to think that out; and moreover I wanted to think out some way to reform this evil and persuade the people to let the foolish fashion die out; but thinking was out of the question in the circumstances. You couldn't think, where Sandy was.

She was a quite biddable creature and good-hearted, but she had a flow of talk that was as steady as a mill, and made your head sore like the drays and wagons in a city. If she had had a cork she would have been a comfort. But you can't cork that kind; they would die. Her clack was going all day, and you would think something would surely happen to her works, by and by; but no, they never got out of order; and she never had to slack up for words. She could grind, and pump, and churn, and buzz by the week, and never stop to oil up or blow out.

And yet the result was just nothing but wind. She never had any ideas, any more than a fog has. She was a perfect blatherskite; I mean for jaw, jaw, jaw, talk, talk, talk, jabber, jabber, jabber; but just as good as she could be. I hadn't minded her mill that morning, on account of having that hornets' nest of other troubles; but more than once in the afternoon I had to say:

"Take a rest, child; the way you are using up all the domestic air, the kingdom will have to go to importing it by to-morrow, and it's a low enough treasury without that."

## CHAPTER XIII. FREEMEN

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Yes, it is strange how little a while at a time a person can be contented. Only a little while back, when I was riding and suffering, what a heaven this peace, this rest, this sweet serenity in this secluded shady nook by this purling stream would have seemed, where I could keep perfectly comfortable all the time by pouring a dipper of water into my armor now and then; yet already I was getting dissatisfied; partly because I could not light my pipe—for, although I had long ago started a match factory, I had forgotten to bring matches with me—and partly because we had nothing to eat. Here was another illustration of the childlike improvidence of this age and people. A man in armor always trusted to chance for his food on a journey, and would have been scandalized at the idea of hanging a basket of sandwiches on his spear. There was probably not a knight of all the Round Table combination who would not rather have died than been caught carrying such a thing as that on his flagstaff. And yet there could not be anything more sensible. It had been my intention to smuggle a couple of sandwiches into my helmet, but I was interrupted in the act, and had to make an excuse and lay them aside, and a dog got them.

Night approached, and with it a storm. The darkness came on fast. We must camp, of course. I found a good shelter for the demoiselle under a rock, and went off and found another for myself. But I was obliged to remain in my armor, because I could not get it off by myself and yet could not allow Alisande to help, because it would have seemed so like undressing before folk. It would not have amounted to that in reality, because I had clothes on underneath; but the prejudices of one's breeding are not gotten rid of just at a jump, and I knew that when it came to stripping off that bob-tailed iron petticoat I should be embarrassed.

With the storm came a change of weather; and the stronger the wind blew, and the wilder the rain lashed around, the colder and colder it got. Pretty soon, various kinds of bugs and ants and worms and things began to flock in out of the wet and crawl down inside my armor to get warm; and while some of them behaved well enough, and snuggled up amongst my clothes and got quiet, the majority were of a restless, uncomfortable sort, and never stayed still, but went



on prowling and hunting for they did not know what; especially the ants, which went tickling along in wearisome procession from one end of me to the other by the hour, and are a kind of creatures which I never wish to sleep with again. It would be my advice to persons situated in this way, to not roll or thrash around, because this excites the interest of all the different sorts of animals and makes every last one of them want to turn out and see what is going on, and this makes things worse than they were before, and of course makes you objurgate harder, too, if you can. Still, if one did not roll and thrash around he would die; so perhaps it is as well to do one way as the other; there is no real choice. Even after I was frozen solid I could still distinguish that tickling, just as a corpse does when he is taking electric treatment. I said I would never wear armor after this trip.

All those trying hours whilst I was frozen and yet was in a living fire, as you may say, on account of that swarm of crawlers, that same unanswerable question kept circling and circling through my tired head: How do people stand this miserable armor? How have they managed to stand it all these generations? How can they sleep at night for dreading the tortures of next day?

When the morning came at last, I was in a bad enough plight: seedy, drowsy, fagged, from want of sleep; weary from thrashing around, famished from long fasting; pining for a bath, and to get rid of the animals; and crippled with rheumatism. And how had it fared with the nobly born, the titled aristocrat, the *Demoiselle Alisande la Carteloise*? Why, she was as fresh as a squirrel; she had slept like the dead; and as for a bath, probably neither she nor any other noble in the land had ever had one, and so she was not missing it. Measured by modern standards, they were merely modified savages, those people. This noble lady showed no impatience to get to breakfast—and that smacks of the savage, too. On their journeys those Britons were used to long fasts, and knew how to bear them; and also how to freight up against probable fasts before starting, after the style of the Indian and the anaconda. As like as not, Sandy was loaded for a three-day stretch.

We were off before sunrise, Sandy riding and I limping along behind. In half an hour we came upon a group of ragged poor creatures who had assembled to mend the thing which was regarded as a road. They were as humble as animals to me; and when I proposed to breakfast with them, they were so flattered, so overwhelmed by this extraordinary condescension of mine that at first they were not able to believe that I was in earnest. My lady put up her scornful lip and withdrew to one side; she said in their hearing that she would as soon think of eating with the other cattle—a remark which embarrassed these poor devils merely because it referred to them, and not because it insulted or offended them,

for it didn't. And yet they were not slaves, not chattels. By a sarcasm of law and phrase they were freemen. Seven-tenths of the free population of the country were of just their class and degree: small "independent" farmers, artisans, etc.; which is to say, they were the nation, the actual Nation; they were about all of it that was useful, or worth saving, or really respect-worthy, and to subtract them would have been to subtract the Nation and leave behind some dregs, some refuse, in the shape of a king, nobility and gentry, idle, unproductive, acquainted mainly with the arts of wasting and destroying, and of no sort of use or value in any rationally constructed world.

And yet, by ingenious contrivance, this gilded minority, instead of being in the tail of the procession where it belonged, was marching head up and banners flying, at the other end of it; had elected itself to be the Nation, and these innumerable clams had permitted it so long that they had come at last to accept it as a truth; and not only that, but to believe it right and as it should be. The priests had told their fathers and themselves that this ironical state of things was ordained of God; and so, not reflecting upon how unlike God it would be to amuse himself with sarcasms, and especially such poor transparent ones as this, they had dropped the matter there and become respectfully quiet.

The talk of these meek people had a strange enough sound in a formerly American ear. They were freemen, but they could not leave the estates of their lord or their bishop without his permission; they could not prepare their own bread, but must have their corn ground and their bread baked at his mill and his bakery, and pay roundly for the same; they could not sell a piece of their own property without paying him a handsome percentage of the proceeds, nor buy a piece of somebody else's without remembering him in cash for the privilege; they had to harvest his grain for him gratis, and be ready to come at a moment's notice, leaving their own crop to destruction by the threatened storm; they had to let him plant fruit trees in their fields, and then keep their indignation to themselves when his heedless fruit-gatherers trampled the grain around the trees; they had to smother their anger when his hunting parties galloped through their fields laying waste the result of their patient toil; they were not allowed to keep doves themselves, and when the swarms from my lord's dovecote settled on their crops they must not lose their temper and kill a bird, for awful would the penalty be; when the harvest was at last gathered, then came the procession of robbers to levy their blackmail upon it: first the Church carted off its fat tenth, then the king's commissioner took his twentieth, then my lord's people made a mighty inroad upon the remainder; after which, the skinned freeman had liberty to bestow the remnant in his barn, in case it was worth the trouble; there were taxes, and taxes, and taxes, and more taxes, and taxes again, and yet other taxes

—upon this free and independent pauper, but none upon his lord the baron or the bishop, none upon the wasteful nobility or the all-devouring Church; if the baron would sleep untroubled, the freeman must sit up all night after his day's work and whip the ponds to keep the frogs quiet; if the freeman's daughter—but no, that last infamy of monarchical government is unprintable; and finally, if the freeman, grown desperate with his tortures, found his life unendurable under such conditions, and sacrificed it and fled to death for mercy and refuge, the gentle Church condemned him to eternal fire, the gentle law buried him at midnight at the cross-roads with a stake through his back, and his master the baron or the bishop confiscated all his property and turned his widow and his orphans out of doors.

And here were these freemen assembled in the early morning to work on their lord the bishop's road three days each—gratis; every head of a family, and every son of a family, three days each, gratis, and a day or so added for their servants. Why, it was like reading about France and the French, before the ever memorable and blessed Revolution, which swept a thousand years of such villainy away in one swift tidal-wave of blood—one: a settlement of that hoary debt in the proportion of half a drop of blood for each hogshead of it that had been pressed by slow tortures out of that people in the weary stretch of ten centuries of wrong and shame and misery the like of which was not to be meted but in hell. There were two "Reigns of Terror," if we would but remember it and consider it; the one wrought murder in hot passion, the other in heartless cold blood; the one lasted mere months, the other had lasted a thousand years; the one inflicted death upon ten thousand persons, the other upon a hundred millions; but our shudders are all for the "horrors" of the minor Terror, the momentary Terror, so to speak; whereas, what is the horror of swift death by the axe, compared with lifelong death from hunger, cold, insult, cruelty, and heart-break? What is swift death by lightning compared with death by slow fire at the stake? A city cemetery could contain the coffins filled by that brief Terror which we have all been so diligently taught to shiver at and mourn over; but all France could hardly contain the coffins filled by that older and real Terror—that unspeakably bitter and awful Terror which none of us has been taught to see in its vastness or pity as it deserves.

These poor ostensible freemen who were sharing their breakfast and their talk with me, were as full of humble reverence for their king and Church and nobility as their worst enemy could desire. There was something pitifully ludicrous about it. I asked them if they supposed a nation of people ever existed, who, with a free vote in every man's hand, would elect that a single family and its descendants should reign over it forever, whether gifted or boobies, to the

exclusion of all other families—including the voter's; and would also elect that a certain hundred families should be raised to dizzy summits of rank, and clothed on with offensive transmissible glories and privileges to the exclusion of the rest of the nation's families—*including his own* .

They all looked unhit, and said they didn't know; that they had never thought about it before, and it hadn't ever occurred to them that a nation could be so situated that every man *could* have a say in the government. I said I had seen one—and that it would last until it had an Established Church. Again they were all unhit—at first. But presently one man looked up and asked me to state that proposition again; and state it slowly, so it could soak into his understanding. I did it; and after a little he had the idea, and he brought his fist down and said *he* didn't believe a nation where every man had a vote would voluntarily get down in the mud and dirt in any such way; and that to steal from a nation its will and preference must be a crime and the first of all crimes. I said to myself:

"This one's a man. If I were backed by enough of his sort, I would make a strike for the welfare of this country, and try to prove myself its loyalest citizen by making a wholesome change in its system of government."

You see my kind of loyalty was loyalty to one's country, not to its institutions or its office-holders. The country is the real thing, the substantial thing, the eternal thing; it is the thing to watch over, and care for, and be loyal to; institutions are extraneous, they are its mere clothing, and clothing can wear out, become ragged, cease to be comfortable, cease to protect the body from winter, disease, and death. To be loyal to rags, to shout for rags, to worship rags, to die for rags—that is a loyalty of unreason, it is pure animal; it belongs to monarchy, was invented by monarchy; let monarchy keep it. I was from Connecticut, whose Constitution declares "that all political power is inherent in the people, and all free governments are founded on their authority and instituted for their benefit; and that they have *at all times* an undeniable and indefeasible right to *alter their form of government* in such a manner as they may think expedient."

Under that gospel, the citizen who thinks he sees that the commonwealth's political clothes are worn out, and yet holds his peace and does not agitate for a new suit, is disloyal; he is a traitor. That he may be the only one who thinks he sees this decay, does not excuse him; it is his duty to agitate anyway, and it is the duty of the others to vote him down if they do not see the matter as he does.

And now here I was, in a country where a right to say how the country should be governed was restricted to six persons in each thousand of its population. For the nine hundred and ninety-four to express dissatisfaction with the regnant system and propose to change it, would have made the whole six shudder as one man, it would have been so disloyal, so dishonorable, such putrid

black treason. So to speak, I was become a stockholder in a corporation where nine hundred and ninety-four of the members furnished all the money and did all the work, and the other six elected themselves a permanent board of direction and took all the dividends. It seemed to me that what the nine hundred and ninety-four dupes needed was a new deal. The thing that would have best suited the circus side of my nature would have been to resign the Boss-ship and get up an insurrection and turn it into a revolution; but I knew that the Jack Cade or the Wat Tyler who tries such a thing without first educating his materials up to revolution grade is almost absolutely certain to get left. I had never been accustomed to getting left, even if I do say it myself. Wherefore, the "deal" which had been for some time working into shape in my mind was of a quite different pattern from the Cade-Tyler sort.

So I did not talk blood and insurrection to that man there who sat munching black bread with that abused and mistaught herd of human sheep, but took him aside and talked matter of another sort to him. After I had finished, I got him to lend me a little ink from his veins; and with this and a sliver I wrote on a piece of bark—

Put him in the Man-factory—  
and gave it to him, and said:

"Take it to the palace at Camelot and give it into the hands of Amyas le Poulet, whom I call Clarence, and he will understand."

"He is a priest, then," said the man, and some of the enthusiasm went out of his face.

"How—a priest? Didn't I tell you that no chattel of the Church, no bond-slave of pope or bishop can enter my Man-Factory? Didn't I tell you that *you* couldn't enter unless your religion, whatever it might be, was your own free property?"

"Marry, it is so, and for that I was glad; wherefore it liked me not, and bred in me a cold doubt, to hear of this priest being there."

"But he isn't a priest, I tell you."

The man looked far from satisfied. He said:

"He is not a priest, and yet can read?"

"He is not a priest and yet can read—yes, and write, too, for that matter. I taught him myself." The man's face cleared. "And it is the first thing that you yourself will be taught in that Factory—"

"I? I would give blood out of my heart to know that art. Why, I will be your slave, your—"

"No you won't, you won't be anybody's slave. Take your family and go along. Your lord the bishop will confiscate your small property, but no matter.

Clarence will fix you all right."

## CHAPTER XIV. "DEFEND THEE, LORD"

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I paid three pennies for my breakfast, and a most extravagant price it was, too, seeing that one could have breakfasted a dozen persons for that money; but I was feeling good by this time, and I had always been a kind of spendthrift anyway; and then these people had wanted to give me the food for nothing, scant as their provision was, and so it was a grateful pleasure to emphasize my appreciation and sincere thankfulness with a good big financial lift where the money would do so much more good than it would in my helmet, where, these pennies being made of iron and not stinted in weight, my half-dollar's worth was a good deal of a burden to me. I spent money rather too freely in those days, it is true; but one reason for it was that I hadn't got the proportions of things entirely adjusted, even yet, after so long a sojourn in Britain—hadn't got along to where I was able to absolutely realize that a penny in Arthur's land and a couple of dollars in Connecticut were about one and the same thing: just twins, as you may say, in purchasing power. If my start from Camelot could have been delayed a very few days I could have paid these people in beautiful new coins from our own mint, and that would have pleased me; and them, too, not less. I had adopted the American values exclusively. In a week or two now, cents, nickels, dimes, quarters, and half-dollars, and also a trifle of gold, would be trickling in thin but steady streams all through the commercial veins of the kingdom, and I looked to see this new blood freshen up its life.

The farmers were bound to throw in something, to sort of offset my liberality, whether I would or no; so I let them give me a flint and steel; and as soon as they had comfortably bestowed Sandy and me on our horse, I lit my pipe. When the first blast of smoke shot out through the bars of my helmet, all those people broke for the woods, and Sandy went over backwards and struck the ground with a dull thud. They thought I was one of those fire-belching dragons they had heard so much about from knights and other professional liars. I had infinite trouble to persuade those people to venture back within explaining distance. Then I told them that this was only a bit of enchantment which would work harm to none but my enemies. And I promised, with my hand on my heart, that if all who felt no enmity toward me would come forward and pass before me

they should see that only those who remained behind would be struck dead. The procession moved with a good deal of promptness. There were no casualties to report, for nobody had curiosity enough to remain behind to see what would happen.

I lost some time, now, for these big children, their fears gone, became so ravished with wonder over my awe-compelling fireworks that I had to stay there and smoke a couple of pipes out before they would let me go. Still the delay was not wholly unproductive, for it took all that time to get Sandy thoroughly wonted to the new thing, she being so close to it, you know. It plugged up her conversation mill, too, for a considerable while, and that was a gain. But above all other benefits accruing, I had learned something. I was ready for any giant or any ogre that might come along, now.

We tarried with a holy hermit, that night, and my opportunity came about the middle of the next afternoon. We were crossing a vast meadow by way of shortcut, and I was musing absently, hearing nothing, seeing nothing, when Sandy suddenly interrupted a remark which she had begun that morning, with the cry:

"Defend thee, lord!—peril of life is toward!"

And she slipped down from the horse and ran a little way and stood. I looked up and saw, far off in the shade of a tree, half a dozen armed knights and their squires; and straightway there was bustle among them and tightening of saddle-girths for the mount. My pipe was ready and would have been lit, if I had not been lost in thinking about how to banish oppression from this land and restore to all its people their stolen rights and manhood without disobliging anybody. I lit up at once, and by the time I had got a good head of reserved steam on, here they came. All together, too; none of those chivalrous magnanimities which one reads so much about—one courtly rascal at a time, and the rest standing by to see fair play. No, they came in a body, they came with a whirr and a rush, they came like a volley from a battery; came with heads low down, plumes streaming out behind, lances advanced at a level. It was a handsome sight, a beautiful sight—for a man up a tree. I laid my lance in rest and waited, with my heart beating, till the iron wave was just ready to break over me, then spouted a column of white smoke through the bars of my helmet. You should have seen the wave go to pieces and scatter! This was a finer sight than the other one.

But these people stopped, two or three hundred yards away, and this troubled me. My satisfaction collapsed, and fear came; I judged I was a lost man. But Sandy was radiant; and was going to be eloquent—but I stopped her, and told her my magic had miscarried, somehow or other, and she must mount, with all despatch, and we must ride for life. No, she wouldn't. She said that my enchantment had disabled those knights; they were not riding on, because they



couldn't; wait, they would drop out of their saddles presently, and we would get their horses and harness. I could not deceive such trusting simplicity, so I said it was a mistake; that when my fireworks killed at all, they killed instantly; no, the men would not die, there was something wrong about my apparatus, I couldn't tell what; but we must hurry and get away, for those people would attack us again, in a minute. Sandy laughed, and said:

"Lack-a-day, sir, they be not of that breed! Sir Launcelot will give battle to dragons, and will abide by them, and will assail them again, and yet again, and still again, until he do conquer and destroy them; and so likewise will Sir Pellinore and Sir Aglovale and Sir Carados, and mayhap others, but there be none else that will venture it, let the idle say what the idle will. And, la, as to yonder base rufflers, think ye they have not their fill, but yet desire more?"

"Well, then, what are they waiting for? Why don't they leave? Nobody's hindering. Good land, I'm willing to let bygones be bygones, I'm sure."

"Leave, is it? Oh, give thyself easement as to that. They dream not of it, no, not they. They wait to yield them."

"Come—really, is that 'sooth'—as you people say? If they want to, why don't they?"

"It would like them much; but an ye wot how dragons are esteemed, ye would not hold them blamable. They fear to come."

"Well, then, suppose I go to them instead, and—"

"Ah, wit ye well they would not abide your coming. I will go."

And she did. She was a handy person to have along on a raid. I would have considered this a doubtful errand, myself. I presently saw the knights riding away, and Sandy coming back. That was a relief. I judged she had somehow failed to get the first innings—I mean in the conversation; otherwise the interview wouldn't have been so short. But it turned out that she had managed the business well; in fact, admirably. She said that when she told those people I was The Boss, it hit them where they lived: "smote them sore with fear and dread" was her word; and then they were ready to put up with anything she might require. So she swore them to appear at Arthur's court within two days and yield them, with horse and harness, and be my knights henceforth, and subject to my command. How much better she managed that thing than I should have done it myself! She was a daisy.

## CHAPTER XV. SANDY'S TALE

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"And so I'm proprietor of some knights," said I, as we rode off. "Who would ever have supposed that I should live to list up assets of that sort. I shan't know what to do with them; unless I raffle them off. How many of them are there, Sandy?"

"Seven, please you, sir, and their squires."

"It is a good haul. Who are they? Where do they hang out?"

"Where do they hang out?"

"Yes, where do they live?"

"Ah, I understood thee not. That will I tell eftsoons." Then she said musingly, and softly, turning the words daintily over her tongue: "Hang they out—hang they out—where hang—where do they hang out; eh, right so; where do they hang out. Of a truth the phrase hath a fair and winsome grace, and is prettily worded withal. I will repeat it anon and anon in mine idlesse, whereby I may peradventure learn it. Where do they hang out. Even so! already it falleth trippingly from my tongue, and forasmuch as—"

"Don't forget the cowboys, Sandy."

"Cowboys?"

"Yes; the knights, you know: You were going to tell me about them. A while back, you remember. Figuratively speaking, game's called."

"Game—"

"Yes, yes, yes! Go to the bat. I mean, get to work on your statistics, and don't burn so much kindling getting your fire started. Tell me about the knights."

"I will well, and lightly will begin. So they two departed and rode into a great forest. And—"

"Great Scott!"

You see, I recognized my mistake at once. I had set her works a-going; it was my own fault; she would be thirty days getting down to those facts. And she generally began without a preface and finished without a result. If you interrupted her she would either go right along without noticing, or answer with a couple of words, and go back and say the sentence over again. So,

interruptions only did harm; and yet I had to interrupt, and interrupt pretty frequently, too, in order to save my life; a person would die if he let her monotony drip on him right along all day.

"Great Scott!" I said in my distress. She went right back and began over again:

"So they two departed and rode into a great forest. And—"

"Which two?"

"Sir Gawaine and Sir Uwaine. And so they came to an abbey of monks, and there were well lodged. So on the morn they heard their masses in the abbey, and so they rode forth till they came to a great forest; then was Sir Gawaine ware in a valley by a turret, of twelve fair damsels, and two knights armed on great horses, and the damsels went to and fro by a tree. And then was Sir Gawaine ware how there hung a white shield on that tree, and ever as the damsels came by it they spit upon it, and some threw mire upon the shield—"

"Now, if I hadn't seen the like myself in this country, Sandy, I wouldn't believe it. But I've seen it, and I can just see those creatures now, parading before that shield and acting like that. The women here do certainly act like all possessed. Yes, and I mean your best, too, society's very choicest brands. The humblest hello-girl along ten thousand miles of wire could teach gentleness, patience, modesty, manners, to the highest duchess in Arthur's land."

"Hello-girl?"

"Yes, but don't you ask me to explain; it's a new kind of a girl; they don't have them here; one often speaks sharply to them when they are not the least in fault, and he can't get over feeling sorry for it and ashamed of himself in thirteen hundred years, it's such shabby mean conduct and so unprovoked; the fact is, no gentleman ever does it—though I—well, I myself, if I've got to confess—"

"Peradventure she—"

"Never mind her; never mind her; I tell you I couldn't ever explain her so you would understand."

"Even so be it, sith ye are so minded. Then Sir Gawaine and Sir Uwaine went and saluted them, and asked them why they did that despite to the shield.

Sirs, said the damsels, we shall tell you. There is a knight in this country that owneth this white shield, and he is a passing good man of his hands, but he hateth all ladies and gentlewomen, and therefore we do all this despite to the shield. I will say you, said Sir Gawaine, it beseemeth evil a good knight to despise all ladies and gentlewomen, and peradventure though he hate you he hath some cause, and peradventure he loveth in some other places ladies and gentlewomen, and to be loved again, and he such a man of prowess as ye speak of—"

"Man of prowess—yes, that is the man to please them, Sandy. Man of brains—that is a thing they never think of. Tom Sayers—John Heenan—John L. Sullivan—pity but you could be here. You would have your legs under the Round Table and a 'Sir' in front of your names within the twenty-four hours; and you could bring about a new distribution of the married princesses and duchesses of the Court in another twenty-four. The fact is, it is just a sort of polished-up court of Comanches, and there isn't a squaw in it who doesn't stand ready at the dropping of a hat to desert to the buck with the biggest string of scalps at his belt."

"—and he be such a man of prowess as ye speak of, said Sir Gawaine. Now, what is his name? Sir, said they, his name is Marhaus the king's son of Ireland."

"Son of the king of Ireland, you mean; the other form doesn't mean anything. And look out and hold on tight, now, we must jump this gully.... There, we are all right now. This horse belongs in the circus; he is born before his time."

"I know him well, said Sir Uwayne, he is a passing good knight as any is on live."

"*On live.* If you've got a fault in the world, Sandy, it is that you are a shade too archaic. But it isn't any matter."

"—for I saw him once proved at a justs where many knights were gathered, and that time there might no man withstand him. Ah, said Sir Gawaine, damsels, methinketh ye are to blame, for it is to suppose he that hung that shield there will not be long therefrom, and then may those knights match him on horseback, and that is more your worship than thus; for I will abide no longer to see a knight's shield dishonored. And therewith Sir Uwayne and Sir Gawaine departed a little from them, and then were they ware where Sir Marhaus came riding on a great horse straight toward them. And when the twelve damsels saw Sir Marhaus they fled into the turret as they were wild, so that some of them fell by the way. Then the one of the knights of the tower dressed his shield, and said on high, Sir Marhaus defend thee. And so they ran together that the knight brake his spear on Marhaus, and Sir Marhaus smote him so hard that he brake his neck and the horse's back—"

"Well, that is just the trouble about this state of things, it ruins so many horses."

"That saw the other knight of the turret, and dressed him toward Marhaus, and they went so eagerly together, that the knight of the turret was soon smitten down, horse and man, stark dead—"

"*Another* horse gone; I tell you it is a custom that ought to be broken up. I don't see how people with any feeling can applaud and support it."

. . . .

"So these two knights came together with great random—"

I saw that I had been asleep and missed a chapter, but I didn't say anything. I judged that the Irish knight was in trouble with the visitors by this time, and this turned out to be the case.

"—that Sir Uwaine smote Sir Marhaus that his spear brast in pieces on the shield, and Sir Marhaus smote him so sore that horse and man he bare to the earth, and hurt Sir Uwaine on the left side—"

"The truth is, Alisande, these archaics are a little *too* simple; the vocabulary is too limited, and so, by consequence, descriptions suffer in the matter of variety; they run too much to level Saharas of fact, and not enough to picturesque detail; this throws about them a certain air of the monotonous; in fact the fights are all alike: a couple of people come together with great random—random is a good word, and so is exegesis, for that matter, and so is holocaust, and defalcation, and usufruct and a hundred others, but land! a body ought to discriminate—they come together with great random, and a spear is brast, and one party brake his shield and the other one goes down, horse and man, over his horse-tail and brake his neck, and then the next candidate comes randoming in, and brast *his* spear, and the other man brast his shield, and down *he* goes, horse and man, over his horse-tail, and brake *his* neck, and then there's another elected, and another and another and still another, till the material is all used up; and when you come to figure up results, you can't tell one fight from another, nor who whipped; and as a *picture*, of living, raging, roaring battle, sho! why, it's pale and noiseless—just ghosts scuffling in a fog. Dear me, what would this barren vocabulary get out of the mightiest spectacle?—the burning of Rome in Nero's time, for instance? Why, it would merely say, 'Town burned down; no insurance; boy brast a window, fireman brake his neck!' Why, *that* ain't a picture!"

It was a good deal of a lecture, I thought, but it didn't disturb Sandy, didn't turn a feather; her steam soared steadily up again, the minute I took off the lid:

"Then Sir Marhaus turned his horse and rode toward Gawaine with his spear. And when Sir Gawaine saw that, he dressed his shield, and they aventred their spears, and they came together with all the might of their horses, that either knight smote other so hard in the midst of their shields, but Sir Gawaine's spear brake—"

"I knew it would."

—"but Sir Marhaus's spear held; and therewith Sir Gawaine and his horse rushed down to the earth—"

"Just so—and brake his back."

—"and lightly Sir Gawaine rose upon his feet and pulled out his sword, and

dressed him toward Sir Marhaus on foot, and therewith either came unto other eagerly, and smote together with their swords, that their shields flew in cantels, and they bruised their helms and their hauberks, and wounded either other. But Sir Gawaine, fro it passed nine of the clock, waxed by the space of three hours ever stronger and stronger and thrice his might was increased. All this espied Sir Marhaus, and had great wonder how his might increased, and so they wounded other passing sore; and then when it was come noon—"

The pelting sing-song of it carried me forward to scenes and sounds of my boyhood days:

"N-e-e-ew Haven! ten minutes for refreshments—knductr'll strike the gong-bell two minutes before train leaves—passengers for the Shore-line please take seats in the rear k'yar, this k'yar don't go no funder—*ahh* -pls, *aw* -rnjz, *b'nan* ners, *s-a-n-d'*ches, *p*—op-corn!"

—"and waxed past noon and drew toward evensong. Sir Gawaine's strength feebled and waxed passing faint, that unnethes he might dure any longer, and Sir Marhaus was then bigger and bigger—"

"Which strained his armor, of course; and yet little would one of these people mind a small thing like that."

—"and so, Sir Knight, said Sir Marhaus, I have well felt that ye are a passing good knight, and a marvelous man of might as ever I felt any, while it lasteth, and our quarrels are not great, and therefore it were a pity to do you hurt, for I feel you are passing feeble. Ah, said Sir Gawaine, gentle knight, ye say the word that I should say. And therewith they took off their helms and either kissed other, and there they swore together either to love other as brethren—"

But I lost the thread there, and dozed off to slumber, thinking about what a pity it was that men with such superb strength—strength enabling them to stand up cased in cruelly burdensome iron and drenched with perspiration, and hack and batter and bang each other for six hours on a stretch—should not have been born at a time when they could put it to some useful purpose. Take a jackass, for instance: a jackass has that kind of strength, and puts it to a useful purpose, and is valuable to this world because he is a jackass; but a nobleman is not valuable because he is a jackass. It is a mixture that is always ineffectual, and should never have been attempted in the first place. And yet, once you start a mistake, the trouble is done and you never know what is going to come of it.

When I came to myself again and began to listen, I perceived that I had lost another chapter, and that Alisande had wandered a long way off with her people.

"And so they rode and came into a deep valley full of stones, and thereby they saw a fair stream of water; above thereby was the head of the stream, a fair fountain, and three damsels sitting thereby. In this country, said Sir Marhaus,

came never knight since it was christened, but he found strange adventures—"

"This is not good form, Alisande. Sir Marhaus the king's son of Ireland talks like all the rest; you ought to give him a brogue, or at least a characteristic expletive; by this means one would recognize him as soon as he spoke, without his ever being named. It is a common literary device with the great authors. You should make him say, 'In this country, be jabbers, came never knight since it was christened, but he found strange adventures, be jabbers.' You see how much better that sounds."

—"came never knight but he found strange adventures, be jabbers. Of a truth it doth indeed, fair lord, albeit 'tis passing hard to say, though peradventure that will not tarry but better speed with usage. And then they rode to the damsels, and either saluted other, and the eldest had a garland of gold about her head, and she was threescore winter of age or more—"

"The *damsel* was?"

"Even so, dear lord—and her hair was white under the garland—"

"Celluloid teeth, nine dollars a set, as like as not—the loose-fit kind, that go up and down like a portcullis when you eat, and fall out when you laugh."

"The second damsel was of thirty winter of age, with a circlet of gold about her head. The third damsel was but fifteen year of age—"

Billows of thought came rolling over my soul, and the voice faded out of my hearing!

Fifteen! Break—my heart! oh, my lost darling! Just her age who was so gentle, and lovely, and all the world to me, and whom I shall never see again!

How the thought of her carries me back over wide seas of memory to a vague dim time, a happy time, so many, many centuries hence, when I used to wake in the soft summer mornings, out of sweet dreams of her, and say "Hello, Central!" just to hear her dear voice come melting back to me with a "Hello, Hank!" that was music of the spheres to my enchanted ear. She got three dollars a week, but she was worth it.

I could not follow Alisande's further explanation of who our captured knights were, now—I mean in case she should ever get to explaining who they were.

My interest was gone, my thoughts were far away, and sad. By fitful glimpses of the drifting tale, caught here and there and now and then, I merely noted in a vague way that each of these three knights took one of these three damsels up behind him on his horse, and one rode north, another east, the other south, to seek adventures, and meet again and lie, after year and day. Year and day—and without baggage. It was of a piece with the general simplicity of the country.

The sun was now setting. It was about three in the afternoon when Alisande had begun to tell me who the cowboys were; so she had made pretty good

progress with it—for her. She would arrive some time or other, no doubt, but she was not a person who could be hurried.

We were approaching a castle which stood on high ground; a huge, strong, venerable structure, whose gray towers and battlements were charmingly draped with ivy, and whose whole majestic mass was drenched with splendors flung from the sinking sun. It was the largest castle we had seen, and so I thought it might be the one we were after, but Sandy said no. She did not know who owned it; she said she had passed it without calling, when she went down to Camelot.



## CHAPTER XVI. MORGAN LE FAY

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If knights errant were to be believed, not all castles were desirable places to seek hospitality in. As a matter of fact, knights errant were *not* persons to be believed—that is, measured by modern standards of veracity; yet, measured by the standards of their own time, and scaled accordingly, you got the truth. It was very simple: you discounted a statement ninety-seven per cent; the rest was fact.

Now after making this allowance, the truth remained that if I could find out something about a castle before ringing the door-bell—I mean hailing the warders—it was the sensible thing to do. So I was pleased when I saw in the distance a horseman making the bottom turn of the road that wound down from this castle.

As we approached each other, I saw that he wore a plumed helmet, and seemed to be otherwise clothed in steel, but bore a curious addition also—a stiff square garment like a herald's tabard. However, I had to smile at my own forgetfulness when I got nearer and read this sign on his tabard:

"Persimmon's Soap—All the Prime-Donna Use It."

That was a little idea of my own, and had several wholesome purposes in view toward the civilizing and uplifting of this nation. In the first place, it was a furtive, underhand blow at this nonsense of knight errantry, though nobody suspected that but me. I had started a number of these people out—the bravest knights I could get—each sandwiched between bulletin-boards bearing one device or another, and I judged that by and by when they got to be numerous enough they would begin to look ridiculous; and then, even the steel-clad ass that *hadn't* any board would himself begin to look ridiculous because he was out of the fashion.

Secondly, these missionaries would gradually, and without creating suspicion or exciting alarm, introduce a rudimentary cleanliness among the nobility, and from them it would work down to the people, if the priests could be kept quiet. This would undermine the Church. I mean would be a step toward that. Next, education—next, freedom—and then she would begin to crumble. It being my conviction that any Established Church is an established crime, an established slave-pen, I had no scruples, but was willing to assail it in any way

or with any weapon that promised to hurt it. Why, in my own former day—in remote centuries not yet stirring in the womb of time—there were old Englishmen who imagined that they had been born in a free country: a "free" country with the Corporation Act and the Test still in force in it—timbers propped against men's liberties and dishonored consciences to shore up an Established Anachronism with.

My missionaries were taught to spell out the gilt signs on their tabards—the showy gilding was a neat idea, I could have got the king to wear a bulletin-board for the sake of that barbaric splendor—they were to spell out these signs and then explain to the lords and ladies what soap was; and if the lords and ladies were afraid of it, get them to try it on a dog. The missionary's next move was to get the family together and try it on himself; he was to stop at no experiment, however desperate, that could convince the nobility that soap was harmless; if any final doubt remained, he must catch a hermit—the woods were full of them; saints they called themselves, and saints they were believed to be. They were unspeakably holy, and worked miracles, and everybody stood in awe of them. If a hermit could survive a wash, and that failed to convince a duke, give him up, let him alone.

Whenever my missionaries overcame a knight errant on the road they washed him, and when he got well they swore him to go and get a bulletin-board and disseminate soap and civilization the rest of his days. As a consequence the workers in the field were increasing by degrees, and the reform was steadily spreading. My soap factory felt the strain early. At first I had only two hands; but before I had left home I was already employing fifteen, and running night and day; and the atmospheric result was getting so pronounced that the king went sort of fainting and gasping around and said he did not believe he could stand it much longer, and Sir Launcelot got so that he did hardly anything but walk up and down the roof and swear, although I told him it was worse up there than anywhere else, but he said he wanted plenty of air; and he was always complaining that a palace was no place for a soap factory anyway, and said if a man was to start one in his house he would be damned if he wouldn't strangle him. There were ladies present, too, but much these people ever cared for that; they would swear before children, if the wind was their way when the factory was going.

This missionary knight's name was La Cote Male Taile, and he said that this castle was the abode of Morgan le Fay, sister of King Arthur, and wife of King Uriens, monarch of a realm about as big as the District of Columbia—you could stand in the middle of it and throw bricks into the next kingdom. "Kings" and "Kingdoms" were as thick in Britain as they had been in little Palestine in

Joshua's time, when people had to sleep with their knees pulled up because they couldn't stretch out without a passport.

La Cote was much depressed, for he had scored here the worst failure of his campaign. He had not worked off a cake; yet he had tried all the tricks of the trade, even to the washing of a hermit; but the hermit died. This was, indeed, a bad failure, for this animal would now be dubbed a martyr, and would take his place among the saints of the Roman calendar. Thus made he his moan, this poor Sir La Cote Male Taile, and sorrowed passing sore. And so my heart bled for him, and I was moved to comfort and stay him. Wherefore I said:

"Forbear to grieve, fair knight, for this is not a defeat. We have brains, you and I; and for such as have brains there are no defeats, but only victories.

Observe how we will turn this seeming disaster into an advertisement; an advertisement for our soap; and the biggest one, to draw, that was ever thought of; an advertisement that will transform that Mount Washington defeat into a Matterhorn victory. We will put on your bulletin-board, '*Patronized by the elect.*' How does that strike you?"

"Verily, it is wonderly bethought!"

"Well, a body is bound to admit that for just a modest little one-line ad, it's a corker."

So the poor colporteur's griefs vanished away. He was a brave fellow, and had done mighty feats of arms in his time. His chief celebrity rested upon the events of an excursion like this one of mine, which he had once made with a damsel named Maledisant, who was as handy with her tongue as was Sandy, though in a different way, for her tongue churned forth only railings and insult, whereas Sandy's music was of a kindlier sort. I knew his story well, and so I knew how to interpret the compassion that was in his face when he bade me farewell. He supposed I was having a bitter hard time of it.

Sandy and I discussed his story, as we rode along, and she said that La Cote's bad luck had begun with the very beginning of that trip; for the king's fool had overthrown him on the first day, and in such cases it was customary for the girl to desert to the conqueror, but Maledisant didn't do it; and also persisted afterward in sticking to him, after all his defeats. But, said I, suppose the victor should decline to accept his spoil? She said that that wouldn't answer—he must.

He couldn't decline; it wouldn't be regular. I made a note of that. If Sandy's music got to be too burdensome, some time, I would let a knight defeat me, on the chance that she would desert to him.

In due time we were challenged by the warders, from the castle walls, and after a parley admitted. I have nothing pleasant to tell about that visit. But it was not a disappointment, for I knew Mrs. le Fay by reputation, and was not

expecting anything pleasant. She was held in awe by the whole realm, for she had made everybody believe she was a great sorceress. All her ways were wicked, all her instincts devilish. She was loaded to the eyelids with cold malice. All her history was black with crime; and among her crimes murder was common. I was most curious to see her; as curious as I could have been to see Satan. To my surprise she was beautiful; black thoughts had failed to make her expression repulsive, age had failed to wrinkle her satin skin or mar its bloomy freshness. She could have passed for old Uriens' granddaughter, she could have been mistaken for sister to her own son.

As soon as we were fairly within the castle gates we were ordered into her presence. King Uriens was there, a kind-faced old man with a subdued look; and also the son, Sir Uwayne le Blanchemains, in whom I was, of course, interested on account of the tradition that he had once done battle with thirty knights, and also on account of his trip with Sir Gawaine and Sir Marhaus, which Sandy had been aging me with. But Morgan was the main attraction, the conspicuous personality here; she was head chief of this household, that was plain. She caused us to be seated, and then she began, with all manner of pretty graces and graciousnesses, to ask me questions. Dear me, it was like a bird or a flute, or something, talking. I felt persuaded that this woman must have been misrepresented, lied about. She trilled along, and trilled along, and presently a handsome young page, clothed like the rainbow, and as easy and undulatory of movement as a wave, came with something on a golden salver, and, kneeling to present it to her, overdid his graces and lost his balance, and so fell lightly against her knee. She slipped a dirk into him in as matter-of-course a way as another person would have harpooned a rat!

Poor child! he slumped to the floor, twisted his silken limbs in one great straining contortion of pain, and was dead. Out of the old king was wrung an involuntary "O-h!" of compassion. The look he got, made him cut it suddenly short and not put any more hyphens in it. Sir Uwayne, at a sign from his mother, went to the anteroom and called some servants, and meanwhile madame went rippling sweetly along with her talk.

I saw that she was a good housekeeper, for while she talked she kept a corner of her eye on the servants to see that they made no balks in handling the body and getting it out; when they came with fresh clean towels, she sent back for the other kind; and when they had finished wiping the floor and were going, she indicated a crimson fleck the size of a tear which their duller eyes had overlooked. It was plain to me that La Cote Male Taile had failed to see the mistress of the house. Often, how louder and clearer than any tongue, does dumb circumstantial evidence speak.

Morgan le Fay rippled along as musically as ever. Marvelous woman. And what a glance she had: when it fell in reproof upon those servants, they shrunk and quailed as timid people do when the lightning flashes out of a cloud. I could have got the habit myself. It was the same with that poor old Brer Uriens; he was always on the ragged edge of apprehension; she could not even turn toward him but he winced.

In the midst of the talk I let drop a complimentary word about King Arthur, forgetting for the moment how this woman hated her brother. That one little compliment was enough. She clouded up like storm; she called for her guards, and said:

"Hale me these varlets to the dungeons."

That struck cold on my ears, for her dungeons had a reputation. Nothing occurred to me to say—or do. But not so with Sandy. As the guard laid a hand upon me, she piped up with the tranquièst confidence, and said:

"God's wounds, dost thou covet destruction, thou maniac? It is The Boss!"

Now what a happy idea that was!—and so simple; yet it would never have occurred to me. I was born modest; not all over, but in spots; and this was one of the spots.

The effect upon madame was electrical. It cleared her countenance and brought back her smiles and all her persuasive graces and blandishments; but nevertheless she was not able to entirely cover up with them the fact that she was in a ghastly fright. She said:

"La, but do list to thine handmaid! as if one gifted with powers like to mine might say the thing which I have said unto one who has vanquished Merlin, and not be jesting. By mine enchantments I foresaw your coming, and by them I knew you when you entered here. I did but play this little jest with hope to surprise you into some display of your art, as not doubting you would blast the guards with occult fires, consuming them to ashes on the spot, a marvel much beyond mine own ability, yet one which I have long been childishly curious to see."

The guards were less curious, and got out as soon as they got permission.

## CHAPTER XVII. A ROYAL BANQUET

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Madame, seeing me pacific and unresentful, no doubt judged that I was deceived by her excuse; for her fright dissolved away, and she was soon so importunate to have me give an exhibition and kill somebody, that the thing grew to be embarrassing. However, to my relief she was presently interrupted by the call to prayers. I will say this much for the nobility: that, tyrannical, murderous, rapacious, and morally rotten as they were, they were deeply and enthusiastically religious. Nothing could divert them from the regular and faithful performance of the pieties enjoined by the Church. More than once I had seen a noble who had gotten his enemy at a disadvantage, stop to pray before cutting his throat; more than once I had seen a noble, after ambushing and despatching his enemy, retire to the nearest wayside shrine and humbly give thanks, without even waiting to rob the body. There was to be nothing finer or sweeter in the life of even Benvenuto Cellini, that rough-hewn saint, ten centuries later. All the nobles of Britain, with their families, attended divine service morning and night daily, in their private chapels, and even the worst of them had family worship five or six times a day besides. The credit of this belonged entirely to the Church. Although I was no friend to that Catholic Church, I was obliged to admit this. And often, in spite of me, I found myself saying, "What would this country be without the Church?"

After prayers we had dinner in a great banqueting hall which was lighted by hundreds of grease-jets, and everything was as fine and lavish and rudely splendid as might become the royal degree of the hosts. At the head of the hall, on a dais, was the table of the king, queen, and their son, Prince Uwaine. Stretching down the hall from this, was the general table, on the floor. At this, above the salt, sat the visiting nobles and the grown members of their families, of both sexes,—the resident Court, in effect—sixty-one persons; below the salt sat minor officers of the household, with their principal subordinates: altogether a hundred and eighteen persons sitting, and about as many liveried servants standing behind their chairs, or serving in one capacity or another. It was a very fine show. In a gallery a band with cymbals, horns, harps, and other horrors, opened the proceedings with what seemed to be the crude first-draft or original

agony of the wail known to later centuries as "In the Sweet Bye and Bye." It was new, and ought to have been rehearsed a little more. For some reason or other the queen had the composer hanged, after dinner.

After this music, the priest who stood behind the royal table said a noble long grace in ostensible Latin. Then the battalion of waiters broke away from their posts, and darted, rushed, flew, fetched and carried, and the mighty feeding began; no words anywhere, but absorbing attention to business. The rows of chops opened and shut in vast unison, and the sound of it was like to the muffled burr of subterranean machinery.

The havoc continued an hour and a half, and unimaginable was the destruction of substantials. Of the chief feature of the feast—the huge wild boar that lay stretched out so portly and imposing at the start—nothing was left but the semblance of a hoop-skirt; and he was but the type and symbol of what had happened to all the other dishes.

With the pastries and so on, the heavy drinking began—and the talk. Gallon after gallon of wine and mead disappeared, and everybody got comfortable, then happy, then sparkingly joyous—both sexes,—and by and by pretty noisy. Men told anecdotes that were terrific to hear, but nobody blushed; and when the nub was sprung, the assemblage let go with a horse-laugh that shook the fortress. Ladies answered back with historiettes that would almost have made Queen Margaret of Navarre or even the great Elizabeth of England hide behind a handkerchief, but nobody hid here, but only laughed—howled, you may say. In pretty much all of these dreadful stories, ecclesiastics were the hardy heroes, but that didn't worry the chaplain any, he had his laugh with the rest; more than that, upon invitation he roared out a song which was of as daring a sort as any that was sung that night.

By midnight everybody was fagged out, and sore with laughing; and, as a rule, drunk: some weepingly, some affectionately, some hilariously, some quarrelsome, some dead and under the table. Of the ladies, the worst spectacle was a lovely young duchess, whose wedding-eve this was; and indeed she was a spectacle, sure enough. Just as she was she could have sat in advance for the portrait of the young daughter of the Regent d'Orleans, at the famous dinner whence she was carried, foul-mouthed, intoxicated, and helpless, to her bed, in the lost and lamented days of the Ancient Regime.

Suddenly, even while the priest was lifting his hands, and all conscious heads were bowed in reverent expectation of the coming blessing, there appeared under the arch of the far-off door at the bottom of the hall an old and bent and white-haired lady, leaning upon a crutch-stick; and she lifted the stick and pointed it toward the queen and cried out:

"The wrath and curse of God fall upon you, woman without pity, who have slain mine innocent grandchild and made desolate this old heart that had nor chick, nor friend nor stay nor comfort in all this world but him!"

Everybody crossed himself in a grisly fright, for a curse was an awful thing to those people; but the queen rose up majestic, with the death-light in her eye, and flung back this ruthless command:

"Lay hands on her! To the stake with her!"

The guards left their posts to obey. It was a shame; it was a cruel thing to see. What could be done? Sandy gave me a look; I knew she had another inspiration. I said:

"Do what you choose."

She was up and facing toward the queen in a moment. She indicated me, and said:

"Madame, *he* saith this may not be. Recall the commandment, or he will dissolve the castle and it shall vanish away like the instable fabric of a dream!"

Confound it, what a crazy contract to pledge a person to! What if the queen

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But my consternation subsided there, and my panic passed off; for the queen, all in a collapse, made no show of resistance but gave a countermanding sign and sunk into her seat. When she reached it she was sober. So were many of the others. The assemblage rose, whiffed ceremony to the winds, and rushed for the door like a mob; overturning chairs, smashing crockery, tugging, struggling, shouldering, crowding—anything to get out before I should change my mind and puff the castle into the measureless dim vacancies of space. Well, well, well, they *were* a superstitious lot. It is all a body can do to conceive of it.

The poor queen was so scared and humbled that she was even afraid to hang the composer without first consulting me. I was very sorry for her—indeed, any one would have been, for she was really suffering; so I was willing to do anything that was reasonable, and had no desire to carry things to wanton extremities. I therefore considered the matter thoughtfully, and ended by having the musicians ordered into our presence to play that Sweet Bye and Bye again, which they did. Then I saw that she was right, and gave her permission to hang the whole band. This little relaxation of sternness had a good effect upon the queen. A statesman gains little by the arbitrary exercise of iron-clad authority upon all occasions that offer, for this wounds the just pride of his subordinates, and thus tends to undermine his strength. A little concession, now and then, where it can do no harm, is the wiser policy.

Now that the queen was at ease in her mind once more, and measurably happy, her wine naturally began to assert itself again, and it got a little the start



of her. I mean it set her music going—her silver bell of a tongue. Dear me, she was a master talker. It would not become me to suggest that it was pretty late and that I was a tired man and very sleepy. I wished I had gone off to bed when I had the chance. Now I must stick it out; there was no other way. So she tinkled along and along, in the otherwise profound and ghostly hush of the sleeping castle, until by and by there came, as if from deep down under us, a far-away sound, as of a muffled shriek—with an expression of agony about it that made my flesh crawl. The queen stopped, and her eyes lighted with pleasure; she tilted her graceful head as a bird does when it listens. The sound bored its way up through the stillness again.

"What is it?" I said.

"It is truly a stubborn soul, and endureth long. It is many hours now."

"Endureth what?"

"The rack. Come—ye shall see a blithe sight. An he yield not his secret now, ye shall see him torn asunder."

What a silky smooth hellion she was; and so composed and serene, when the cords all down my legs were hurting in sympathy with that man's pain.

Conducted by mailed guards bearing flaring torches, we tramped along echoing corridors, and down stone stairways dank and dripping, and smelling of mould and ages of imprisoned night—a chill, uncanny journey and a long one, and not made the shorter or the cheerier by the sorceress's talk, which was about this sufferer and his crime. He had been accused by an anonymous informer, of having killed a stag in the royal preserves. I said:

"Anonymous testimony isn't just the right thing, your Highness. It were fairer to confront the accused with the accuser."

"I had not thought of that, it being but of small consequence. But an I would, I could not, for that the accuser came masked by night, and told the forester, and straightway got him hence again, and so the forester knoweth him not."

"Then is this Unknown the only person who saw the stag killed?"

"Marry, *no* man saw the killing, but this Unknown saw this hardy wretch near to the spot where the stag lay, and came with right loyal zeal and betrayed him to the forester."

"So the Unknown was near the dead stag, too? Isn't it just possible that he did the killing himself? His loyal zeal—in a mask—looks just a shade suspicious. But what is your highness's idea for racking the prisoner? Where is the profit?"

"He will not confess, else; and then were his soul lost. For his crime his life is forfeited by the law—and of a surety will I see that he payeth it!—but it were peril to my own soul to let him die unconfessed and unabsolved. Nay, I were a

fool to fling me into hell for *his* accommodation."

"But, your Highness, suppose he has nothing to confess?"

"As to that, we shall see, anon. An I rack him to death and he confess not, it will peradventure show that he had indeed naught to confess—ye will grant that that is sooth? Then shall I not be damned for an unconfessed man that had naught to confess—wherefore, I shall be safe."

It was the stubborn unreasoning of the time. It was useless to argue with her. Arguments have no chance against petrified training; they wear it as little as the waves wear a cliff. And her training was everybody's. The brightest intellect in the land would not have been able to see that her position was defective.

As we entered the rack-cell I caught a picture that will not go from me; I wish it would. A native young giant of thirty or thereabouts lay stretched upon the frame on his back, with his wrists and ankles tied to ropes which led over windlasses at either end. There was no color in him; his features were contorted and set, and sweat-drops stood upon his forehead. A priest bent over him on each side; the executioner stood by; guards were on duty; smoking torches stood in sockets along the walls; in a corner crouched a poor young creature, her face drawn with anguish, a half-wild and hunted look in her eyes, and in her lap lay a little child asleep. Just as we stepped across the threshold the executioner gave his machine a slight turn, which wrung a cry from both the prisoner and the woman; but I shouted, and the executioner released the strain without waiting to see who spoke. I could not let this horror go on; it would have killed me to see it.

I asked the queen to let me clear the place and speak to the prisoner privately; and when she was going to object I spoke in a low voice and said I did not want to make a scene before her servants, but I must have my way; for I was King Arthur's representative, and was speaking in his name. She saw she had to yield.

I asked her to indorse me to these people, and then leave me. It was not pleasant for her, but she took the pill; and even went further than I was meaning to require. I only wanted the backing of her own authority; but she said:

"Ye will do in all things as this lord shall command. It is The Boss."

It was certainly a good word to conjure with: you could see it by the squirming of these rats. The queen's guards fell into line, and she and they marched away, with their torch-bearers, and woke the echoes of the cavernous tunnels with the measured beat of their retreating footfalls. I had the prisoner taken from the rack and placed upon his bed, and medicaments applied to his hurts, and wine given him to drink. The woman crept near and looked on, eagerly, lovingly, but timorously,—like one who fears a repulse; indeed, she tried furtively to touch the man's forehead, and jumped back, the picture of fright, when I turned unconsciously toward her. It was pitiful to see.

"Lord," I said, "stroke him, lass, if you want to. Do anything you're a mind to; don't mind me."

Why, her eyes were as grateful as an animal's, when you do it a kindness that it understands. The baby was out of her way and she had her cheek against the man's in a minute and her hands fondling his hair, and her happy tears running down. The man revived and caressed his wife with his eyes, which was all he could do. I judged I might clear the den, now, and I did; cleared it of all but the family and myself. Then I said:

"Now, my friend, tell me your side of this matter; I know the other side."

The man moved his head in sign of refusal. But the woman looked pleased—as it seemed to me—pleased with my suggestion. I went on—

"You know of me?"

"Yes. All do, in Arthur's realms."

"If my reputation has come to you right and straight, you should not be afraid to speak."

The woman broke in, eagerly:

"Ah, fair my lord, do thou persuade him! Thou canst an thou wilt. Ah, he suffereth so; and it is for me—for *me* ! And how can I bear it? I would I might see him die—a sweet, swift death; oh, my Hugo, I cannot bear this one!"

And she fell to sobbing and grovelling about my feet, and still imploring. Imploring what? The man's death? I could not quite get the bearings of the thing. But Hugo interrupted her and said:

"Peace! Ye wit not what ye ask. Shall I starve whom I love, to win a gentle death? I wend thou knewest me better."

"Well," I said, "I can't quite make this out. It is a puzzle. Now—"

"Ah, dear my lord, an ye will but persuade him! Consider how these his tortures wound me! Oh, and he will not speak!—whereas, the healing, the solace that lie in a blessed swift death—"

"What *are* you maundering about? He's going out from here a free man and whole—he's not going to die."

The man's white face lit up, and the woman flung herself at me in a most surprising explosion of joy, and cried out:

"He is saved!—for it is the king's word by the mouth of the king's servant—Arthur, the king whose word is gold!"

"Well, then you do believe I can be trusted, after all. Why didn't you before?"

"Who doubted? Not I, indeed; and not she."

"Well, why wouldn't you tell me your story, then?"

"Ye had made no promise; else had it been otherwise."

"I see, I see.... And yet I believe I don't quite see, after all. You stood the torture and refused to confess; which shows plain enough to even the dullest understanding that you had nothing to confess—"

"I, my lord? How so? It was I that killed the deer!"

"You *did* ? Oh, dear, this is the most mixed-up business that ever—"

"Dear lord, I begged him on my knees to confess, but—"

"You *did* ! It gets thicker and thicker. What did you want him to do that for?"

"Sith it would bring him a quick death and save him all this cruel pain."

"Well—yes, there is reason in that. But *he* didn't want the quick death."

"He? Why, of a surety he *did* ."

"Well, then, why in the world *didn't* he confess?"

"Ah, sweet sir, and leave my wife and chick without bread and shelter?"

"Oh, heart of gold, now I see it! The bitter law takes the convicted man's estate and beggars his widow and his orphans. They could torture you to death, but without conviction or confession they could not rob your wife and baby.

You stood by them like a man; and *you*—true wife and the woman that you are—you would have bought him release from torture at cost to yourself of slow starvation and death—well, it humbles a body to think what your sex can do when it comes to self-sacrifice. I'll book you both for my colony; you'll like it there; it's a Factory where I'm going to turn groping and grubbing automata into *men* ."

## CHAPTER XVIII. IN THE QUEEN'S DUNGEONS

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Well, I arranged all that; and I had the man sent to his home. I had a great desire to rack the executioner; not because he was a good, painstaking and paingiving official,—for surely it was not to his discredit that he performed his functions well—but to pay him back for wantonly cuffing and otherwise distressing that young woman. The priests told me about this, and were generously hot to have him punished. Something of this disagreeable sort was turning up every now and then. I mean, episodes that showed that not all priests were frauds and self-seekers, but that many, even the great majority, of these that were down on the ground among the common people, were sincere and right-hearted, and devoted to the alleviation of human troubles and sufferings. Well, it was a thing which could not be helped, so I seldom fretted about it, and never many minutes at a time; it has never been my way to bother much about things which you can't cure. But I did not like it, for it was just the sort of thing to keep people reconciled to an Established Church. We *must* have a religion—it goes without saying—but my idea is, to have it cut up into forty free sects, so that they will police each other, as had been the case in the United States in my time.

Concentration of power in a political machine is bad; and an Established Church is only a political machine; it was invented for that; it is nursed, cradled, preserved for that; it is an enemy to human liberty, and does no good which it could not better do in a split-up and scattered condition. That wasn't law; it wasn't gospel: it was only an opinion—my opinion, and I was only a man, one man: so it wasn't worth any more than the pope's—or any less, for that matter.

Well, I couldn't rack the executioner, neither would I overlook the just complaint of the priests. The man must be punished somehow or other, so I degraded him from his office and made him leader of the band—the new one that was to be started. He begged hard, and said he couldn't play—a plausible excuse, but too thin; there wasn't a musician in the country that could.

The queen was a good deal outraged, next morning when she found she was going to have neither Hugo's life nor his property. But I told her she must bear this cross; that while by law and custom she certainly was entitled to both the man's life and his property, there were extenuating circumstances, and so in

Arthur the king's name I had pardoned him. The deer was ravaging the man's fields, and he had killed it in sudden passion, and not for gain; and he had carried it into the royal forest in the hope that that might make detection of the misdoer impossible. Confound her, I couldn't make her see that sudden passion is an extenuating circumstance in the killing of venison—or of a person—so I gave it up and let her sulk it out. I *did* think I was going to make her see it by remarking that her own sudden passion in the case of the page modified that crime.

"Crime!" she exclaimed. "How thou talkest! Crime, forsooth! Man, I am going to *pay* for him!"

Oh, it was no use to waste sense on her. Training—training is everything; training is all there is *to* a person. We speak of nature; it is folly; there is no such thing as nature; what we call by that misleading name is merely heredity and training. We have no thoughts of our own, no opinions of our own; they are transmitted to us, trained into us. All that is original in us, and therefore fairly creditable or discreditable to us, can be covered up and hidden by the point of a cambric needle, all the rest being atoms contributed by, and inherited from, a procession of ancestors that stretches back a billion years to the Adam-clam or grasshopper or monkey from whom our race has been so tediously and ostentatiously and unprofitably developed. And as for me, all that I think about in this plodding sad pilgrimage, this pathetic drift between the eternities, is to look out and humbly live a pure and high and blameless life, and save that one microscopic atom in me that is truly *me* : the rest may land in Sheol and welcome for all I care.

No, confound her, her intellect was good, she had brains enough, but her training made her an ass—that is, from a many-centuries-later point of view. To kill the page was no crime—it was her right; and upon her right she stood, serenely and unconscious of offense. She was a result of generations of training in the unexamined and unassailed belief that the law which permitted her to kill a subject when she chose was a perfectly right and righteous one.

Well, we must give even Satan his due. She deserved a compliment for one thing; and I tried to pay it, but the words stuck in my throat. She had a right to kill the boy, but she was in no wise obliged to pay for him. That was law for some other people, but not for her. She knew quite well that she was doing a large and generous thing to pay for that lad, and that I ought in common fairness to come out with something handsome about it, but I couldn't—my mouth refused. I couldn't help seeing, in my fancy, that poor old grandma with the broken heart, and that fair young creature lying butchered, his little silken pomps and vanities laced with his golden blood. How could she *pay* for him! *Whom* could she pay? And so, well knowing that this woman, trained as she had been,

deserved praise, even adulation, I was yet not able to utter it, trained as I had been. The best I could do was to fish up a compliment from outside, so to speak—and the pity of it was, that it was true:

"Madame, your people will adore you for this."

Quite true, but I meant to hang her for it some day if I lived. Some of those laws were too bad, altogether too bad. A master might kill his slave for nothing—for mere spite, malice, or to pass the time—just as we have seen that the crowned head could do it with *his* slave, that is to say, anybody. A gentleman could kill a free commoner, and pay for him—cash or garden-truck. A noble could kill a noble without expense, as far as the law was concerned, but reprisals in kind were to be expected. *Any* body could kill *some* body, except the commoner and the slave; these had no privileges. If they killed, it was murder, and the law wouldn't stand murder. It made short work of the experimenter—and of his family, too, if he murdered somebody who belonged up among the ornamental ranks. If a commoner gave a noble even so much as a Damiens-scratch which didn't kill or even hurt, he got Damiens' dose for it just the same; they pulled him to rags and tatters with horses, and all the world came to see the show, and crack jokes, and have a good time; and some of the performances of the best people present were as tough, and as properly unprintable, as any that have been printed by the pleasant Casanova in his chapter about the dismemberment of Louis XV's poor awkward enemy.

I had had enough of this grisly place by this time, and wanted to leave, but I couldn't, because I had something on my mind that my conscience kept prodding me about, and wouldn't let me forget. If I had the remaking of man, he wouldn't have any conscience. It is one of the most disagreeable things connected with a person; and although it certainly does a great deal of good, it cannot be said to pay, in the long run; it would be much better to have less good and more comfort. Still, this is only my opinion, and I am only one man; others, with less experience, may think differently. They have a right to their view. I only stand to this: I have noticed my conscience for many years, and I know it is more trouble and bother to me than anything else I started with. I suppose that in the beginning I prized it, because we prize anything that is ours; and yet how foolish it was to think so. If we look at it in another way, we see how absurd it is: if I had an anvil in me would I prize it? Of course not. And yet when you come to think, there is no real difference between a conscience and an anvil—I mean for comfort. I have noticed it a thousand times. And you could dissolve an anvil with acids, when you couldn't stand it any longer; but there isn't any way that you can work off a conscience—at least so it will stay worked off; not that I know of, anyway.

There was something I wanted to do before leaving, but it was a disagreeable matter, and I hated to go at it. Well, it bothered me all the morning. I could have mentioned it to the old king, but what would be the use?—he was but an extinct volcano; he had been active in his time, but his fire was out, this good while, he was only a stately ash-pile now; gentle enough, and kindly enough for my purpose, without doubt, but not usable. He was nothing, this so-called king: the queen was the only power there. And she was a Vesuvius. As a favor, she might consent to warm a flock of sparrows for you, but then she might take that very opportunity to turn herself loose and bury a city. However, I reflected that as often as any other way, when you are expecting the worst, you get something that is not so bad, after all.

So I braced up and placed my matter before her royal Highness. I said I had been having a general jail-delivery at Camelot and among neighboring castles, and with her permission I would like to examine her collection, her bric-a-brac—that is to say, her prisoners. She resisted; but I was expecting that. But she finally consented. I was expecting that, too, but not so soon. That about ended my discomfort. She called her guards and torches, and we went down into the dungeons. These were down under the castle's foundations, and mainly were small cells hollowed out of the living rock. Some of these cells had no light at all. In one of them was a woman, in foul rags, who sat on the ground, and would not answer a question or speak a word, but only looked up at us once or twice, through a cobweb of tangled hair, as if to see what casual thing it might be that was disturbing with sound and light the meaningless dull dream that was become her life; after that, she sat bowed, with her dirt-caked fingers idly interlocked in her lap, and gave no further sign. This poor rack of bones was a woman of middle age, apparently; but only apparently; she had been there nine years, and was eighteen when she entered. She was a commoner, and had been sent here on her bridal night by Sir Breuse Sance Pite, a neighboring lord whose vassal her father was, and to which said lord she had refused what has since been called le droit du seigneur, and, moreover, had opposed violence to violence and spilt half a gill of his almost sacred blood. The young husband had interfered at that point, believing the bride's life in danger, and had flung the noble out into the midst of the humble and trembling wedding guests, in the parlor, and left him there astonished at this strange treatment, and implacably embittered against both bride and groom. The said lord being cramped for dungeon-room had asked the queen to accommodate his two criminals, and here in her bastille they had been ever since; hither, indeed, they had come before their crime was an hour old, and had never seen each other since. Here they were, kenneled like toads in the same rock; they had passed nine pitch dark years within fifty feet of



each other, yet neither knew whether the other was alive or not. All the first years, their only question had been—asked with beseechings and tears that might have moved stones, in time, perhaps, but hearts are not stones: "Is he alive?" "Is she alive?" But they had never got an answer; and at last that question was not asked any more—or any other.

I wanted to see the man, after hearing all this. He was thirty-four years old, and looked sixty. He sat upon a squared block of stone, with his head bent down, his forearms resting on his knees, his long hair hanging like a fringe before his face, and he was muttering to himself. He raised his chin and looked us slowly over, in a listless dull way, blinking with the distress of the torchlight, then dropped his head and fell to muttering again and took no further notice of us. There were some pathetically suggestive dumb witnesses present. On his wrists and ankles were cicatrices, old smooth scars, and fastened to the stone on which he sat was a chain with manacles and fetters attached; but this apparatus lay idle on the ground, and was thick with rust. Chains cease to be needed after the spirit has gone out of a prisoner.

I could not rouse the man; so I said we would take him to her, and see—to the bride who was the fairest thing in the earth to him, once—roses, pearls, and dew made flesh, for him; a wonder-work, the master-work of nature: with eyes like no other eyes, and voice like no other voice, and a freshness, and lithe young grace, and beauty, that belonged properly to the creatures of dreams—as he thought—and to no other. The sight of her would set his stagnant blood leaping; the sight of her—

But it was a disappointment. They sat together on the ground and looked dimly wondering into each other's faces a while, with a sort of weak animal curiosity; then forgot each other's presence, and dropped their eyes, and you saw that they were away again and wandering in some far land of dreams and shadows that we know nothing about.

I had them taken out and sent to their friends. The queen did not like it much. Not that she felt any personal interest in the matter, but she thought it disrespectful to Sir Breuse Sance Pite. However, I assured her that if he found he couldn't stand it I would fix him so that he could.

I set forty-seven prisoners loose out of those awful rat-holes, and left only one in captivity. He was a lord, and had killed another lord, a sort of kinsman of the queen. That other lord had ambushed him to assassinate him, but this fellow had got the best of him and cut his throat. However, it was not for that that I left him jailed, but for maliciously destroying the only public well in one of his wretched villages. The queen was bound to hang him for killing her kinsman, but I would not allow it: it was no crime to kill an assassin. But I said I was

willing to let her hang him for destroying the well; so she concluded to put up with that, as it was better than nothing.

Dear me, for what trifling offenses the most of those forty-seven men and women were shut up there! Indeed, some were there for no distinct offense at all, but only to gratify somebody's spite; and not always the queen's by any means, but a friend's. The newest prisoner's crime was a mere remark which he had made. He said he believed that men were about all alike, and one man as good as another, barring clothes. He said he believed that if you were to strip the nation naked and send a stranger through the crowd, he couldn't tell the king from a quack doctor, nor a duke from a hotel clerk. Apparently here was a man whose brains had not been reduced to an ineffectual mush by idiotic training. I set him loose and sent him to the Factory.

Some of the cells carved in the living rock were just behind the face of the precipice, and in each of these an arrow-slit had been pierced outward to the daylight, and so the captive had a thin ray from the blessed sun for his comfort.

The case of one of these poor fellows was particularly hard. From his dusky swallow's hole high up in that vast wall of native rock he could peer out through the arrow-slit and see his own home off yonder in the valley; and for twenty-two years he had watched it, with heartache and longing, through that crack. He could see the lights shine there at night, and in the daytime he could see figures go in and come out—his wife and children, some of them, no doubt, though he could not make out at that distance. In the course of years he noted festivities there, and tried to rejoice, and wondered if they were weddings or what they might be. And he noted funerals; and they wrung his heart. He could make out the coffin, but he could not determine its size, and so could not tell whether it was wife or child. He could see the procession form, with priests and mourners, and move solemnly away, bearing the secret with them. He had left behind him five children and a wife; and in nineteen years he had seen five funerals issue, and none of them humble enough in pomp to denote a servant. So he had lost five of his treasures; there must still be one remaining—one now infinitely, unspeakably precious,—but *which* one? wife, or child? That was the question that tortured him, by night and by day, asleep and awake. Well, to have an interest, of some sort, and half a ray of light, when you are in a dungeon, is a great support to the body and preserver of the intellect. This man was in pretty good condition yet. By the time he had finished telling me his distressful tale, I was in the same state of mind that you would have been in yourself, if you have got average human curiosity; that is to say, I was as burning up as he was to find out which member of the family it was that was left. So I took him over home myself; and an amazing kind of a surprise party it was, too—typhoons and

cyclones of frantic joy, and whole Niagaras of happy tears; and by George! we found the aforetime young matron graying toward the imminent verge of her half century, and the babies all men and women, and some of them married and experimenting familywise themselves—for not a soul of the tribe was dead!

Conceive of the ingenious devilishness of that queen: she had a special hatred for this prisoner, and she had *invented* all those funerals herself, to scorch his heart with; and the sublimest stroke of genius of the whole thing was leaving the family-invoice a funeral *short* , so as to let him wear his poor old soul out guessing.

But for me, he never would have got out. Morgan le Fay hated him with her whole heart, and she never would have softened toward him. And yet his crime was committed more in thoughtlessness than deliberate depravity. He had said she had red hair. Well, she had; but that was no way to speak of it. When red-headed people are above a certain social grade their hair is auburn.

Consider it: among these forty-seven captives there were five whose names, offenses, and dates of incarceration were no longer known! One woman and four men—all bent, and wrinkled, and mind-extinguished patriarchs. They themselves had long ago forgotten these details; at any rate they had mere vague theories about them, nothing definite and nothing that they repeated twice in the same way. The succession of priests whose office it had been to pray daily with the captives and remind them that God had put them there, for some wise purpose or other, and teach them that patience, humbleness, and submission to oppression was what He loved to see in parties of a subordinate rank, had traditions about these poor old human ruins, but nothing more. These traditions went but little way, for they concerned the length of the incarceration only, and not the names of the offenses. And even by the help of tradition the only thing that could be proven was that none of the five had seen daylight for thirty-five years: how much longer this privation has lasted was not guessable. The king and the queen knew nothing about these poor creatures, except that they were heirlooms, assets inherited, along with the throne, from the former firm.

Nothing of their history had been transmitted with their persons, and so the inheriting owners had considered them of no value, and had felt no interest in them. I said to the queen:

"Then why in the world didn't you set them free?"

The question was a puzzler. She didn't know *why* she hadn't, the thing had never come up in her mind. So here she was, forecasting the veritable history of future prisoners of the Castle d'If, without knowing it. It seemed plain to me now, that with her training, those inherited prisoners were merely property—nothing more, nothing less. Well, when we inherit property, it does not occur to

us to throw it away, even when we do not value it.

When I brought my procession of human bats up into the open world and the glare of the afternoon sun—previously blindfolding them, in charity for eyes so long untortured by light—they were a spectacle to look at. Skeletons, scarecrows, goblins, pathetic frights, every one; legitimatest possible children of Monarchy by the Grace of God and the Established Church. I muttered absently:

"I *wish* I could photograph them!"

You have seen that kind of people who will never let on that they don't know the meaning of a new big word. The more ignorant they are, the more pitifully certain they are to pretend you haven't shot over their heads. The queen was just one of that sort, and was always making the stupidest blunders by reason of it.

She hesitated a moment; then her face brightened up with sudden comprehension, and she said she would do it for me.

I thought to myself: She? why what can she know about photography? But it was a poor time to be thinking. When I looked around, she was moving on the procession with an axe!

Well, she certainly was a curious one, was Morgan le Fay. I have seen a good many kinds of women in my time, but she laid over them all for variety.

And how sharply characteristic of her this episode was. She had no more idea than a horse of how to photograph a procession; but being in doubt, it was just like her to try to do it with an axe.

## CHAPTER XIX. KNIGHT-ERRANTRY AS A TRADE

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Sandy and I were on the road again, next morning, bright and early. It was so good to open up one's lungs and take in whole luscious barrels-ful of the blessed God's untainted, dew-fashioned, woodland-scented air once more, after suffocating body and mind for two days and nights in the moral and physical stench of that intolerable old buzzard-roost! I mean, for me: of course the place was all right and agreeable enough for Sandy, for she had been used to high life all her days.

Poor girl, her jaws had had a wearisome rest now for a while, and I was expecting to get the consequences. I was right; but she had stood by me most helpfully in the castle, and had mightily supported and reinforced me with gigantic foolishnesses which were worth more for the occasion than wisdoms double their size; so I thought she had earned a right to work her mill for a while, if she wanted to, and I felt not a pang when she started it up:

"Now turn we unto Sir Marhaus that rode with the damsel of thirty winter of age southward—"

"Are you going to see if you can work up another half-stretch on the trail of the cowboys, Sandy?"

"Even so, fair my lord."

"Go ahead, then. I won't interrupt this time, if I can help it. Begin over again; start fair, and shake out all your reefs, and I will load my pipe and give good attention."

"Now turn we unto Sir Marhaus that rode with the damsel of thirty winter of age southward. And so they came into a deep forest, and by fortune they were nighted, and rode along in a deep way, and at the last they came into a courtelage where abode the duke of South Marches, and there they asked harbour. And on the morn the duke sent unto Sir Marhaus, and bad him make him ready. And so Sir Marhaus arose and armed him, and there was a mass sung afore him, and he brake his fast, and so mounted on horseback in the court of the castle, there they should do the battle. So there was the duke already on horseback, clean armed, and his six sons by him, and every each had a spear in his hand, and so they

encountered, whereas the duke and his two sons brake their spears upon him, but Sir Marhaus held up his spear and touched none of them. Then came the four sons by couples, and two of them brake their spears, and so did the other two. And all this while Sir Marhaus touched them not. Then Sir Marhaus ran to the duke, and smote him with his spear that horse and man fell to the earth. And so he served his sons. And then Sir Marhaus alight down, and bad the duke yield him or else he would slay him. And then some of his sons recovered, and would have set upon Sir Marhaus. Then Sir Marhaus said to the duke, Cease thy sons, or else I will do the uttermost to you all. When the duke saw he might not escape the death, he cried to his sons, and charged them to yield them to Sir Marhaus. And they kneeled all down and put the pommels of their swords to the knight, and so he received them. And then they help up their father, and so by their common assent promised unto Sir Marhaus never to be foes unto King Arthur, and thereupon at Whitsuntide after, to come he and his sons, and put them in the king's grace.\*

[\*Footnote: The story is borrowed, language and all, from the Morte d'Arthur.—M.T.]

"Even so standeth the history, fair Sir Boss. Now ye shall wit that that very duke and his six sons are they whom but few days past you also did overcome and send to Arthur's court!"

"Why, Sandy, you can't mean it!"

"An I speak not sooth, let it be the worse for me."

"Well, well, well,—now who would ever have thought it? One whole duke and six dukelets; why, Sandy, it was an elegant haul. Knight-errantry is a most chuckle-headed trade, and it is tedious hard work, too, but I begin to see that there *is* money in it, after all, if you have luck. Not that I would ever engage in it as a business, for I wouldn't. No sound and legitimate business can be established on a basis of speculation. A successful whirl in the knight-errantry line—now what is it when you blow away the nonsense and come down to the cold facts? It's just a corner in pork, that's all, and you can't make anything else out of it. You're rich—yes,—suddenly rich—for about a day, maybe a week; then somebody corners the market on *you*, and down goes your bucket-shop; ain't that so, Sandy?"

"Whethersoever it be that my mind miscarrieth, bewraying simple language in such sort that the words do seem to come endlong and overthwart—"

"There's no use in beating about the bush and trying to get around it that way, Sandy, it's *so*, just as I say. I *know* it's so. And, moreover, when you come right down to the bedrock, knight-errantry is *worse* than pork; for whatever happens, the pork's left, and so somebody's benefited anyway; but when the

market breaks, in a knight-errantry whirl, and every knight in the pool passes in his checks, what have you got for assets? Just a rubbish-pile of battered corpses and a barrel or two of busted hardware. Can you call *those* assets? Give me pork, every time. Am I right?"

"Ah, peradventure my head being distraught by the manifold matters whereunto the confusions of these but late adventured haps and fortunings whereby not I alone nor you alone, but every each of us, meseemeth—"

"No, it's not your head, Sandy. Your head's all right, as far as it goes, but you don't know business; that's where the trouble is. It unfits you to argue about business, and you're wrong to be always trying. However, that aside, it was a good haul, anyway, and will breed a handsome crop of reputation in Arthur's court. And speaking of the cowboys, what a curious country this is for women and men that never get old. Now there's Morgan le Fay, as fresh and young as a Vassar pullet, to all appearances, and here is this old duke of the South Marches still slashing away with sword and lance at his time of life, after raising such a family as he has raised. As I understand it, Sir Gawaine killed seven of his sons, and still he had six left for Sir Marhaus and me to take into camp. And then there was that damsel of sixty winter of age still excursioning around in her frosty bloom—How old are you, Sandy?"

It was the first time I ever struck a still place in her. The mill had shut down for repairs, or something.

## CHAPTER XX. THE OGRE'S CASTLE

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Between six and nine we made ten miles, which was plenty for a horse carrying triple—man, woman, and armor; then we stopped for a long nooning under some trees by a limpid brook.

Right so came by and by a knight riding; and as he drew near he made dolorous moan, and by the words of it I perceived that he was cursing and swearing; yet nevertheless was I glad of his coming, for that I saw he bore a bulletin-board whereon in letters all of shining gold was writ:

"USE PETERSON'S PROPHYLACTIC TOOTH-BRUSH—ALL THE GO."

I was glad of his coming, for even by this token I knew him for knight of mine. It was Sir Madok de la Montaine, a burly great fellow whose chief distinction was that he had come within an ace of sending Sir Launcelot down over his horse-tail once. He was never long in a stranger's presence without finding some pretext or other to let out that great fact. But there was another fact of nearly the same size, which he never pushed upon anybody unasked, and yet never withheld when asked: that was, that the reason he didn't quite succeed was, that he was interrupted and sent down over horse-tail himself. This innocent vast lubber did not see any particular difference between the two facts.

I liked him, for he was earnest in his work, and very valuable. And he was so fine to look at, with his broad mailed shoulders, and the grand leonine set of his plumed head, and his big shield with its quaint device of a gauntleted hand clutching a prophylactic tooth-brush, with motto: "Try Noyoudont." This was a tooth-wash that I was introducing.

He was aweary, he said, and indeed he looked it; but he would not alight. He said he was after the stove-polish man; and with this he broke out cursing and swearing anew. The bulletin-boarder referred to was Sir Ossaise of Surluse, a brave knight, and of considerable celebrity on account of his having tried conclusions in a tournament once, with no less a Mogul than Sir Gaheris himself—although not successfully. He was of a light and laughing disposition, and to him nothing in this world was serious. It was for this reason that I had chosen him to work up a stove-polish sentiment. There were no stoves yet, and so there



could be nothing serious about stove-polish. All that the agent needed to do was to deftly and by degrees prepare the public for the great change, and have them established in predilections toward neatness against the time when the stove should appear upon the stage.

Sir Madok was very bitter, and brake out anew with cursings. He said he had cursed his soul to rags; and yet he would not get down from his horse, neither would he take any rest, or listen to any comfort, until he should have found Sir Ossaie and settled this account. It appeared, by what I could piece together of the unprofane fragments of his statement, that he had chanced upon Sir Ossaie at dawn of the morning, and been told that if he would make a short cut across the fields and swamps and broken hills and glades, he could head off a company of travelers who would be rare customers for prophylactics and tooth-wash. With characteristic zeal Sir Madok had plunged away at once upon this quest, and after three hours of awful crosslot riding had overhauled his game.

And behold, it was the five patriarchs that had been released from the dungeons the evening before! Poor old creatures, it was all of twenty years since any one of them had known what it was to be equipped with any remaining snag or remnant of a tooth.

"Blank-blank-blank him," said Sir Madok, "an I do not stove-polish him an I may find him, leave it to me; for never no knight that hight Ossaie or aught else may do me this disservice and bide on live, an I may find him, the which I have thereunto sworn a great oath this day."

And with these words and others, he lightly took his spear and gat him thence. In the middle of the afternoon we came upon one of those very patriarchs ourselves, in the edge of a poor village. He was basking in the love of relatives and friends whom he had not seen for fifty years; and about him and caressing him were also descendants of his own body whom he had never seen at all till now; but to him these were all strangers, his memory was gone, his mind was stagnant. It seemed incredible that a man could outlast half a century shut up in a dark hole like a rat, but here were his old wife and some old comrades to testify to it. They could remember him as he was in the freshness and strength of his young manhood, when he kissed his child and delivered it to its mother's hands and went away into that long oblivion. The people at the castle could not tell within half a generation the length of time the man had been shut up there for his unrecorded and forgotten offense; but this old wife knew; and so did her old child, who stood there among her married sons and daughters trying to realize a father who had been to her a name, a thought, a formless image, a tradition, all her life, and now was suddenly concreted into actual flesh and blood and set before her face.

It was a curious situation; yet it is not on that account that I have made room for it here, but on account of a thing which seemed to me still more curious. To wit, that this dreadful matter brought from these downtrodden people no outburst of rage against these oppressors. They had been heritors and subjects of cruelty and outrage so long that nothing could have startled them but a kindness. Yes, here was a curious revelation, indeed, of the depth to which this people had been sunk in slavery. Their entire being was reduced to a monotonous dead level of patience, resignation, dumb uncomplaining acceptance of whatever might befall them in this life. Their very imagination was dead. When you can say that of a man, he has struck bottom, I reckon; there is no lower deep for him.

I rather wished I had gone some other road. This was not the sort of experience for a statesman to encounter who was planning out a peaceful revolution in his mind. For it could not help bringing up the unget-aroundable fact that, all gentle cant and philosophizing to the contrary notwithstanding, no people in the world ever did achieve their freedom by goody-goody talk and moral suasion: it being immutable law that all revolutions that will succeed must *begin* in blood, whatever may answer afterward. If history teaches anything, it teaches that. What this folk needed, then, was a Reign of Terror and a guillotine, and I was the wrong man for them.

Two days later, toward noon, Sandy began to show signs of excitement and feverish expectancy. She said we were approaching the ogre's castle. I was surprised into an uncomfortable shock. The object of our quest had gradually dropped out of my mind; this sudden resurrection of it made it seem quite a real and startling thing for a moment, and roused up in me a smart interest. Sandy's excitement increased every moment; and so did mine, for that sort of thing is catching. My heart got to thumping. You can't reason with your heart; it has its own laws, and thumps about things which the intellect scorns. Presently, when Sandy slid from the horse, motioned me to stop, and went creeping stealthily, with her head bent nearly to her knees, toward a row of bushes that bordered a declivity, the thumpings grew stronger and quicker. And they kept it up while she was gaining her ambush and getting her glimpse over the declivity; and also while I was creeping to her side on my knees. Her eyes were burning now, as she pointed with her finger, and said in a panting whisper:

"The castle! The castle! Lo, where it looms!"

What a welcome disappointment I experienced! I said:

"Castle? It is nothing but a pigsty; a pigsty with a wattled fence around it."

She looked surprised and distressed. The animation faded out of her face; and during many moments she was lost in thought and silent. Then:

"It was not enchanted aforetime," she said in a musing fashion, as if to

herself. "And how strange is this marvel, and how awful—that to the one perception it is enchanted and dight in a base and shameful aspect; yet to the perception of the other it is not enchanted, hath suffered no change, but stands firm and stately still, girt with its moat and waving its banners in the blue air from its towers. And God shield us, how it pricks the heart to see again these gracious captives, and the sorrow deepened in their sweet faces! We have tarried along, and are to blame."

I saw my cue. The castle was enchanted to *me*, not to her. It would be wasted time to try to argue her out of her delusion, it couldn't be done; I must just humor it. So I said:

"This is a common case—the enchanting of a thing to one eye and leaving it in its proper form to another. You have heard of it before, Sandy, though you haven't happened to experience it. But no harm is done. In fact, it is lucky the way it is. If these ladies were hogs to everybody and to themselves, it would be necessary to break the enchantment, and that might be impossible if one failed to find out the particular process of the enchantment. And hazardous, too; for in attempting a disenchantment without the true key, you are liable to err, and turn your hogs into dogs, and the dogs into cats, the cats into rats, and so on, and end by reducing your materials to nothing finally, or to an odorless gas which you can't follow—which, of course, amounts to the same thing. But here, by good luck, no one's eyes but mine are under the enchantment, and so it is of no consequence to dissolve it. These ladies remain ladies to you, and to themselves, and to everybody else; and at the same time they will suffer in no way from my delusion, for when I know that an ostensible hog is a lady, that is enough for me, I know how to treat her."

"Thanks, oh, sweet my lord, thou talkest like an angel. And I know that thou wilt deliver them, for that thou art minded to great deeds and art as strong a knight of your hands and as brave to will and to do, as any that is on live."

"I will not leave a princess in the sty, Sandy. Are those three yonder that to my disordered eyes are starveling swine-herds—"

"The ogres, Are *they* changed also? It is most wonderful. Now am I fearful; for how canst thou strike with sure aim when five of their nine cubits of stature are to thee invisible? Ah, go warily, fair sir; this is a mightier emprise than I wend."

"You be easy, Sandy. All I need to know is, how *much* of an ogre is invisible; then I know how to locate his vitals. Don't you be afraid, I will make short work of these bunco-steerers. Stay where you are."

I left Sandy kneeling there, corpse-faced but plucky and hopeful, and rode down to the pigsty, and struck up a trade with the swine-herds. I won their

gratitude by buying out all the hogs at the lump sum of sixteen pennies, which was rather above latest quotations. I was just in time; for the Church, the lord of the manor, and the rest of the tax-gatherers would have been along next day and swept off pretty much all the stock, leaving the swine-herds very short of hogs and Sandy out of princesses. But now the tax people could be paid in cash, and there would be a stake left besides. One of the men had ten children; and he said that last year when a priest came and of his ten pigs took the fattest one for tithes, the wife burst out upon him, and offered him a child and said:

"Thou beast without bowels of mercy, why leave me my child, yet rob me of the wherewithal to feed it?"

How curious. The same thing had happened in the Wales of my day, under this same old Established Church, which was supposed by many to have changed its nature when it changed its disguise.

I sent the three men away, and then opened the sty gate and beckoned Sandy to come—which she did; and not leisurely, but with the rush of a prairie fire.

And when I saw her fling herself upon those hogs, with tears of joy running down her cheeks, and strain them to her heart, and kiss them, and caress them, and call them reverently by grand princely names, I was ashamed of her, ashamed of the human race.

We had to drive those hogs home—ten miles; and no ladies were ever more fickle-minded or contrary. They would stay in no road, no path; they broke out through the brush on all sides, and flowed away in all directions, over rocks, and hills, and the roughest places they could find. And they must not be struck, or roughly accosted; Sandy could not bear to see them treated in ways unbecoming their rank. The troublesomest old sow of the lot had to be called my Lady, and your Highness, like the rest. It is annoying and difficult to scour around after hogs, in armor. There was one small countess, with an iron ring in her snout and hardly any hair on her back, that was the devil for perversity. She gave me a race of an hour, over all sorts of country, and then we were right where we had started from, having made not a rod of real progress. I seized her at last by the tail, and brought her along squealing. When I overtook Sandy she was horrified, and said it was in the last degree indelicate to drag a countess by her train.

We got the hogs home just at dark—most of them. The princess Nerovens de Morganore was missing, and two of her ladies in waiting; namely, Miss Angela Bohun, and the Demoiselle Elaine Courtemains, the former of these two being a young black sow with a white star in her forehead, and the latter a brown one with thin legs and a slight limp in the forward shank on the starboard side—a couple of the tryingest blisters to drive that I ever saw. Also among the missing were several mere baronesses—and I wanted them to stay missing; but

no, all that sausage-meat had to be found; so servants were sent out with torches to scour the woods and hills to that end.

Of course, the whole drove was housed in the house, and, great guns!—well, I never saw anything like it. Nor ever heard anything like it. And never smelt anything like it. It was like an insurrection in a gasometer.

## CHAPTER XXI. THE PILGRIMS

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When I did get to bed at last I was unspeakably tired; the stretching out, and the relaxing of the long-tense muscles, how luxurious, how delicious! but that was as far as I could get—sleep was out of the question for the present. The ripping and tearing and squealing of the nobility up and down the halls and corridors was pandemonium come again, and kept me broad awake. Being awake, my thoughts were busy, of course; and mainly they busied themselves with Sandy's curious delusion. Here she was, as sane a person as the kingdom could produce; and yet, from my point of view she was acting like a crazy woman. My land, the power of training! of influence! of education! It can bring a body up to believe anything. I had to put myself in Sandy's place to realize that she was not a lunatic. Yes, and put her in mine, to demonstrate how easy it is to seem a lunatic to a person who has not been taught as you have been taught.

If I had told Sandy I had seen a wagon, uninfluenced by enchantment, spin along fifty miles an hour; had seen a man, unequipped with magic powers, get into a basket and soar out of sight among the clouds; and had listened, without any necromancer's help, to the conversation of a person who was several hundred miles away, Sandy would not merely have supposed me to be crazy, she would have thought she knew it. Everybody around her believed in enchantments; nobody had any doubts; to doubt that a castle could be turned into a sty, and its occupants into hogs, would have been the same as my doubting among Connecticut people the actuality of the telephone and its wonders,—and in both cases would be absolute proof of a diseased mind, an unsettled reason.

Yes, Sandy was sane; that must be admitted. If I also would be sane—to Sandy—I must keep my superstitions about unenchanted and unmiraculous locomotives, balloons, and telephones, to myself. Also, I believed that the world was not flat, and hadn't pillars under it to support it, nor a canopy over it to turn off a universe of water that occupied all space above; but as I was the only person in the kingdom afflicted with such impious and criminal opinions, I recognized that it would be good wisdom to keep quiet about this matter, too, if I did not wish to be suddenly shunned and forsaken by everybody as a madman.

The next morning Sandy assembled the swine in the dining-room and gave

them their breakfast, waiting upon them personally and manifesting in every way the deep reverence which the natives of her island, ancient and modern, have always felt for rank, let its outward casket and the mental and moral contents be what they may. I could have eaten with the hogs if I had had birth approaching my lofty official rank; but I hadn't, and so accepted the unavoidable slight and made no complaint. Sandy and I had our breakfast at the second table. The family were not at home. I said:

"How many are in the family, Sandy, and where do they keep themselves?"

"Family?"

"Yes."

"Which family, good my lord?"

"Why, this family; your own family."

"Sooth to say, I understand you not. I have no family."

"No family? Why, Sandy, isn't this your home?"

"Now how indeed might that be? I have no home."

"Well, then, whose house is this?"

"Ah, wit you well I would tell you an I knew myself."

"Come—you don't even know these people? Then who invited us here?"

"None invited us. We but came; that is all."

"Why, woman, this is a most extraordinary performance. The effrontery of it is beyond admiration. We blandly march into a man's house, and cram it full of the only really valuable nobility the sun has yet discovered in the earth, and then it turns out that we don't even know the man's name. How did you ever venture to take this extravagant liberty? I supposed, of course, it was your home. What will the man say?"

"What will he say? Forsooth what can he say but give thanks?"

"Thanks for what?"

Her face was filled with a puzzled surprise:

"Verily, thou troublest mine understanding with strange words. Do ye dream that one of his estate is like to have the honor twice in his life to entertain company such as we have brought to grace his house withal?"

"Well, no—when you come to that. No, it's an even bet that this is the first time he has had a treat like this."

"Then let him be thankful, and manifest the same by grateful speech and due humility; he were a dog, else, and the heir and ancestor of dogs."

To my mind, the situation was uncomfortable. It might become more so. It might be a good idea to muster the hogs and move on. So I said:

"The day is wasting, Sandy. It is time to get the nobility together and be moving."

"Wherefore, fair sir and Boss?"

"We want to take them to their home, don't we?"

"La, but list to him! They be of all the regions of the earth! Each must hie to her own home; wend you we might do all these journeys in one so brief life as He hath appointed that created life, and thereto death likewise with help of Adam, who by sin done through persuasion of his helpmeet, she being wrought upon and bewrayed by the beguilements of the great enemy of man, that serpent hight Satan, aforetime consecrated and set apart unto that evil work by overmastering spite and envy begotten in his heart through fell ambitions that did blight and mildew a nature erst so white and pure whenso it hove with the shining multitudes its brethren-born in glade and shade of that fair heaven wherein all such as native be to that rich estate and—"

"Great Scott!"

"My lord?"

"Well, you know we haven't got time for this sort of thing. Don't you see, we could distribute these people around the earth in less time than it is going to take you to explain that we can't. We mustn't talk now, we must act. You want to be careful; you mustn't let your mill get the start of you that way, at a time like this. To business now—and sharp's the word. Who is to take the aristocracy home?"

"Even their friends. These will come for them from the far parts of the earth."

This was lightning from a clear sky, for unexpectedness; and the relief of it was like pardon to a prisoner. She would remain to deliver the goods, of course.

"Well, then, Sandy, as our enterprise is handsomely and successfully ended, I will go home and report; and if ever another one—"

"I also am ready; I will go with thee."

This was recalling the pardon.

"How? You will go with me? Why should you?"

"Will I be traitor to my knight, dost think? That were dishonor. I may not part from thee until in knightly encounter in the field some overmatching champion shall fairly win and fairly wear me. I were to blame an I thought that that might ever hap."

"Elected for the long term," I sighed to myself. "I may as well make the best of it." So then I spoke up and said:

"All right; let us make a start."

While she was gone to cry her farewells over the pork, I gave that whole peerage away to the servants. And I asked them to take a duster and dust around a little where the nobilities had mainly lodged and promenaded; but they



considered that that would be hardly worth while, and would moreover be a rather grave departure from custom, and therefore likely to make talk. A departure from custom—that settled it; it was a nation capable of committing any crime but that. The servants said they would follow the fashion, a fashion grown sacred through immemorial observance; they would scatter fresh rushes in all the rooms and halls, and then the evidence of the aristocratic visitation would be no longer visible. It was a kind of satire on Nature: it was the scientific method, the geologic method; it deposited the history of the family in a stratified record; and the antiquary could dig through it and tell by the remains of each period what changes of diet the family had introduced successively for a hundred years.

The first thing we struck that day was a procession of pilgrims. It was not going our way, but we joined it, nevertheless; for it was hourly being borne in upon me now, that if I would govern this country wisely, I must be posted in the details of its life, and not at second hand, but by personal observation and scrutiny.

This company of pilgrims resembled Chaucer's in this: that it had in it a sample of about all the upper occupations and professions the country could show, and a corresponding variety of costume. There were young men and old men, young women and old women, lively folk and grave folk. They rode upon mules and horses, and there was not a side-saddle in the party; for this specialty was to remain unknown in England for nine hundred years yet.

It was a pleasant, friendly, sociable herd; pious, happy, merry and full of unconscious coarsenesses and innocent indecencies. What they regarded as the merry tale went the continual round and caused no more embarrassment than it would have caused in the best English society twelve centuries later. Practical jokes worthy of the English wits of the first quarter of the far-off nineteenth century were sprung here and there and yonder along the line, and compelled the delightedest applause; and sometimes when a bright remark was made at one end of the procession and started on its travels toward the other, you could note its progress all the way by the sparkling spray of laughter it threw off from its bows as it plowed along; and also by the blushes of the mules in its wake.

Sandy knew the goal and purpose of this pilgrimage, and she posted me. She said:

"They journey to the Valley of Holiness, for to be blessed of the godly hermits and drink of the miraculous waters and be cleansed from sin."

"Where is this watering place?"

"It lieth a two-day journey hence, by the borders of the land that hight the Cuckoo Kingdom."

"Tell me about it. Is it a celebrated place?"

"Oh, of a truth, yes. There be none more so. Of old time there lived there an abbot and his monks. Belike were none in the world more holy than these; for they gave themselves to study of pious books, and spoke not the one to the other, or indeed to any, and ate decayed herbs and naught thereto, and slept hard, and prayed much, and washed never; also they wore the same garment until it fell from their bodies through age and decay. Right so came they to be known of all the world by reason of these holy austerities, and visited by rich and poor, and revered."

"Proceed."

"But always there was lack of water there. Whereas, upon a time, the holy abbot prayed, and for answer a great stream of clear water burst forth by miracle in a desert place. Now were the fickle monks tempted of the Fiend, and they wrought with their abbot unceasingly by beggings and beseechings that he would construct a bath; and when he was become weary and might not resist more, he said have ye your will, then, and granted that they asked. Now mark thou what 'tis to forsake the ways of purity the which He loveth, and wanton with such as be worldly and an offense. These monks did enter into the bath and come thence washed as white as snow; and lo, in that moment His sign appeared, in miraculous rebuke! for His insulted waters ceased to flow, and utterly vanished away."

"They fared mildly, Sandy, considering how that kind of crime is regarded in this country."

"Belike; but it was their first sin; and they had been of perfect life for long, and differing in naught from the angels. Prayers, tears, torturings of the flesh, all was vain to beguile that water to flow again. Even processions; even burnt-offerings; even votive candles to the Virgin, did fail every each of them; and all in the land did marvel."

"How odd to find that even this industry has its financial panics, and at times sees its assignats and greenbacks languish to zero, and everything come to a standstill. Go on, Sandy."

"And so upon a time, after year and day, the good abbot made humble surrender and destroyed the bath. And behold, His anger was in that moment appeased, and the waters gushed richly forth again, and even unto this day they have not ceased to flow in that generous measure."

"Then I take it nobody has washed since."

"He that would essay it could have his halter free; yes, and swiftly would he need it, too."

"The community has prospered since?"

"Even from that very day. The fame of the miracle went abroad into all lands. From every land came monks to join; they came even as the fishes come, in shoals; and the monastery added building to building, and yet others to these, and so spread wide its arms and took them in. And nuns came, also; and more again, and yet more; and built over against the monastery on the yon side of the vale, and added building to building, until mighty was that nunnery. And these were friendly unto those, and they joined their loving labors together, and together they built a fair great foundling asylum midway of the valley between."

"You spoke of some hermits, Sandy."

"These have gathered there from the ends of the earth. A hermit thriveth best where there be multitudes of pilgrims. Ye shall not find no hermit of no sort wanting. If any shall mention a hermit of a kind he thinketh new and not to be found but in some far strange land, let him but scratch among the holes and caves and swamps that line that Valley of Holiness, and whatsoever be his breed, it skills not, he shall find a sample of it there."

I closed up alongside of a burly fellow with a fat good-humored face, purposing to make myself agreeable and pick up some further crumbs of fact; but I had hardly more than scraped acquaintance with him when he began eagerly and awkwardly to lead up, in the immemorial way, to that same old anecdote—the one Sir Dinadan told me, what time I got into trouble with Sir Sagramor and was challenged of him on account of it. I excused myself and dropped to the rear of the procession, sad at heart, willing to go hence from this troubled life, this vale of tears, this brief day of broken rest, of cloud and storm, of weary struggle and monotonous defeat; and yet shrinking from the change, as remembering how long eternity is, and how many have wended thither who know that anecdote.

Early in the afternoon we overtook another procession of pilgrims; but in this one was no merriment, no jokes, no laughter, no playful ways, nor any happy giddiness, whether of youth or age. Yet both were here, both age and youth; gray old men and women, strong men and women of middle age, young husbands, young wives, little boys and girls, and three babies at the breast. Even the children were smileless; there was not a face among all these half a hundred people but was cast down, and bore that set expression of hopelessness which is bred of long and hard trials and old acquaintance with despair. They were slaves. Chains led from their fettered feet and their manacled hands to a sole-leather belt about their waists; and all except the children were also linked together in a file six feet apart, by a single chain which led from collar to collar all down the line. They were on foot, and had tramped three hundred miles in eighteen days, upon the cheapest odds and ends of food, and stingy rations of

that. They had slept in these chains every night, bundled together like swine. They had upon their bodies some poor rags, but they could not be said to be clothed. Their irons had chafed the skin from their ankles and made sores which were ulcerated and wormy. Their naked feet were torn, and none walked without a limp. Originally there had been a hundred of these unfortunates, but about half had been sold on the trip. The trader in charge of them rode a horse and carried a whip with a short handle and a long heavy lash divided into several knotted tails at the end. With this whip he cut the shoulders of any that tottered from weariness and pain, and straightened them up. He did not speak; the whip conveyed his desire without that. None of these poor creatures looked up as we rode along by; they showed no consciousness of our presence. And they made no sound but one; that was the dull and awful clank of their chains from end to end of the long file, as forty-three burdened feet rose and fell in unison. The file moved in a cloud of its own making.

All these faces were gray with a coating of dust. One has seen the like of this coating upon furniture in unoccupied houses, and has written his idle thought in it with his finger. I was reminded of this when I noticed the faces of some of those women, young mothers carrying babes that were near to death and freedom, how a something in their hearts was written in the dust upon their faces, plain to see, and lord, how plain to read! for it was the track of tears. One of these young mothers was but a girl, and it hurt me to the heart to read that writing, and reflect that it was come up out of the breast of such a child, a breast that ought not to know trouble yet, but only the gladness of the morning of life; and no doubt—

She reeled just then, giddy with fatigue, and down came the lash and flicked a flake of skin from her naked shoulder. It stung me as if I had been hit instead. The master halted the file and jumped from his horse. He stormed and swore at this girl, and said she had made annoyance enough with her laziness, and as this was the last chance he should have, he would settle the account now. She dropped on her knees and put up her hands and began to beg, and cry, and implore, in a passion of terror, but the master gave no attention. He snatched the child from her, and then made the men-slaves who were chained before and behind her throw her on the ground and hold her there and expose her body; and then he laid on with his lash like a madman till her back was flayed, she shrieking and struggling the while piteously. One of the men who was holding her turned away his face, and for this humanity he was reviled and flogged.

All our pilgrims looked on and commented—on the expert way in which the whip was handled. They were too much hardened by lifelong everyday familiarity with slavery to notice that there was anything else in the exhibition

that invited comment. This was what slavery could do, in the way of ossifying what one may call the superior lobe of human feeling; for these pilgrims were kind-hearted people, and they would not have allowed that man to treat a horse like that.

I wanted to stop the whole thing and set the slaves free, but that would not do. I must not interfere too much and get myself a name for riding over the country's laws and the citizen's rights roughshod. If I lived and prospered I would be the death of slavery, that I was resolved upon; but I would try to fix it so that when I became its executioner it should be by command of the nation.

Just here was the wayside shop of a smith; and now arrived a landed proprietor who had bought this girl a few miles back, deliverable here where her irons could be taken off. They were removed; then there was a squabble between the gentleman and the dealer as to which should pay the blacksmith.

The moment the girl was delivered from her irons, she flung herself, all tears and frantic sobbings, into the arms of the slave who had turned away his face when she was whipped. He strained her to his breast, and smothered her face and the child's with kisses, and washed them with the rain of his tears. I suspected. I inquired. Yes, I was right; it was husband and wife. They had to be torn apart by force; the girl had to be dragged away, and she struggled and fought and shrieked like one gone mad till a turn of the road hid her from sight; and even after that, we could still make out the fading plaint of those receding shrieks. And the husband and father, with his wife and child gone, never to be seen by him again in life?—well, the look of him one might not bear at all, and so I turned away; but I knew I should never get his picture out of my mind again, and there it is to this day, to wring my heartstrings whenever I think of it.

We put up at the inn in a village just at nightfall, and when I rose next morning and looked abroad, I was ware where a knight came riding in the golden glory of the new day, and recognized him for knight of mine—Sir Ozana le Cure Hardy. He was in the gentlemen's furnishing line, and his missionarying specialty was plug hats. He was clothed all in steel, in the beautifullest armor of the time—up to where his helmet ought to have been; but he hadn't any helmet, he wore a shiny stove-pipe hat, and was ridiculous a spectacle as one might want to see. It was another of my surreptitious schemes for extinguishing knighthood by making it grotesque and absurd. Sir Ozana's saddle was hung about with leather hat boxes, and every time he overcame a wandering knight he swore him into my service and fitted him with a plug and made him wear it. I dressed and ran down to welcome Sir Ozana and get his news.

"How is trade?" I asked.

"Ye will note that I have but these four left; yet were they sixteen whenas I

got me from Camelot."

"Why, you have certainly done nobly, Sir Ozana. Where have you been foraging of late?"

"I am but now come from the Valley of Holiness, please you sir."

"I am pointed for that place myself. Is there anything stirring in the monkery, more than common?"

"By the mass ye may not question it!.... Give him good feed, boy, and stint it not, an thou valuest thy crown; so get ye lightly to the stable and do even as I bid.... Sir, it is parlous news I bring, and—be these pilgrims? Then ye may not do better, good folk, than gather and hear the tale I have to tell, sith it concerneth you, forasmuch as ye go to find that ye will not find, and seek that ye will seek in vain, my life being hostage for my word, and my word and message being these, namely: That a hap has happened whereof the like has not been seen no more but once this two hundred years, which was the first and last time that that said misfortune strake the holy valley in that form by commandment of the Most High whereto by reasons just and causes thereunto contributing, wherein the matter—"

"The miraculous fount hath ceased to flow!" This shout burst from twenty pilgrim mouths at once.

"Ye say well, good people. I was verging to it, even when ye spake."

"Has somebody been washing again?"

"Nay, it is suspected, but none believe it. It is thought to be some other sin, but none wit what."

"How are they feeling about the calamity?"

"None may describe it in words. The fount is these nine days dry. The prayers that did begin then, and the lamentations in sackcloth and ashes, and the holy processions, none of these have ceased nor night nor day; and so the monks and the nuns and the foundlings be all exhausted, and do hang up prayers writ upon parchment, sith that no strength is left in man to lift up voice. And at last they sent for thee, Sir Boss, to try magic and enchantment; and if you could not come, then was the messenger to fetch Merlin, and he is there these three days now, and saith he will fetch that water though he burst the globe and wreck its kingdoms to accomplish it; and right bravely doth he work his magic and call upon his hellions to hie them hither and help, but not a whiff of moisture hath he started yet, even so much as might qualify as mist upon a copper mirror an ye count not the barrel of sweat he sweateth betwixt sun and sun over the dire labors of his task; and if ye—"

Breakfast was ready. As soon as it was over I showed to Sir Ozana these words which I had written on the inside of his hat: "Chemical Department,

Laboratory extension, Section G. Pxxp. Send two of first size, two of No. 3, and six of No. 4, together with the proper complementary details—and two of my trained assistants." And I said:

"Now get you to Camelot as fast as you can fly, brave knight, and show the writing to Clarence, and tell him to have these required matters in the Valley of Holiness with all possible dispatch."

"I will well, Sir Boss," and he was off.

## CHAPTER XXII. THE HOLY FOUNTAIN

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The pilgrims were human beings. Otherwise they would have acted differently. They had come a long and difficult journey, and now when the journey was nearly finished, and they learned that the main thing they had come for had ceased to exist, they didn't do as horses or cats or angle-worms would probably have done—turn back and get at something profitable—no, anxious as they had before been to see the miraculous fountain, they were as much as forty times as anxious now to see the place where it had used to be. There is no accounting for human beings.

We made good time; and a couple of hours before sunset we stood upon the high confines of the Valley of Holiness, and our eyes swept it from end to end and noted its features. That is, its large features. These were the three masses of buildings. They were distant and isolated temporalities shrunken to toy constructions in the lonely waste of what seemed a desert—and was. Such a scene is always mournful, it is so impressively still, and looks so steeped in death. But there was a sound here which interrupted the stillness only to add to its mournfulness; this was the faint far sound of tolling bells which floated fitfully to us on the passing breeze, and so faintly, so softly, that we hardly knew whether we heard it with our ears or with our spirits.

We reached the monastery before dark, and there the males were given lodging, but the women were sent over to the nunnery. The bells were close at hand now, and their solemn booming smote upon the ear like a message of doom. A superstitious despair possessed the heart of every monk and published itself in his ghastly face. Everywhere, these black-robed, soft-sandaled, tallow-visaged specters appeared, flitted about and disappeared, noiseless as the creatures of a troubled dream, and as uncanny.

The old abbot's joy to see me was pathetic. Even to tears; but he did the shedding himself. He said:

"Delay not, son, but get to thy saving work. An we bring not the water back again, and soon, we are ruined, and the good work of two hundred years must end. And see thou do it with enchantments that be holy, for the Church will not endure that work in her cause be done by devil's magic."



"When I work, Father, be sure there will be no devil's work connected with it. I shall use no arts that come of the devil, and no elements not created by the hand of God. But is Merlin working strictly on pious lines?"

"Ah, he said he would, my son, he said he would, and took oath to make his promise good."

"Well, in that case, let him proceed."

"But surely you will not sit idle by, but help?"

"It will not answer to mix methods, Father; neither would it be professional courtesy. Two of a trade must not underbid each other. We might as well cut rates and be done with it; it would arrive at that in the end. Merlin has the contract; no other magician can touch it till he throws it up."

"But I will take it from him; it is a terrible emergency and the act is thereby justified. And if it were not so, who will give law to the Church? The Church giveth law to all; and what she wills to do, that she may do, hurt whom it may. I will take it from him; you shall begin upon the moment."

"It may not be, Father. No doubt, as you say, where power is supreme, one can do as one likes and suffer no injury; but we poor magicians are not so situated. Merlin is a very good magician in a small way, and has quite a neat provincial reputation. He is struggling along, doing the best he can, and it would not be etiquette for me to take his job until he himself abandons it."

The abbot's face lighted.

"Ah, that is simple. There are ways to persuade him to abandon it."

"No-no, Father, it skills not, as these people say. If he were persuaded against his will, he would load that well with a malicious enchantment which would balk me until I found out its secret. It might take a month. I could set up a little enchantment of mine which I call the telephone, and he could not find out its secret in a hundred years. Yes, you perceive, he might block me for a month. Would you like to risk a month in a dry time like this?"

"A month! The mere thought of it maketh me to shudder. Have it thy way, my son. But my heart is heavy with this disappointment. Leave me, and let me wear my spirit with weariness and waiting, even as I have done these ten long days, counterfeiting thus the thing that is called rest, the prone body making outward sign of repose where inwardly is none."

Of course, it would have been best, all round, for Merlin to waive etiquette and quit and call it half a day, since he would never be able to start that water, for he was a true magician of the time; which is to say, the big miracles, the ones that gave him his reputation, always had the luck to be performed when nobody but Merlin was present; he couldn't start this well with all this crowd around to see; a crowd was as bad for a magician's miracle in that day as it was for a

spiritualist's miracle in mine; there was sure to be some skeptic on hand to turn up the gas at the crucial moment and spoil everything. But I did not want Merlin to retire from the job until I was ready to take hold of it effectively myself; and I could not do that until I got my things from Camelot, and that would take two or three days.

My presence gave the monks hope, and cheered them up a good deal; inasmuch that they ate a square meal that night for the first time in ten days. As soon as their stomachs had been properly reinforced with food, their spirits began to rise fast; when the mead began to go round they rose faster. By the time everybody was half-seas over, the holy community was in good shape to make a night of it; so we stayed by the board and put it through on that line.

Matters got to be very jolly. Good old questionable stories were told that made the tears run down and cavernous mouths stand wide and the round bellies shake with laughter; and questionable songs were bellowed out in a mighty chorus that drowned the boom of the tolling bells.

At last I ventured a story myself; and vast was the success of it. Not right off, of course, for the native of those islands does not, as a rule, dissolve upon the early applications of a humorous thing; but the fifth time I told it, they began to crack in places; the eighth time I told it, they began to crumble; at the twelfth repetition they fell apart in chunks; and at the fifteenth they disintegrated, and I got a broom and swept them up. This language is figurative. Those islanders—well, they are slow pay at first, in the matter of return for your investment of effort, but in the end they make the pay of all other nations poor and small by contrast.

I was at the well next day betimes. Merlin was there, enchanting away like a beaver, but not raising the moisture. He was not in a pleasant humor; and every time I hinted that perhaps this contract was a shade too hefty for a novice he unlimbered his tongue and cursed like a bishop—French bishop of the Regency days, I mean.

Matters were about as I expected to find them. The "fountain" was an ordinary well, it had been dug in the ordinary way, and stoned up in the ordinary way. There was no miracle about it. Even the lie that had created its reputation was not miraculous; I could have told it myself, with one hand tied behind me.

The well was in a dark chamber which stood in the center of a cut-stone chapel, whose walls were hung with pious pictures of a workmanship that would have made a chromo feel good; pictures historically commemorative of curative miracles which had been achieved by the waters when nobody was looking.

That is, nobody but angels; they are always on deck when there is a miracle to the fore—so as to get put in the picture, perhaps. Angels are as fond of that as a

fire company; look at the old masters.

The well-chamber was dimly lighted by lamps; the water was drawn with a windlass and chain by monks, and poured into troughs which delivered it into stone reservoirs outside in the chapel—when there was water to draw, I mean—and none but monks could enter the well-chamber. I entered it, for I had temporary authority to do so, by courtesy of my professional brother and subordinate. But he hadn't entered it himself. He did everything by incantations; he never worked his intellect. If he had stepped in there and used his eyes, instead of his disordered mind, he could have cured the well by natural means, and then turned it into a miracle in the customary way; but no, he was an old numskull, a magician who believed in his own magic; and no magician can thrive who is handicapped with a superstition like that.

I had an idea that the well had sprung a leak; that some of the wall stones near the bottom had fallen and exposed fissures that allowed the water to escape. I measured the chain—98 feet. Then I called in a couple of monks, locked the door, took a candle, and made them lower me in the bucket. When the chain was all paid out, the candle confirmed my suspicion; a considerable section of the wall was gone, exposing a good big fissure.

I almost regretted that my theory about the well's trouble was correct, because I had another one that had a showy point or two about it for a miracle. I remembered that in America, many centuries later, when an oil well ceased to flow, they used to blast it out with a dynamite torpedo. If I should find this well dry and no explanation of it, I could astonish these people most nobly by having a person of no especial value drop a dynamite bomb into it. It was my idea to appoint Merlin. However, it was plain that there was no occasion for the bomb. One cannot have everything the way he would like it. A man has no business to be depressed by a disappointment, anyway; he ought to make up his mind to get even. That is what I did. I said to myself, I am in no hurry, I can wait; that bomb will come good yet. And it did, too.

When I was above ground again, I turned out the monks, and let down a fish-line; the well was a hundred and fifty feet deep, and there was forty-one feet of water in it. I called in a monk and asked:

"How deep is the well?"

"That, sir, I wit not, having never been told."

"How does the water usually stand in it?"

"Near to the top, these two centuries, as the testimony goeth, brought down to us through our predecessors."

It was true—as to recent times at least—for there was witness to it, and better witness than a monk; only about twenty or thirty feet of the chain showed

wear and use, the rest of it was unworn and rusty. What had happened when the well gave out that other time? Without doubt some practical person had come along and mended the leak, and then had come up and told the abbot he had discovered by divination that if the sinful bath were destroyed the well would flow again. The leak had befallen again now, and these children would have prayed, and processioned, and tolled their bells for heavenly succor till they all dried up and blew away, and no innocent of them all would ever have thought to drop a fish-line into the well or go down in it and find out what was really the matter. Old habit of mind is one of the toughest things to get away from in the world. It transmits itself like physical form and feature; and for a man, in those days, to have had an idea that his ancestors hadn't had, would have brought him under suspicion of being illegitimate. I said to the monk:

"It is a difficult miracle to restore water in a dry well, but we will try, if my brother Merlin fails. Brother Merlin is a very passable artist, but only in the parlor-magic line, and he may not succeed; in fact, is not likely to succeed. But that should be nothing to his discredit; the man that can do *this* kind of miracle knows enough to keep hotel."

"Hotel? I mind not to have heard—"

"Of hotel? It's what you call hostel. The man that can do this miracle can keep hostel. I can do this miracle; I shall do this miracle; yet I do not try to conceal from you that it is a miracle to tax the occult powers to the last strain."

"None knoweth that truth better than the brotherhood, indeed; for it is of record that aforetime it was parlous difficult and took a year. Natheless, God send you good success, and to that end will we pray."

As a matter of business it was a good idea to get the notion around that the thing was difficult. Many a small thing has been made large by the right kind of advertising. That monk was filled up with the difficulty of this enterprise; he would fill up the others. In two days the solicitude would be booming.

On my way home at noon, I met Sandy. She had been sampling the hermits. I said:

"I would like to do that myself. This is Wednesday. Is there a matinee?"

"A which, please you, sir?"

"Matinee. Do they keep open afternoons?"

"Who?"

"The hermits, of course."

"Keep open?"

"Yes, keep open. Isn't that plain enough? Do they knock off at noon?"

"Knock off?"

"Knock off?—yes, knock off. What is the matter with knock off? I never

saw such a dunderhead; can't you understand anything at all? In plain terms, do they shut up shop, draw the game, bank the fires—"

"Shut up shop, draw—"

"There, never mind, let it go; you make me tired. You can't seem to understand the simplest thing."

"I would I might please thee, sir, and it is to me dole and sorrow that I fail, albeit sith I am but a simple damsel and taught of none, being from the cradle unbaptized in those deep waters of learning that do anoint with a sovereignty him that partaketh of that most noble sacrament, investing him with reverend state to the mental eye of the humble mortal who, by bar and lack of that great consecration seeth in his own unlearned estate but a symbol of that other sort of lack and loss which men do publish to the pitying eye with sackcloth trappings whereon the ashes of grief do lie bepowdered and bestrewn, and so, when such shall in the darkness of his mind encounter these golden phrases of high mystery, these shut-up-shops, and draw-the-game, and bank-the-fires, it is but by the grace of God that he burst not for envy of the mind that can beget, and tongue that can deliver so great and mellow-sounding miracles of speech, and if there do ensue confusion in that humbler mind, and failure to divine the meanings of these wonders, then if so be this miscomprehension is not vain but sooth and true, wit ye well it is the very substance of worshipful dear homage and may not lightly be misprized, nor had been, an ye had noted this complexion of mood and mind and understood that that I would I could not, and that I could not I might not, nor yet nor might *nor* could, nor might-not nor could-not, might be by advantage turned to the desired *would*, and so I pray you mercy of my fault, and that ye will of your kindness and your charity forgive it, good my master and most dear lord."

I couldn't make it all out—that is, the details—but I got the general idea; and enough of it, too, to be ashamed. It was not fair to spring those nineteenth century technicalities upon the untutored infant of the sixth and then rail at her because she couldn't get their drift; and when she was making the honest best drive at it she could, too, and no fault of hers that she couldn't fetch the home plate; and so I apologized. Then we meandered pleasantly away toward the hermit holes in sociable converse together, and better friends than ever.

I was gradually coming to have a mysterious and shuddery reverence for this girl; nowadays whenever she pulled out from the station and got her train fairly started on one of those horizonless transcontinental sentences of hers, it was borne in upon me that I was standing in the awful presence of the Mother of the German Language. I was so impressed with this, that sometimes when she began to empty one of these sentences on me I unconsciously took the very

attitude of reverence, and stood uncovered; and if words had been water, I had been drowned, sure. She had exactly the German way; whatever was in her mind to be delivered, whether a mere remark, or a sermon, or a cyclopedia, or the history of a war, she would get it into a single sentence or die. Whenever the literary German dives into a sentence, that is the last you are going to see of him till he emerges on the other side of his Atlantic with his verb in his mouth.

We drifted from hermit to hermit all the afternoon. It was a most strange menagerie. The chief emulation among them seemed to be, to see which could manage to be the uncleanest and most prosperous with vermin. Their manner and attitudes were the last expression of complacent self-righteousness. It was one anchorite's pride to lie naked in the mud and let the insects bite him and blister him unmolested; it was another's to lean against a rock, all day long, conspicuous to the admiration of the throng of pilgrims and pray; it was another's to go naked and crawl around on all fours; it was another's to drag about with him, year in and year out, eighty pounds of iron; it was another's to never lie down when he slept, but to stand among the thorn-bushes and snore when there were pilgrims around to look; a woman, who had the white hair of age, and no other apparel, was black from crown to heel with forty-seven years of holy abstinence from water. Groups of gazing pilgrims stood around all and every of these strange objects, lost in reverent wonder, and envious of the fleckless sanctity which these pious austerities had won for them from an exacting heaven.

By and by we went to see one of the supremely great ones. He was a mighty celebrity; his fame had penetrated all Christendom; the noble and the renowned journeyed from the remotest lands on the globe to pay him reverence. His stand was in the center of the widest part of the valley; and it took all that space to hold his crowds.

His stand was a pillar sixty feet high, with a broad platform on the top of it. He was now doing what he had been doing every day for twenty years up there—bowing his body ceaselessly and rapidly almost to his feet. It was his way of praying. I timed him with a stop watch, and he made 1,244 revolutions in 24 minutes and 46 seconds. It seemed a pity to have all this power going to waste. It was one of the most useful motions in mechanics, the pedal movement; so I made a note in my memorandum book, purposing some day to apply a system of elastic cords to him and run a sewing machine with it. I afterward carried out that scheme, and got five years' good service out of him; in which time he turned out upward of eighteen thousand first-rate tow-linen shirts, which was ten a day. I worked him Sundays and all; he was going, Sundays, the same as week days, and it was no use to waste the power. These shirts cost me nothing but just the

mere trifle for the materials—I furnished those myself, it would not have been right to make him do that—and they sold like smoke to pilgrims at a dollar and a half apiece, which was the price of fifty cows or a blooded race horse in Arthurdom. They were regarded as a perfect protection against sin, and advertised as such by my knights everywhere, with the paint-pot and stencil-plate; insomuch that there was not a cliff or a boulder or a dead wall in England but you could read on it at a mile distance:

"Buy the only genuine St. Stylite; patronized by the Nobility. Patent applied for."

There was more money in the business than one knew what to do with. As it extended, I brought out a line of goods suitable for kings, and a nobby thing for duchesses and that sort, with ruffles down the forehatch and the running-gear clewed up with a featherstitch to leeward and then hauled aft with a back-stay and triced up with a half-turn in the standing rigging forward of the weather-gaskets. Yes, it was a daisy.

But about that time I noticed that the motive power had taken to standing on one leg, and I found that there was something the matter with the other one; so I stocked the business and unloaded, taking Sir Bors de Ganis into camp financially along with certain of his friends; for the works stopped within a year, and the good saint got him to his rest. But he had earned it. I can say that for him.

When I saw him that first time—however, his personal condition will not quite bear description here. You can read it in the Lives of the Saints.\*

[\*All the details concerning the hermits, in this chapter, are from Lecky—but greatly modified. This book not being a history but only a tale, the majority of the historian's frank details were too strong for reproduction in it.—*Editor* ]

## CHAPTER XXIII. RESTORATION OF THE FOUNTAIN

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Saturday noon I went to the well and looked on a while. Merlin was still burning smoke-powders, and pawing the air, and muttering gibberish as hard as ever, but looking pretty down-hearted, for of course he had not started even a perspiration in that well yet. Finally I said:

"How does the thing promise by this time, partner?"

"Behold, I am even now busied with trial of the powerfulest enchantment known to the princes of the occult arts in the lands of the East; an it fail me, naught can avail. Peace, until I finish."

He raised a smoke this time that darkened all the region, and must have made matters uncomfortable for the hermits, for the wind was their way, and it rolled down over their dens in a dense and billowy fog. He poured out volumes of speech to match, and contorted his body and sawed the air with his hands in a most extraordinary way. At the end of twenty minutes he dropped down panting, and about exhausted. Now arrived the abbot and several hundred monks and nuns, and behind them a multitude of pilgrims and a couple of acres of foundlings, all drawn by the prodigious smoke, and all in a grand state of excitement. The abbot inquired anxiously for results. Merlin said:

"If any labor of mortal might break the spell that binds these waters, this which I have but just essayed had done it. It has failed; whereby I do now know that that which I had feared is a truth established; the sign of this failure is, that the most potent spirit known to the magicians of the East, and whose name none may utter and live, has laid his spell upon this well. The mortal does not breathe, nor ever will, who can penetrate the secret of that spell, and without that secret none can break it. The water will flow no more forever, good Father. I have done what man could. Suffer me to go."

Of course this threw the abbot into a good deal of a consternation. He turned to me with the signs of it in his face, and said:

"Ye have heard him. Is it true?"

"Part of it is."

"Not all, then, not all! What part is true?"



"That that spirit with the Russian name has put his spell upon the well."

"God's wounds, then are we ruined!"

"Possibly."

"But not certainly? Ye mean, not certainly?"

"That is it."

"Wherefore, ye also mean that when he saith none can break the spell—"

"Yes, when he says that, he says what isn't necessarily true. There are conditions under which an effort to break it may have some chance—that is, some small, some trifling chance—of success."

"The conditions—"

"Oh, they are nothing difficult. Only these: I want the well and the surroundings for the space of half a mile, entirely to myself from sunset to-day until I remove the ban—and nobody allowed to cross the ground but by my authority."

"Are these all?"

"Yes."

"And you have no fear to try?"

"Oh, none. One may fail, of course; and one may also succeed. One can try, and I am ready to chance it. I have my conditions?"

"These and all others ye may name. I will issue commandment to that effect."

"Wait," said Merlin, with an evil smile. "Ye wit that he that would break this spell must know that spirit's name?"

"Yes, I know his name."

"And wit you also that to know it skills not of itself, but ye must likewise pronounce it? Ha-ha! Knew ye that?"

"Yes, I knew that, too."

"You had that knowledge! Art a fool? Are ye minded to utter that name and die?"

"Utter it? Why certainly. I would utter it if it was Welsh."

"Ye are even a dead man, then; and I go to tell Arthur."

"That's all right. Take your gripsack and get along. The thing for *you* to do is to go home and work the weather, John W. Merlin."

It was a home shot, and it made him wince; for he was the worst weather-failure in the kingdom. Whenever he ordered up the danger-signals along the coast there was a week's dead calm, sure, and every time he prophesied fair weather it rained brickbats. But I kept him in the weather bureau right along, to undermine his reputation. However, that shot raised his bile, and instead of starting home to report my death, he said he would remain and enjoy it.

My two experts arrived in the evening, and pretty well fagged, for they had traveled double tides. They had pack-mules along, and had brought everything I needed—tools, pump, lead pipe, Greek fire, sheaves of big rockets, roman candles, colored fire sprays, electric apparatus, and a lot of sundries—everything necessary for the stateliest kind of a miracle. They got their supper and a nap, and about midnight we sallied out through a solitude so wholly vacant and complete that it quite overpassed the required conditions. We took possession of the well and its surroundings. My boys were experts in all sorts of things, from the stoning up of a well to the constructing of a mathematical instrument. An hour before sunrise we had that leak mended in ship-shape fashion, and the water began to rise. Then we stowed our fireworks in the chapel, locked up the place, and went home to bed.

Before the noon mass was over, we were at the well again; for there was a deal to do yet, and I was determined to spring the miracle before midnight, for business reasons: for whereas a miracle worked for the Church on a week-day is worth a good deal, it is worth six times as much if you get it in on a Sunday. In nine hours the water had risen to its customary level—that is to say, it was within twenty-three feet of the top. We put in a little iron pump, one of the first turned out by my works near the capital; we bored into a stone reservoir which stood against the outer wall of the well-chamber and inserted a section of lead pipe that was long enough to reach to the door of the chapel and project beyond the threshold, where the gushing water would be visible to the two hundred and fifty acres of people I was intending should be present on the flat plain in front of this little holy hillock at the proper time.

We knocked the head out of an empty hogshead and hoisted this hogshead to the flat roof of the chapel, where we clamped it down fast, poured in gunpowder till it lay loosely an inch deep on the bottom, then we stood up rockets in the hogshead as thick as they could loosely stand, all the different breeds of rockets there are; and they made a portly and imposing sheaf, I can tell you. We grounded the wire of a pocket electrical battery in that powder, we placed a whole magazine of Greek fire on each corner of the roof—blue on one corner, green on another, red on another, and purple on the last—and grounded a wire in each.

About two hundred yards off, in the flat, we built a pen of scantlings, about four feet high, and laid planks on it, and so made a platform. We covered it with swell tapestries borrowed for the occasion, and topped it off with the abbot's own throne. When you are going to do a miracle for an ignorant race, you want to get in every detail that will count; you want to make all the properties impressive to the public eye; you want to make matters comfortable for your head guest; then

you can turn yourself loose and play your effects for all they are worth. I know the value of these things, for I know human nature. You can't throw too much style into a miracle. It costs trouble, and work, and sometimes money; but it pays in the end. Well, we brought the wires to the ground at the chapel, and then brought them under the ground to the platform, and hid the batteries there. We put a rope fence a hundred feet square around the platform to keep off the common multitude, and that finished the work. My idea was, doors open at 10:30, performance to begin at 11:25 sharp. I wished I could charge admission, but of course that wouldn't answer. I instructed my boys to be in the chapel as early as 10, before anybody was around, and be ready to man the pumps at the proper time, and make the fur fly. Then we went home to supper.

The news of the disaster to the well had traveled far by this time; and now for two or three days a steady avalanche of people had been pouring into the valley. The lower end of the valley was become one huge camp; we should have a good house, no question about that. Criers went the rounds early in the evening and announced the coming attempt, which put every pulse up to fever heat. They gave notice that the abbot and his official suite would move in state and occupy the platform at 10:30, up to which time all the region which was under my ban must be clear; the bells would then cease from tolling, and this sign should be permission to the multitudes to close in and take their places.

I was at the platform and all ready to do the honors when the abbot's solemn procession hove in sight—which it did not do till it was nearly to the rope fence, because it was a starless black night and no torches permitted. With it came Merlin, and took a front seat on the platform; he was as good as his word for once. One could not see the multitudes banked together beyond the ban, but they were there, just the same. The moment the bells stopped, those banked masses broke and poured over the line like a vast black wave, and for as much as a half hour it continued to flow, and then it solidified itself, and you could have walked upon a pavement of human heads to—well, miles.

We had a solemn stage-wait, now, for about twenty minutes—a thing I had counted on for effect; it is always good to let your audience have a chance to work up its expectancy. At length, out of the silence a noble Latin chant—men's voices—broke and swelled up and rolled away into the night, a majestic tide of melody. I had put that up, too, and it was one of the best effects I ever invented. When it was finished I stood up on the platform and extended my hands abroad, for two minutes, with my face uplifted—that always produces a dead hush—and then slowly pronounced this ghastly word with a kind of awfulness which caused hundreds to tremble, and many women to faint:

"Constantinopolitanischerdudelsackspfeifenmachersgesellschaft!"

Just as I was moaning out the closing hunks of that word, I touched off one of my electric connections and all that murky world of people stood revealed in a hideous blue glare! It was immense—that effect! Lots of people shrieked, women curled up and quit in every direction, foundlings collapsed by platoons.

The abbot and the monks crossed themselves nimbly and their lips fluttered with agitated prayers. Merlin held his grip, but he was astonished clear down to his corns; he had never seen anything to begin with that, before. Now was the time to pile in the effects. I lifted my hands and groaned out this word—as it were in agony:

"Nihilistendynamittheaterkaestchenssprengungsattentaetsversuchungen!"

—and turned on the red fire! You should have heard that Atlantic of people moan and howl when that crimson hell joined the blue! After sixty seconds I shouted:

"Transvaaltruppentropentransporttrampelthiertreibertrauungsthraenen-tragoedie!"

—and lit up the green fire! After waiting only forty seconds this time, I spread my arms abroad and thundered out the devastating syllables of this word of words:

"Mekkamuselmanne massenmenchenmoerdermohrenmuttermarmormonume

—and whirled on the purple glare! There they were, all going at once, red, blue, green, purple!—four furious volcanoes pouring vast clouds of radiant smoke aloft, and spreading a blinding rainbowed noonday to the furthest confines of that valley. In the distance one could see that fellow on the pillar standing rigid against the background of sky, his seesaw stopped for the first time in twenty years. I knew the boys were at the pump now and ready. So I said to the abbot:

"The time is come, Father. I am about to pronounce the dread name and command the spell to dissolve. You want to brace up, and take hold of something." Then I shouted to the people: "Behold, in another minute the spell will be broken, or no mortal can break it. If it break, all will know it, for you will see the sacred water gush from the chapel door!"

I stood a few moments, to let the hearers have a chance to spread my announcement to those who couldn't hear, and so convey it to the furthest ranks, then I made a grand exhibition of extra posturing and gesturing, and shouted:

"Lo, I command the fell spirit that possesses the holy fountain to now disgorge into the skies all the infernal fires that still remain in him, and straightway dissolve his spell and flee hence to the pit, there to lie bound a thousand years. By his own dread name I command it—BGWJJILLIGKKK!"

Then I touched off the hogshhead of rockets, and a vast fountain of dazzling

lances of fire vomited itself toward the zenith with a hissing rush, and burst in mid-sky into a storm of flashing jewels! One mighty groan of terror started up from the massed people—then suddenly broke into a wild hosannah of joy—for there, fair and plain in the uncanny glare, they saw the freed water leaping forth!

The old abbot could not speak a word, for tears and the chokings in his throat; without utterance of any sort, he folded me in his arms and mashed me. It was more eloquent than speech. And harder to get over, too, in a country where there were really no doctors that were worth a damaged nickel.

You should have seen those acres of people throw themselves down in that water and kiss it; kiss it, and pet it, and fondle it, and talk to it as if it were alive, and welcome it back with the dear names they gave their darlings, just as if it had been a friend who was long gone away and lost, and was come home again.

Yes, it was pretty to see, and made me think more of them than I had done before.

I sent Merlin home on a shutter. He had caved in and gone down like a landslide when I pronounced that fearful name, and had never come to since. He never had heard that name before,—neither had I—but to him it was the right one. Any jumble would have been the right one. He admitted, afterward, that that spirit's own mother could not have pronounced that name better than I did. He never could understand how I survived it, and I didn't tell him. It is only young magicians that give away a secret like that. Merlin spent three months working enchantments to try to find out the deep trick of how to pronounce that name and outlive it. But he didn't arrive.

When I started to the chapel, the populace uncovered and fell back reverently to make a wide way for me, as if I had been some kind of a superior being—and I was. I was aware of that. I took along a night shift of monks, and taught them the mystery of the pump, and set them to work, for it was plain that a good part of the people out there were going to sit up with the water all night, consequently it was but right that they should have all they wanted of it. To those monks that pump was a good deal of a miracle itself, and they were full of wonder over it; and of admiration, too, of the exceeding effectiveness of its performance.

It was a great night, an immense night. There was reputation in it. I could hardly get to sleep for glorying over it.

## CHAPTER XXIV. A RIVAL MAGICIAN

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My influence in the Valley of Holiness was something prodigious now. It seemed worth while to try to turn it to some valuable account. The thought came to me the next morning, and was suggested by my seeing one of my knights who was in the soap line come riding in. According to history, the monks of this place two centuries before had been worldly minded enough to want to wash. It might be that there was a leaven of this unrighteousness still remaining. So I sounded a Brother:

"Wouldn't you like a bath?"

He shuddered at the thought—the thought of the peril of it to the well—but he said with feeling:

"One needs not to ask that of a poor body who has not known that blessed refreshment sith that he was a boy. Would God I might wash me! but it may not be, fair sir, tempt me not; it is forbidden."

And then he sighed in such a sorrowful way that I was resolved he should have at least one layer of his real estate removed, if it sized up my whole influence and bankrupted the pile. So I went to the abbot and asked for a permit for this Brother. He blenched at the idea—I don't mean that you could see him blench, for of course you couldn't see it without you scraped him, and I didn't care enough about it to scrape him, but I knew the blench was there, just the same, and within a book-cover's thickness of the surface, too—blenched, and trembled. He said:

"Ah, son, ask aught else thou wilt, and it is thine, and freely granted out of a grateful heart—but this, oh, this! Would you drive away the blessed water again?"

"No, Father, I will not drive it away. I have mysterious knowledge which teaches me that there was an error that other time when it was thought the institution of the bath banished the fountain." A large interest began to show up in the old man's face. "My knowledge informs me that the bath was innocent of that misfortune, which was caused by quite another sort of sin."

"These are brave words—but—but right welcome, if they be true."

"They are true, indeed. Let me build the bath again, Father. Let me build it

again, and the fountain shall flow forever."

"You promise this?—you promise it? Say the word—say you promise it!"

"I do promise it."

"Then will I have the first bath myself! Go—get ye to your work. Tarry not, tarry not, but go."

I and my boys were at work, straight off. The ruins of the old bath were there yet in the basement of the monastery, not a stone missing. They had been left just so, all these lifetimes, and avoided with a pious fear, as things accursed.

In two days we had it all done and the water in—a spacious pool of clear pure water that a body could swim in. It was running water, too. It came in, and went out, through the ancient pipes. The old abbot kept his word, and was the first to try it. He went down black and shaky, leaving the whole black community above troubled and worried and full of bodings; but he came back white and joyful, and the game was made! another triumph scored.

It was a good campaign that we made in that Valley of Holiness, and I was very well satisfied, and ready to move on now, but I struck a disappointment. I caught a heavy cold, and it started up an old lurking rheumatism of mine. Of course the rheumatism hunted up my weakest place and located itself there. This was the place where the abbot put his arms about me and mashed me, what time he was moved to testify his gratitude to me with an embrace.

When at last I got out, I was a shadow. But everybody was full of attentions and kindnesses, and these brought cheer back into my life, and were the right medicine to help a convalescent swiftly up toward health and strength again; so I gained fast.

Sandy was worn out with nursing; so I made up my mind to turn out and go a cruise alone, leaving her at the nunnery to rest up. My idea was to disguise myself as a freeman of peasant degree and wander through the country a week or two on foot. This would give me a chance to eat and lodge with the lowliest and poorest class of free citizens on equal terms. There was no other way to inform myself perfectly of their everyday life and the operation of the laws upon it. If I went among them as a gentleman, there would be restraints and conventionalities which would shut me out from their private joys and troubles, and I should get no further than the outside shell.

One morning I was out on a long walk to get up muscle for my trip, and had climbed the ridge which bordered the northern extremity of the valley, when I came upon an artificial opening in the face of a low precipice, and recognized it by its location as a hermitage which had often been pointed out to me from a distance as the den of a hermit of high renown for dirt and austerity. I knew he had lately been offered a situation in the Great Sahara, where lions and sandflies

made the hermit-life peculiarly attractive and difficult, and had gone to Africa to take possession, so I thought I would look in and see how the atmosphere of this den agreed with its reputation.

My surprise was great: the place was newly swept and scoured. Then there was another surprise. Back in the gloom of the cavern I heard the clink of a little bell, and then this exclamation:

"Hello Central! Is this you, Camelot?—Behold, thou mayst glad thy heart an thou hast faith to believe the wonderful when that it cometh in unexpected guise and maketh itself manifest in impossible places—here standeth in the flesh his mightiness The Boss, and with thine own ears shall ye hear him speak!"

Now what a radical reversal of things this was; what a jumbling together of extravagant incongruities; what a fantastic conjunction of opposites and irreconcilables—the home of the bogus miracle become the home of a real one, the den of a mediaeval hermit turned into a telephone office!

The telephone clerk stepped into the light, and I recognized one of my young fellows. I said:

"How long has this office been established here, Ulfius?"

"But since midnight, fair Sir Boss, an it please you. We saw many lights in the valley, and so judged it well to make a station, for that where so many lights be needs must they indicate a town of goodly size."

"Quite right. It isn't a town in the customary sense, but it's a good stand, anyway. Do you know where you are?"

"Of that I have had no time to make inquiry; for whenas my comradeship moved hence upon their labors, leaving me in charge, I got me to needed rest, purposing to inquire when I waked, and report the place's name to Camelot for record."

"Well, this is the Valley of Holiness."

It didn't take; I mean, he didn't start at the name, as I had supposed he would. He merely said:

"I will so report it."

"Why, the surrounding regions are filled with the noise of late wonders that have happened here! You didn't hear of them?"

"Ah, ye will remember we move by night, and avoid speech with all. We learn naught but that we get by the telephone from Camelot."

"Why *they* know all about this thing. Haven't they told you anything about the great miracle of the restoration of a holy fountain?"

"Oh, *that* ? Indeed yes. But the name of *this* valley doth woundily differ from the name of *that* one; indeed to differ wider were not pos—"

"What was that name, then?"



"The Valley of Hellishness."

"*That* explains it. Confound a telephone, anyway. It is the very demon for conveying similarities of sound that are miracles of divergence from similarity of sense. But no matter, you know the name of the place now. Call up Camelot."

He did it, and had Clarence sent for. It was good to hear my boy's voice again. It was like being home. After some affectionate interchanges, and some account of my late illness, I said:

"What is new?"

"The king and queen and many of the court do start even in this hour, to go to your valley to pay pious homage to the waters ye have restored, and cleanse themselves of sin, and see the place where the infernal spirit spouted true hell-flames to the clouds—an ye listen sharply ye may hear me wink and hear me likewise smile a smile, sith 'twas I that made selection of those flames from out our stock and sent them by your order."

"Does the king know the way to this place?"

"The king?—no, nor to any other in his realms, mayhap; but the lads that help you with your miracle will be his guide and lead the way, and appoint the places for rests at noons and sleeps at night."

"This will bring them here—when?"

"Mid-afternoon, or later, the third day."

"Anything else in the way of news?"

"The king hath begun the raising of the standing army ye suggested to him; one regiment is complete and officered."

"The mischief! I wanted a main hand in that myself. There is only one body of men in the kingdom that are fitted to officer a regular army."

"Yes—and now ye will marvel to know there's not so much as one West Pointer in that regiment."

"What are you talking about? Are you in earnest?"

"It is truly as I have said."

"Why, this makes me uneasy. Who were chosen, and what was the method? Competitive examination?"

"Indeed, I know naught of the method. I but know this—these officers be all of noble family, and are born—what is it you call it?—chuckleheads."

"There's something wrong, Clarence."

"Comfort yourself, then; for two candidates for a lieutenancy do travel hence with the king—young nobles both—and if you but wait where you are you will hear them questioned."

"That is news to the purpose. I will get one West Pointer in, anyway. Mount

a man and send him to that school with a message; let him kill horses, if necessary, but he must be there before sunset to-night and say—"

"There is no need. I have laid a ground wire to the school. Prithee let me connect you with it."

It sounded good! In this atmosphere of telephones and lightning communication with distant regions, I was breathing the breath of life again after long suffocation. I realized, then, what a creepy, dull, inanimate horror this land had been to me all these years, and how I had been in such a stifled condition of mind as to have grown used to it almost beyond the power to notice it.

I gave my order to the superintendent of the Academy personally. I also asked him to bring me some paper and a fountain pen and a box or so of safety matches. I was getting tired of doing without these conveniences. I could have them now, as I wasn't going to wear armor any more at present, and therefore could get at my pockets.

When I got back to the monastery, I found a thing of interest going on. The abbot and his monks were assembled in the great hall, observing with childish wonder and faith the performances of a new magician, a fresh arrival. His dress was the extreme of the fantastic; as showy and foolish as the sort of thing an Indian medicine-man wears. He was mowing, and mumbling, and gesticulating, and drawing mystical figures in the air and on the floor,—the regular thing, you know. He was a celebrity from Asia—so he said, and that was enough. That sort of evidence was as good as gold, and passed current everywhere.

How easy and cheap it was to be a great magician on this fellow's terms. His specialty was to tell you what any individual on the face of the globe was doing at the moment; and what he had done at any time in the past, and what he would do at any time in the future. He asked if any would like to know what the Emperor of the East was doing now? The sparkling eyes and the delighted rubbing of hands made eloquent answer—this reverend crowd *would* like to know what that monarch was at, just as this moment. The fraud went through some more mummery, and then made grave announcement:

"The high and mighty Emperor of the East doth at this moment put money in the palm of a holy begging friar—one, two, three pieces, and they be all of silver."

A buzz of admiring exclamations broke out, all around:

"It is marvelous!" "Wonderful!" "What study, what labor, to have acquired a so amazing power as this!"

Would they like to know what the Supreme Lord of Inde was doing? Yes. He told them what the Supreme Lord of Inde was doing. Then he told them what the Sultan of Egypt was at; also what the King of the Remote Seas was

about. And so on and so on; and with each new marvel the astonishment at his accuracy rose higher and higher. They thought he must surely strike an uncertain place some time; but no, he never had to hesitate, he always knew, and always with unerring precision. I saw that if this thing went on I should lose my supremacy, this fellow would capture my following, I should be left out in the cold. I must put a cog in his wheel, and do it right away, too. I said:

"If I might ask, I should very greatly like to know what a certain person is doing."

"Speak, and freely. I will tell you."

"It will be difficult—perhaps impossible."

"My art knoweth not that word. The more difficult it is, the more certainly will I reveal it to you."

You see, I was working up the interest. It was getting pretty high, too; you could see that by the craning necks all around, and the half-suspended breathing. So now I climaxed it:

"If you make no mistake—if you tell me truly what I want to know—I will give you two hundred silver pennies."

"The fortune is mine! I will tell you what you would know."

"Then tell me what I am doing with my right hand."

"Ah-h!" There was a general gasp of surprise. It had not occurred to anybody in the crowd—that simple trick of inquiring about somebody who wasn't ten thousand miles away. The magician was hit hard; it was an emergency that had never happened in his experience before, and it corked him; he didn't know how to meet it. He looked stunned, confused; he couldn't say a word. "Come," I said, "what are you waiting for? Is it possible you can answer up, right off, and tell what anybody on the other side of the earth is doing, and yet can't tell what a person is doing who isn't three yards from you? Persons behind me know what I am doing with my right hand—they will indorse you if you tell correctly." He was still dumb. "Very well, I'll tell you why you don't speak up and tell; it is because you don't know. *You* a magician! Good friends, this tramp is a mere fraud and liar."

This distressed the monks and terrified them. They were not used to hearing these awful beings called names, and they did not know what might be the consequence. There was a dead silence now; superstitious bodings were in every mind. The magician began to pull his wits together, and when he presently smiled an easy, nonchalant smile, it spread a mighty relief around; for it indicated that his mood was not destructive. He said:

"It hath struck me speechless, the frivolity of this person's speech. Let all know, if perchance there be any who know it not, that enchanters of my degree

deign not to concern themselves with the doings of any but kings, princes, emperors, them that be born in the purple and them only. Had ye asked me what Arthur the great king is doing, it were another matter, and I had told ye; but the doings of a subject interest me not."

"Oh, I misunderstood you. I thought you said 'anybody,' and so I supposed 'anybody' included—well, anybody; that is, everybody."

"It doth—anybody that is of lofty birth; and the better if he be royal."

"That, it meseemeth, might well be," said the abbot, who saw his opportunity to smooth things and avert disaster, "for it were not likely that so wonderful a gift as this would be conferred for the revelation of the concerns of lesser beings than such as be born near to the summits of greatness. Our Arthur the king—"

"Would you know of him?" broke in the enchanter.

"Most gladly, yea, and gratefully."

Everybody was full of awe and interest again right away, the incorrigible idiots. They watched the incantations absorbingly, and looked at me with a "There, now, what can you say to that?" air, when the announcement came:

"The king is weary with the chase, and lieth in his palace these two hours sleeping a dreamless sleep."

"God's benison upon him!" said the abbot, and crossed himself; "may that sleep be to the refreshment of his body and his soul."

"And so it might be, if he were sleeping," I said, "but the king is not sleeping, the king rides."

Here was trouble again—a conflict of authority. Nobody knew which of us to believe; I still had some reputation left. The magician's scorn was stirred, and he said:

"Lo, I have seen many wonderful soothsayers and prophets and magicians in my life days, but none before that could sit idle and see to the heart of things with never an incantation to help."

"You have lived in the woods, and lost much by it. I use incantations myself, as this good brotherhood are aware—but only on occasions of moment."

When it comes to sarcasming, I reckon I know how to keep my end up. That jab made this fellow squirm. The abbot inquired after the queen and the court, and got this information:

"They be all on sleep, being overcome by fatigue, like as to the king."

I said:

"That is merely another lie. Half of them are about their amusements, the queen and the other half are not sleeping, they ride. Now perhaps you can spread yourself a little, and tell us where the king and queen and all that are this moment riding with them are going?"

"They sleep now, as I said; but on the morrow they will ride, for they go a journey toward the sea."

"And where will they be the day after to-morrow at vespers?"

"Far to the north of Camelot, and half their journey will be done."

"That is another lie, by the space of a hundred and fifty miles. Their journey will not be merely half done, it will be all done, and they will be *here*, in this valley."

*That* was a noble shot! It set the abbot and the monks in a whirl of excitement, and it rocked the enchanter to his base. I followed the thing right up:

"If the king does not arrive, I will have myself ridden on a rail: if he does I will ride you on a rail instead."

Next day I went up to the telephone office and found that the king had passed through two towns that were on the line. I spotted his progress on the succeeding day in the same way. I kept these matters to myself. The third day's reports showed that if he kept up his gait he would arrive by four in the afternoon. There was still no sign anywhere of interest in his coming; there seemed to be no preparations making to receive him in state; a strange thing, truly. Only one thing could explain this: that other magician had been cutting under me, sure. This was true. I asked a friend of mine, a monk, about it, and he said, yes, the magician had tried some further enchantments and found out that the court had concluded to make no journey at all, but stay at home. Think of that! Observe how much a reputation was worth in such a country. These people had seen me do the very showiest bit of magic in history, and the only one within their memory that had a positive value, and yet here they were, ready to take up with an adventurer who could offer no evidence of his powers but his mere unproven word.

However, it was not good politics to let the king come without any fuss and feathers at all, so I went down and drummed up a procession of pilgrims and smoked out a batch of hermits and started them out at two o'clock to meet him.

And that was the sort of state he arrived in. The abbot was helpless with rage and humiliation when I brought him out on a balcony and showed him the head of the state marching in and never a monk on hand to offer him welcome, and no stir of life or clang of joy-bell to glad his spirit. He took one look and then flew to rouse out his forces. The next minute the bells were dinning furiously, and the various buildings were vomiting monks and nuns, who went swarming in a rush toward the coming procession; and with them went that magician—and he was on a rail, too, by the abbot's order; and his reputation was in the mud, and mine was in the sky again. Yes, a man can keep his trademark current in such a

country, but he can't sit around and do it; he has got to be on deck and attending to business right along.

## CHAPTER XXV. A COMPETITIVE EXAMINATION

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When the king traveled for change of air, or made a progress, or visited a distant noble whom he wished to bankrupt with the cost of his keep, part of the administration moved with him. It was a fashion of the time. The Commission charged with the examination of candidates for posts in the army came with the king to the Valley, whereas they could have transacted their business just as well at home. And although this expedition was strictly a holiday excursion for the king, he kept some of his business functions going just the same. He touched for the evil, as usual; he held court in the gate at sunrise and tried cases, for he was himself Chief Justice of the King's Bench.

He shone very well in this latter office. He was a wise and humane judge, and he clearly did his honest best and fairest,—according to his lights. That is a large reservation. His lights—I mean his rearing—often colored his decisions.

Whenever there was a dispute between a noble or gentleman and a person of lower degree, the king's leanings and sympathies were for the former class always, whether he suspected it or not. It was impossible that this should be otherwise. The blunting effects of slavery upon the slaveholder's moral perceptions are known and conceded, the world over; and a privileged class, an aristocracy, is but a band of slaveholders under another name. This has a harsh sound, and yet should not be offensive to any—even to the noble himself—unless the fact itself be an offense: for the statement simply formulates a fact. The repulsive feature of slavery is the *thing*, not its name. One needs but to hear an aristocrat speak of the classes that are below him to recognize—and in but indifferently modified measure—the very air and tone of the actual slaveholder; and behind these are the slaveholder's spirit, the slaveholder's blunted feeling. They are the result of the same cause in both cases: the possessor's old and inbred custom of regarding himself as a superior being. The king's judgments wrought frequent injustices, but it was merely the fault of his training, his natural and unalterable sympathies. He was as unfitted for a judgeship as would be the average mother for the position of milk-distributor to starving children in famine-time; her own children would fare a shade better than

the rest.

One very curious case came before the king. A young girl, an orphan, who had a considerable estate, married a fine young fellow who had nothing. The girl's property was within a seigniorship held by the Church. The bishop of the diocese, an arrogant scion of the great nobility, claimed the girl's estate on the ground that she had married privately, and thus had cheated the Church out of one of its rights as lord of the seigniorship—the one heretofore referred to as *le droit du seigneur*. The penalty of refusal or avoidance was confiscation. The girl's defense was, that the lordship of the seigniorship was vested in the bishop, and the particular right here involved was not transferable, but must be exercised by the lord himself or stand vacated; and that an older law, of the Church itself, strictly barred the bishop from exercising it. It was a very odd case, indeed.

It reminded me of something I had read in my youth about the ingenious way in which the aldermen of London raised the money that built the Mansion House. A person who had not taken the Sacrament according to the Anglican rite could not stand as a candidate for sheriff of London. Thus Dissenters were ineligible; they could not run if asked, they could not serve if elected. The aldermen, who without any question were Yankees in disguise, hit upon this neat device: they passed a by-law imposing a fine of £400 upon any one who should refuse to be a candidate for sheriff, and a fine of £600 upon any person who, after being elected sheriff, refused to serve. Then they went to work and elected a lot of Dissenters, one after another, and kept it up until they had collected £15,000 in fines; and there stands the stately Mansion House to this day, to keep the blushing citizen in mind of a long past and lamented day when a band of Yankees slipped into London and played games of the sort that has given their race a unique and shady reputation among all truly good and holy peoples that be in the earth.

The girl's case seemed strong to me; the bishop's case was just as strong. I did not see how the king was going to get out of this hole. But he got out. I append his decision:

"Truly I find small difficulty here, the matter being even a child's affair for simpleness. An the young bride had conveyed notice, as in duty bound, to her feudal lord and proper master and protector the bishop, she had suffered no loss, for the said bishop could have got a dispensation making him, for temporary conveniency, eligible to the exercise of his said right, and thus would she have kept all she had. Whereas, failing in her first duty, she hath by that failure failed in all; for whoso, clinging to a rope, severeth it above his hands, must fall; it being no defense to claim that the rest of the rope is sound, neither any deliverance from his peril, as he shall find. Pardy, the woman's case is rotten at



the source. It is the decree of the court that she forfeit to the said lord bishop all her goods, even to the last farthing that she doth possess, and be thereto mulcted in the costs. Next!"

Here was a tragic end to a beautiful honeymoon not yet three months old. Poor young creatures! They had lived these three months lapped to the lips in worldly comforts. These clothes and trinkets they were wearing were as fine and dainty as the shrewdest stretch of the sumptuary laws allowed to people of their degree; and in these pretty clothes, she crying on his shoulder, and he trying to comfort her with hopeful words set to the music of despair, they went from the judgment seat out into the world homeless, bedless, breadless; why, the very beggars by the roadsides were not so poor as they.

Well, the king was out of the hole; and on terms satisfactory to the Church and the rest of the aristocracy, no doubt. Men write many fine and plausible arguments in support of monarchy, but the fact remains that where every man in a State has a vote, brutal laws are impossible. Arthur's people were of course poor material for a republic, because they had been debased so long by monarchy; and yet even they would have been intelligent enough to make short work of that law which the king had just been administering if it had been submitted to their full and free vote. There is a phrase which has grown so common in the world's mouth that it has come to seem to have sense and meaning—the sense and meaning implied when it is used; that is the phrase which refers to this or that or the other nation as possibly being "capable of self-government"; and the implied sense of it is, that there has been a nation somewhere, some time or other which *wasn't* capable of it—*wasn't* as able to govern itself as some self-appointed specialists were or would be to govern it.

The master minds of all nations, in all ages, have sprung in affluent multitude from the mass of the nation, and from the mass of the nation only—not from its privileged classes; and so, no matter what the nation's intellectual grade was; whether high or low, the bulk of its ability was in the long ranks of its nameless and its poor, and so it never saw the day that it had not the material in abundance whereby to govern itself. Which is to assert an always self-proven fact: that even the best governed and most free and most enlightened monarchy is still behind the best condition attainable by its people; and that the same is true of kindred governments of lower grades, all the way down to the lowest.

King Arthur had hurried up the army business altogether beyond my calculations. I had not supposed he would move in the matter while I was away; and so I had not mapped out a scheme for determining the merits of officers; I had only remarked that it would be wise to submit every candidate to a sharp and searching examination; and privately I meant to put together a list of military

qualifications that nobody could answer to but my West Pointers. That ought to have been attended to before I left; for the king was so taken with the idea of a standing army that he couldn't wait but must get about it at once, and get up as good a scheme of examination as he could invent out of his own head.

I was impatient to see what this was; and to show, too, how much more admirable was the one which I should display to the Examining Board. I intimated this, gently, to the king, and it fired his curiosity. When the Board was assembled, I followed him in; and behind us came the candidates. One of these candidates was a bright young West Pointer of mine, and with him were a couple of my West Point professors.

When I saw the Board, I did not know whether to cry or to laugh. The head of it was the officer known to later centuries as Norroy King-at-Arms! The two other members were chiefs of bureaus in his department; and all three were priests, of course; all officials who had to know how to read and write were priests.

My candidate was called first, out of courtesy to me, and the head of the Board opened on him with official solemnity:

"Name?"

"Mal-ease."

"Son of?"

"Webster."

"Webster—Webster. H'm—I—my memory faileth to recall the name. Condition?"

"Weaver."

"Weaver!—God keep us!"

The king was staggered, from his summit to his foundations; one clerk fainted, and the others came near it. The chairman pulled himself together, and said indignantly:

"It is sufficient. Get you hence."

But I appealed to the king. I begged that my candidate might be examined. The king was willing, but the Board, who were all well-born folk, implored the king to spare them the indignity of examining the weaver's son. I knew they didn't know enough to examine him anyway, so I joined my prayers to theirs and the king turned the duty over to my professors. I had had a blackboard prepared, and it was put up now, and the circus began. It was beautiful to hear the lad lay out the science of war, and wallow in details of battle and siege, of supply, transportation, mining and countermining, grand tactics, big strategy and little strategy, signal service, infantry, cavalry, artillery, and all about siege guns, field guns, gatling guns, rifled guns, smooth bores, musket practice, revolver practice

—and not a solitary word of it all could these catfish make head or tail of, you understand—and it was handsome to see him chalk off mathematical nightmares on the blackboard that would stump the angels themselves, and do it like nothing, too—all about eclipses, and comets, and solstices, and constellations, and mean time, and sidereal time, and dinner time, and bedtime, and every other imaginable thing above the clouds or under them that you could harry or bullyrag an enemy with and make him wish he hadn't come—and when the boy made his military salute and stood aside at last, I was proud enough to hug him, and all those other people were so dazed they looked partly petrified, partly drunk, and wholly caught out and snowed under. I judged that the cake was ours, and by a large majority.

Education is a great thing. This was the same youth who had come to West Point so ignorant that when I asked him, "If a general officer should have a horse shot under him on the field of battle, what ought he to do?" answered up naively and said:

"Get up and brush himself."

One of the young nobles was called up now. I thought I would question him a little myself. I said:

"Can your lordship read?"

His face flushed indignantly, and he fired this at me:

"Takest me for a clerk? I trow I am not of a blood that—"

"Answer the question!"

He crowded his wrath down and made out to answer "No."

"Can you write?"

He wanted to resent this, too, but I said:

"You will confine yourself to the questions, and make no comments. You are not here to air your blood or your graces, and nothing of the sort will be permitted. Can you write?"

"No."

"Do you know the multiplication table?"

"I wit not what ye refer to."

"How much is 9 times 6?"

"It is a mystery that is hidden from me by reason that the emergency requiring the fathoming of it hath not in my life-days occurred, and so, not having no need to know this thing, I abide barren of the knowledge."

"If A trade a barrel of onions to B, worth 2 pence the bushel, in exchange for a sheep worth 4 pence and a dog worth a penny, and C kill the dog before delivery, because bitten by the same, who mistook him for D, what sum is still due to A from B, and which party pays for the dog, C or D, and who gets the

money? If A, is the penny sufficient, or may he claim consequential damages in the form of additional money to represent the possible profit which might have inured from the dog, and classifiable as earned increment, that is to say, usufruct?"

"Verily, in the all-wise and unknowable providence of God, who moveth in mysterious ways his wonders to perform, have I never heard the fellow to this question for confusion of the mind and congestion of the ducts of thought.

Wherefore I beseech you let the dog and the onions and these people of the strange and godless names work out their several salvations from their piteous and wonderful difficulties without help of mine, for indeed their trouble is sufficient as it is, whereas an I tried to help I should but damage their cause the more and yet mayhap not live myself to see the desolation wrought."

"What do you know of the laws of attraction and gravitation?"

"If there be such, mayhap his grace the king did promulgate them whilst that I lay sick about the beginning of the year and thereby failed to hear his proclamation."

"What do you know of the science of optics?"

"I know of governors of places, and seneschals of castles, and sheriffs of counties, and many like small offices and titles of honor, but him you call the Science of Optics I have not heard of before; peradventure it is a new dignity."

"Yes, in this country."

Try to conceive of this mollusk gravely applying for an official position, of any kind under the sun! Why, he had all the earmarks of a typewriter copyist, if you leave out the disposition to contribute uninvited emendations of your grammar and punctuation. It was unaccountable that he didn't attempt a little help of that sort out of his majestic supply of incapacity for the job. But that didn't prove that he hadn't material in him for the disposition, it only proved that he wasn't a typewriter copyist yet. After nagging him a little more, I let the professors loose on him and they turned him inside out, on the line of scientific war, and found him empty, of course. He knew somewhat about the warfare of the time—bushwhacking around for ogres, and bull-fights in the tournament ring, and such things—but otherwise he was empty and useless. Then we took the other young noble in hand, and he was the first one's twin, for ignorance and incapacity. I delivered them into the hands of the chairman of the Board with the comfortable consciousness that their cake was dough. They were examined in the previous order of precedence.

"Name, so please you?"

"Pertipole, son of Sir Pertipole, Baron of Barley Mash."

"Grandfather?"

"Also Sir Pertipole, Baron of Barley Mash."

"Great-grandfather?"

"The same name and title."

"Great-great-grandfather?"

"We had none, worshipful sir, the line failing before it had reached so far back."

"It mattereth not. It is a good four generations, and fulfilleth the requirements of the rule."

"Fulfills what rule?" I asked.

"The rule requiring four generations of nobility or else the candidate is not eligible."

"A man not eligible for a lieutenancy in the army unless he can prove four generations of noble descent?"

"Even so; neither lieutenant nor any other officer may be commissioned without that qualification."

"Oh, come, this is an astonishing thing. What good is such a qualification as that?"

"What good? It is a hardy question, fair sir and Boss, since it doth go far to impugn the wisdom of even our holy Mother Church herself."

"As how?"

"For that she hath established the self-same rule regarding saints. By her law none may be canonized until he hath lain dead four generations."

"I see, I see—it is the same thing. It is wonderful. In the one case a man lies dead-alive four generations—mummified in ignorance and sloth—and that qualifies him to command live people, and take their weal and woe into his impotent hands; and in the other case, a man lies bedded with death and worms four generations, and that qualifies him for office in the celestial camp. Does the king's grace approve of this strange law?"

The king said:

"Why, truly I see naught about it that is strange. All places of honor and of profit do belong, by natural right, to them that be of noble blood, and so these dignities in the army are their property and would be so without this or any rule.

The rule is but to mark a limit. Its purpose is to keep out too recent blood, which would bring into contempt these offices, and men of lofty lineage would turn their backs and scorn to take them. I were to blame an I permitted this calamity. *You* can permit it an you are minded so to do, for you have the delegated authority, but that the king should do it were a most strange madness and not comprehensible to any."

"I yield. Proceed, sir Chief of the Herald's College."

The chairman resumed as follows:

"By what illustrious achievement for the honor of the Throne and State did the founder of your great line lift himself to the sacred dignity of the British nobility?"

"He built a brewery."

"Sire, the Board finds this candidate perfect in all the requirements and qualifications for military command, and doth hold his case open for decision after due examination of his competitor."

The competitor came forward and proved exactly four generations of nobility himself. So there was a tie in military qualifications that far.

He stood aside a moment, and Sir Pertipole was questioned further:

"Of what condition was the wife of the founder of your line?"

"She came of the highest landed gentry, yet she was not noble; she was gracious and pure and charitable, of a blameless life and character, insomuch that in these regards was she peer of the best lady in the land."

"That will do. Stand down." He called up the competing lordling again, and asked: "What was the rank and condition of the great-grandmother who conferred British nobility upon your great house?"

"She was a king's leman and did climb to that splendid eminence by her own unholpen merit from the sewer where she was born."

"Ah, this, indeed, is true nobility, this is the right and perfect intermixture. The lieutenancy is yours, fair lord. Hold it not in contempt; it is the humble step which will lead to grandeurs more worthy of the splendor of an origin like to thine."

I was down in the bottomless pit of humiliation. I had promised myself an easy and zenith-scouring triumph, and this was the outcome!

I was almost ashamed to look my poor disappointed cadet in the face. I told him to go home and be patient, this wasn't the end.

I had a private audience with the king, and made a proposition. I said it was quite right to officer that regiment with nobilities, and he couldn't have done a wiser thing. It would also be a good idea to add five hundred officers to it; in fact, add as many officers as there were nobles and relatives of nobles in the country, even if there should finally be five times as many officers as privates in it; and thus make it the crack regiment, the envied regiment, the King's Own regiment, and entitled to fight on its own hook and in its own way, and go whither it would and come when it pleased, in time of war, and be utterly swell and independent. This would make that regiment the heart's desire of all the nobility, and they would all be satisfied and happy. Then we would make up the rest of the standing army out of commonplace materials, and officer it with

nobodies, as was proper—nobodies selected on a basis of mere efficiency—and we would make this regiment toe the line, allow it no aristocratic freedom from restraint, and force it to do all the work and persistent hammering, to the end that whenever the King's Own was tired and wanted to go off for a change and rummage around amongst ogres and have a good time, it could go without uneasiness, knowing that matters were in safe hands behind it, and business going to be continued at the old stand, same as usual. The king was charmed with the idea.

When I noticed that, it gave me a valuable notion. I thought I saw my way out of an old and stubborn difficulty at last. You see, the royalties of the Pendragon stock were a long-lived race and very fruitful. Whenever a child was born to any of these—and it was pretty often—there was wild joy in the nation's mouth, and piteous sorrow in the nation's heart. The joy was questionable, but the grief was honest. Because the event meant another call for a Royal Grant.

Long was the list of these royalties, and they were a heavy and steadily increasing burden upon the treasury and a menace to the crown. Yet Arthur could not believe this latter fact, and he would not listen to any of my various projects for substituting something in the place of the royal grants. If I could have persuaded him to now and then provide a support for one of these outlying scions from his own pocket, I could have made a grand to-do over it, and it would have had a good effect with the nation; but no, he wouldn't hear of such a thing. He had something like a religious passion for royal grant; he seemed to look upon it as a sort of sacred swag, and one could not irritate him in any way so quickly and so surely as by an attack upon that venerable institution. If I ventured to cautiously hint that there was not another respectable family in England that would humble itself to hold out the hat—however, that is as far as I ever got; he always cut me short there, and peremptorily, too.

But I believed I saw my chance at last. I would form this crack regiment out of officers alone—not a single private. Half of it should consist of nobles, who should fill all the places up to Major-General, and serve gratis and pay their own expenses; and they would be glad to do this when they should learn that the rest of the regiment would consist exclusively of princes of the blood. These princes of the blood should range in rank from Lieutenant-General up to Field Marshal, and be gorgeously salaried and equipped and fed by the state. Moreover—and this was the master stroke—it should be decreed that these princely grandees should be always addressed by a stunningly gaudy and awe-compelling title (which I would presently invent), and they and they only in all England should be so addressed. Finally, all princes of the blood should have free choice; join that regiment, get that great title, and renounce the royal grant, or stay out and

receive a grant. Neatest touch of all: unborn but imminent princes of the blood could be *born* into the regiment, and start fair, with good wages and a permanent situation, upon due notice from the parents.

All the boys would join, I was sure of that; so, all existing grants would be relinquished; that the newly born would always join was equally certain. Within sixty days that quaint and bizarre anomaly, the Royal Grant, would cease to be a living fact, and take its place among the curiosities of the past.



## CHAPTER XXVI. THE FIRST NEWSPAPER

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When I told the king I was going out disguised as a petty freeman to scour the country and familiarize myself with the humbler life of the people, he was all afire with the novelty of the thing in a minute, and was bound to take a chance in the adventure himself—nothing should stop him—he would drop everything and go along—it was the prettiest idea he had run across for many a day. He wanted to glide out the back way and start at once; but I showed him that that wouldn't answer. You see, he was billed for the king's-evil—to touch for it, I mean—and it wouldn't be right to disappoint the house and it wouldn't make a delay worth considering, anyway, it was only a one-night stand. And I thought he ought to tell the queen he was going away. He clouded up at that and looked sad. I was sorry I had spoken, especially when he said mournfully:

"Thou forgettest that Launcelot is here; and where Launcelot is, she noteth not the going forth of the king, nor what day he returneth."

Of course, I changed the Subject. Yes, Guenever was beautiful, it is true, but take her all around she was pretty slack. I never meddled in these matters, they weren't my affair, but I did hate to see the way things were going on, and I don't mind saying that much. Many's the time she had asked me, "Sir Boss, hast seen Sir Launcelot about?" but if ever she went fretting around for the king I didn't happen to be around at the time.

There was a very good lay-out for the king's-evil business—very tidy and creditable. The king sat under a canopy of state; about him were clustered a large body of the clergy in full canonicals. Conspicuous, both for location and personal outfit, stood Marinel, a hermit of the quack-doctor species, to introduce the sick. All abroad over the spacious floor, and clear down to the doors, in a thick jumble, lay or sat the scrofulous, under a strong light. It was as good as a tableau; in fact, it had all the look of being gotten up for that, though it wasn't.

There were eight hundred sick people present. The work was slow; it lacked the interest of novelty for me, because I had seen the ceremonies before; the thing soon became tedious, but the proprieties required me to stick it out. The doctor was there for the reason that in all such crowds there were many people who only imagined something was the matter with them, and many who were

consciously sound but wanted the immortal honor of fleshly contact with a king, and yet others who pretended to illness in order to get the piece of coin that went with the touch. Up to this time this coin had been a wee little gold piece worth about a third of a dollar. When you consider how much that amount of money would buy, in that age and country, and how usual it was to be scrofulous, when not dead, you would understand that the annual king's-evil appropriation was just the River and Harbor bill of that government for the grip it took on the treasury and the chance it afforded for skinning the surplus. So I had privately concluded to touch the treasury itself for the king's-evil. I covered six-sevenths of the appropriation into the treasury a week before starting from Camelot on my adventures, and ordered that the other seventh be inflated into five-cent nickels and delivered into the hands of the head clerk of the King's Evil Department; a nickel to take the place of each gold coin, you see, and do its work for it. It might strain the nickel some, but I judged it could stand it. As a rule, I do not approve of watering stock, but I considered it square enough in this case, for it was just a gift, anyway. Of course, you can water a gift as much as you want to; and I generally do. The old gold and silver coins of the country were of ancient and unknown origin, as a rule, but some of them were Roman; they were ill-shapen, and seldom rounder than a moon that is a week past the full; they were hammered, not minted, and they were so worn with use that the devices upon them were as illegible as blisters, and looked like them. I judged that a sharp, bright new nickel, with a first-rate likeness of the king on one side of it and Guenever on the other, and a blooming pious motto, would take the tuck out of scrofula as handy as a nobler coin and please the scrofulous fancy more; and I was right. This batch was the first it was tried on, and it worked to a charm. The saving in expense was a notable economy. You will see that by these figures: We touched a trifle over 700 of the 800 patients; at former rates, this would have cost the government about \$240; at the new rate we pulled through for about \$35, thus saving upward of \$200 at one swoop. To appreciate the full magnitude of this stroke, consider these other figures: the annual expenses of a national government amount to the equivalent of a contribution of three days' average wages of every individual of the population, counting every individual as if he were a man. If you take a nation of 60,000,000, where average wages are \$2 per day, three days' wages taken from each individual will provide \$360,000,000 and pay the government's expenses. In my day, in my own country, this money was collected from imposts, and the citizen imagined that the foreign importer paid it, and it made him comfortable to think so; whereas, in fact, it was paid by the American people, and was so equally and exactly distributed among them that the annual cost to the 100-millionaire and the

annual cost to the sucking child of the day-laborer was precisely the same—each paid \$6. Nothing could be equaler than that, I reckon. Well, Scotland and Ireland were tributary to Arthur, and the united populations of the British Islands amounted to something less than 1,000,000. A mechanic's average wage was 3 cents a day, when he paid his own keep. By this rule the national government's expenses were \$90,000 a year, or about \$250 a day. Thus, by the substitution of nickels for gold on a king's-evil day, I not only injured no one, dissatisfied no one, but pleased all concerned and saved four-fifths of that day's national expense into the bargain—a saving which would have been the equivalent of \$800,000 in my day in America. In making this substitution I had drawn upon the wisdom of a very remote source—the wisdom of my boyhood—for the true statesman does not despise any wisdom, howsoever lowly may be its origin: in my boyhood I had always saved my pennies and contributed buttons to the foreign missionary cause. The buttons would answer the ignorant savage as well as the coin, the coin would answer me better than the buttons; all hands were happy and nobody hurt.

Marinel took the patients as they came. He examined the candidate; if he couldn't qualify he was warned off; if he could he was passed along to the king. A priest pronounced the words, "They shall lay their hands on the sick, and they shall recover." Then the king stroked the ulcers, while the reading continued; finally, the patient graduated and got his nickel—the king hanging it around his neck himself—and was dismissed. Would you think that that would cure? It certainly did. Any mummerly will cure if the patient's faith is strong in it. Up by Astolat there was a chapel where the Virgin had once appeared to a girl who used to herd geese around there—the girl said so herself—and they built the chapel upon that spot and hung a picture in it representing the occurrence—a picture which you would think it dangerous for a sick person to approach; whereas, on the contrary, thousands of the lame and the sick came and prayed before it every year and went away whole and sound; and even the well could look upon it and live. Of course, when I was told these things I did not believe them; but when I went there and saw them I had to succumb. I saw the cures effected myself; and they were real cures and not questionable. I saw cripples whom I had seen around Camelot for years on crutches, arrive and pray before that picture, and put down their crutches and walk off without a limp. There were piles of crutches there which had been left by such people as a testimony.

In other places people operated on a patient's mind, without saying a word to him, and cured him. In others, experts assembled patients in a room and prayed over them, and appealed to their faith, and those patients went away cured. Wherever you find a king who can't cure the king's-evil you can be sure that the

most valuable superstition that supports his throne—the subject's belief in the divine appointment of his sovereign—has passed away. In my youth the monarchs of England had ceased to touch for the evil, but there was no occasion for this diffidence: they could have cured it forty-nine times in fifty.

Well, when the priest had been droning for three hours, and the good king polishing the evidences, and the sick were still pressing forward as plenty as ever, I got to feeling intolerably bored. I was sitting by an open window not far from the canopy of state. For the five hundredth time a patient stood forward to have his repulsivenesses stroked; again those words were being droned out: "they shall lay their hands on the sick"—when outside there rang clear as a clarion a note that enchanted my soul and tumbled thirteen worthless centuries about my ears: "*Camelot Weekly Hosannah and Literary Volcano!*—latest irruption—only two cents—all about the big miracle in the Valley of Holiness!"

One greater than kings had arrived—the newsboy. But I was the only person in all that throng who knew the meaning of this mighty birth, and what this imperial magician was come into the world to do.

I dropped a nickel out of the window and got my paper; the Adam-newsboy of the world went around the corner to get my change; is around the corner yet.

It was delicious to see a newspaper again, yet I was conscious of a secret shock when my eye fell upon the first batch of display head-lines. I had lived in a clammy atmosphere of reverence, respect, deference, so long that they sent a quivery little cold wave through me:

—and so on, and so on. Yes, it was too loud. Once I could have enjoyed it and seen nothing out of the way about it, but now its note was discordant. It was good Arkansas journalism, but this was not Arkansas. Moreover, the next to the last line was calculated to give offense to the hermits, and perhaps lose us their advertising. Indeed, there was too lightsome a tone of flippancy all through the paper. It was plain I had undergone a considerable change without noticing it. I found myself unpleasantly affected by pert little irreverencies which would have seemed but proper and airy graces of speech at an earlier period of my life.

There was an abundance of the following breed of items, and they discomfited me:

#### **LOCAL SMOKE AND CINDERS.**

Sir Launcelot met up with old King  
Agrivance of Ireland unexpectedly last  
week over on the moor south of Sir  
Balmoral le Merveilleuse's hog dasture.  
The widow has been notified.

Expedition No. 3 will start about the

first of next month on a search for Sir Sagramour le Desirous. It is in command of the renowned Knight of the Red Lawns, assisted by Sir Persant of Inde, who is competent, intelligent, courteous, and in every way a brick, and further assisted by Sir Palamides the Saracen, who is no huckleberry himself. This is no picnic, these boys mean business.

The readers of the Hosannah will regret to learn that the handsome and popular Sir Charolais of Gaul, who during his four weeks' stay at the Bull and Halibut, this city, has won every heart by his polished manners and elegant conversation, will pull out to-day for home. Give us another call, Charley!

The business end of the funeral of the late Sir Dalliance the duke's son of Cornwall, killed in an encounter with the Giant of the Knotted Bludgeon last Tuesday on the borders of the Plain of Enchantment was in the hands of the ever affable and efficient Mumble, prince of undertakers, then whom there exists none by whom it were a more satisfying pleasure to have the last sad offices performed. Give him a trial.

The cordial thanks of the Hosannah office are due, from editor down to devil, to the ever courteous and thoughtful Lord High Steward of the Palace's Third Assistant V t for several sauces of ice cream a quality calculated to make the eye of the recipients humid with gratitude; and it done it. When this administration wants to chalk up a desirable name for early

promotion, the Hosannah would like a chance to suggest.

The Demoiselle Irene Dewlap, of South Astolat, is visiting her uncle, the popular host of the Cattlemen's Boarding House, Liver Lane, this city.

Young Barker the bellows-mender is home again, and looks much improved by his vacation round-up among the outlying smithies. See his ad.

Of course it was good enough journalism for a beginning; I knew that quite well, and yet it was somehow disappointing. The "Court Circular" pleased me better; indeed, its simple and dignified respectfulness was a distinct refreshment to me after all those disgraceful familiarities. But even it could have been improved. Do what one may, there is no getting an air of variety into a court circular, I acknowledge that. There is a profound monotonousness about its facts that baffles and defeats one's sincerest efforts to make them sparkle and enthuse.

The best way to manage—in fact, the only sensible way—is to disguise repetitiousness of fact under variety of form: skin your fact each time and lay on a new cuticle of words. It deceives the eye; you think it is a new fact; it gives you the idea that the court is carrying on like everything; this excites you, and you drain the whole column, with a good appetite, and perhaps never notice that it's a barrel of soup made out of a single bean. Clarence's way was good, it was simple, it was dignified, it was direct and business-like; all I say is, it was not the best way:

However, take the paper by and large, I was vastly pleased with it. Little crudities of a mechanical sort were observable here and there, but there were not enough of them to amount to anything, and it was good enough Arkansas proof-reading, anyhow, and better than was needed in Arthur's day and realm. As a rule, the grammar was leaky and the construction more or less lame; but I did not much mind these things. They are common defects of my own, and one mustn't criticise other people on grounds where he can't stand perpendicular himself.

I was hungry enough for literature to want to take down the whole paper at this one meal, but I got only a few bites, and then had to postpone, because the monks around me besieged me so with eager questions: What is this curious thing? What is it for? Is it a handkerchief?—saddle blanket?—part of a shirt? What is it made of? How thin it is, and how dainty and frail; and how it rattles. Will it wear, do you think, and won't the rain injure it? Is it writing that appears on it, or is it only ornamentation? They suspected it was writing, because those

among them who knew how to read Latin and had a smattering of Greek, recognized some of the letters, but they could make nothing out of the result as a whole. I put my information in the simplest form I could:

"It is a public journal; I will explain what that is, another time. It is not cloth, it is made of paper; some time I will explain what paper is. The lines on it are reading matter; and not written by hand, but printed; by and by I will explain what printing is. A thousand of these sheets have been made, all exactly like this, in every minute detail—they can't be told apart." Then they all broke out with exclamations of surprise and admiration:

"A thousand! Verily a mighty work—a year's work for many men."

"No—merely a day's work for a man and a boy."

They crossed themselves, and whiffed out a protective prayer or two.

"Ah-h—a miracle, a wonder! Dark work of enchantment."

I let it go at that. Then I read in a low voice, to as many as could crowd their shaven heads within hearing distance, part of the account of the miracle of the restoration of the well, and was accompanied by astonished and reverent ejaculations all through: "Ah-h-h!" "How true!" "Amazing, amazing!" "These be the very haps as they happened, in marvelous exactness!" And might they take this strange thing in their hands, and feel of it and examine it?—they would be very careful. Yes. So they took it, handling it as cautiously and devoutly as if it had been some holy thing come from some supernatural region; and gently felt of its texture, caressed its pleasant smooth surface with lingering touch, and scanned the mysterious characters with fascinated eyes. These grouped bent heads, these charmed faces, these speaking eyes—how beautiful to me! For was not this my darling, and was not all this mute wonder and interest and homage a most eloquent tribute and unforced compliment to it? I knew, then, how a mother feels when women, whether strangers or friends, take her new baby, and close themselves about it with one eager impulse, and bend their heads over it in a tranced adoration that makes all the rest of the universe vanish out of their consciousness and be as if it were not, for that time. I knew how she feels, and that there is no other satisfied ambition, whether of king, conqueror, or poet, that ever reaches half-way to that serene far summit or yields half so divine a contentment.

During all the rest of the seance my paper traveled from group to group all up and down and about that huge hall, and my happy eye was upon it always, and I sat motionless, steeped in satisfaction, drunk with enjoyment. Yes, this was heaven; I was tasting it once, if I might never taste it more.

## CHAPTER XXVII. THE YANKEE AND THE KING TRAVEL INCOGNITO

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About bedtime I took the king to my private quarters to cut his hair and help him get the hang of the lowly raiment he was to wear. The high classes wore their hair banged across the forehead but hanging to the shoulders the rest of the way around, whereas the lowest ranks of commoners were banged fore and aft both; the slaves were bangless, and allowed their hair free growth. So I inverted a bowl over his head and cut away all the locks that hung below it. I also trimmed his whiskers and mustache until they were only about a half-inch long; and tried to do it inartistically, and succeeded. It was a villainous disfigurement.

When he got his lubberly sandals on, and his long robe of coarse brown linen cloth, which hung straight from his neck to his ankle-bones, he was no longer the comeliest man in his kingdom, but one of the unhandsomest and most commonplace and unattractive. We were dressed and barbered alike, and could pass for small farmers, or farm bailiffs, or shepherds, or carters; yes, or for village artisans, if we chose, our costume being in effect universal among the poor, because of its strength and cheapness. I don't mean that it was really cheap to a very poor person, but I do mean that it was the cheapest material there was for male attire—manufactured material, you understand.

We slipped away an hour before dawn, and by broad sun-up had made eight or ten miles, and were in the midst of a sparsely settled country. I had a pretty heavy knapsack; it was laden with provisions—provisions for the king to taper down on, till he could take to the coarse fare of the country without damage.

I found a comfortable seat for the king by the roadside, and then gave him a morsel or two to stay his stomach with. Then I said I would find some water for him, and strolled away. Part of my project was to get out of sight and sit down and rest a little myself. It had always been my custom to stand when in his presence; even at the council board, except upon those rare occasions when the sitting was a very long one, extending over hours; then I had a trifling little backless thing which was like a reversed culvert and was as comfortable as the toothache. I didn't want to break him in suddenly, but do it by degrees. We should have to sit together now when in company, or people would notice; but it



would not be good politics for me to be playing equality with him when there was no necessity for it.

I found the water some three hundred yards away, and had been resting about twenty minutes, when I heard voices. That is all right, I thought—peasants going to work; nobody else likely to be stirring this early. But the next moment these comers jingled into sight around a turn of the road—smartly clad people of quality, with luggage-mules and servants in their train! I was off like a shot, through the bushes, by the shortest cut. For a while it did seem that these people would pass the king before I could get to him; but desperation gives you wings, you know, and I canted my body forward, inflated my breast, and held my breath and flew. I arrived. And in plenty good enough time, too.

"Pardon, my king, but it's no time for ceremony—jump! Jump to your feet—some quality are coming!"

"Is that a marvel? Let them come."

"But my liege! You must not be seen sitting. Rise!—and stand in humble posture while they pass. You are a peasant, you know."

"True—I had forgot it, so lost was I in planning of a huge war with Gaul"—he was up by this time, but a farm could have got up quicker, if there was any kind of a boom in real estate—"and right-so a thought came randoming overthwart this majestic dream the which—"

"A humbler attitude, my lord the king—and quick! Duck your head!—more!—still more!—droop it!"

He did his honest best, but lord, it was no great things. He looked as humble as the leaning tower at Pisa. It is the most you could say of it. Indeed, it was such a thundering poor success that it raised wondering scowls all along the line, and a gorgeous flunkey at the tail end of it raised his whip; but I jumped in time and was under it when it fell; and under cover of the volley of coarse laughter which followed, I spoke up sharply and warned the king to take no notice. He mastered himself for the moment, but it was a sore tax; he wanted to eat up the procession. I said:

"It would end our adventures at the very start; and we, being without weapons, could do nothing with that armed gang. If we are going to succeed in our emprise, we must not only look the peasant but act the peasant."

"It is wisdom; none can gainsay it. Let us go on, Sir Boss. I will take note and learn, and do the best I may."

He kept his word. He did the best he could, but I've seen better. If you have ever seen an active, heedless, enterprising child going diligently out of one mischief and into another all day long, and an anxious mother at its heels all the while, and just saving it by a hair from drowning itself or breaking its neck with

each new experiment, you've seen the king and me.

If I could have foreseen what the thing was going to be like, I should have said, No, if anybody wants to make his living exhibiting a king as a peasant, let him take the layout; I can do better with a menagerie, and last longer. And yet, during the first three days I never allowed him to enter a hut or other dwelling.

If he could pass muster anywhere during his early novitiate it would be in small inns and on the road; so to these places we confined ourselves. Yes, he certainly did the best he could, but what of that? He didn't improve a bit that I could see.

He was always frightening me, always breaking out with fresh astonishers, in new and unexpected places. Toward evening on the second day, what does he do but blandly fetch out a dirk from inside his robe!

"Great guns, my liege, where did you get that?"

"From a smuggler at the inn, yester eve."

"What in the world possessed you to buy it?"

"We have escaped divers dangers by wit—thy wit—but I have bethought me that it were but prudence if I bore a weapon, too. Thine might fail thee in some pinch."

"But people of our condition are not allowed to carry arms. What would a lord say—yes, or any other person of whatever condition—if he caught an upstart peasant with a dagger on his person?"

It was a lucky thing for us that nobody came along just then. I persuaded him to throw the dirk away; and it was as easy as persuading a child to give up some bright fresh new way of killing itself. We walked along, silent and thinking. Finally the king said:

"When ye know that I meditate a thing inconvenient, or that hath a peril in it, why do you not warn me to cease from that project?"

It was a startling question, and a puzzler. I didn't quite know how to take hold of it, or what to say, and so, of course, I ended by saying the natural thing:

"But, sire, how can I know what your thoughts are?"

The king stopped dead in his tracks, and stared at me.

"I believed thou wert greater than Merlin; and truly in magic thou art. But prophecy is greater than magic. Merlin is a prophet."

I saw I had made a blunder. I must get back my lost ground. After a deep reflection and careful planning, I said:

"Sire, I have been misunderstood. I will explain. There are two kinds of prophecy. One is the gift to foretell things that are but a little way off, the other is the gift to foretell things that are whole ages and centuries away. Which is the mightier gift, do you think?"

"Oh, the last, most surely!"

"True. Does Merlin possess it?"

"Partly, yes. He foretold mysteries about my birth and future kingship that were twenty years away."

"Has he ever gone beyond that?"

"He would not claim more, I think."

"It is probably his limit. All prophets have their limit. The limit of some of the great prophets has been a hundred years."

"These are few, I ween."

"There have been two still greater ones, whose limit was four hundred and six hundred years, and one whose limit compassed even seven hundred and twenty."

"Gramercy, it is marvelous!"

"But what are these in comparison with me? They are nothing."

"What? Canst thou truly look beyond even so vast a stretch of time as—"

"Seven hundred years? My liege, as clear as the vision of an eagle does my prophetic eye penetrate and lay bare the future of this world for nearly thirteen centuries and a half!"

My land, you should have seen the king's eyes spread slowly open, and lift the earth's entire atmosphere as much as an inch! That settled Brer Merlin. One never had any occasion to prove his facts, with these people; all he had to do was to state them. It never occurred to anybody to doubt the statement.

"Now, then," I continued, "I *could* work both kinds of prophecy—the long and the short—if I chose to take the trouble to keep in practice; but I seldom exercise any but the long kind, because the other is beneath my dignity. It is properer to Merlin's sort—stump-tail prophets, as we call them in the profession.

Of course, I whet up now and then and flirt out a minor prophecy, but not often—hardly ever, in fact. You will remember that there was great talk, when you reached the Valley of Holiness, about my having prophesied your coming and the very hour of your arrival, two or three days beforehand."

"Indeed, yes, I mind it now."

"Well, I could have done it as much as forty times easier, and piled on a thousand times more detail into the bargain, if it had been five hundred years away instead of two or three days."

"How amazing that it should be so!"

"Yes, a genuine expert can always foretell a thing that is five hundred years away easier than he can a thing that's only five hundred seconds off."

"And yet in reason it should clearly be the other way; it should be five hundred times as easy to foretell the last as the first, for, indeed, it is so close by that one uninspired might almost see it. In truth, the law of prophecy doth

contradict the likelihoods, most strangely making the difficult easy, and the easy difficult."

It was a wise head. A peasant's cap was no safe disguise for it; you could know it for a king's under a diving-bell, if you could hear it work its intellect.

I had a new trade now, and plenty of business in it. The king was as hungry to find out everything that was going to happen during the next thirteen centuries as if he were expecting to live in them. From that time out, I prophesied myself bald-headed trying to supply the demand. I have done some indiscreet things in my day, but this thing of playing myself for a prophet was the worst. Still, it had its ameliorations. A prophet doesn't have to have any brains. They are good to have, of course, for the ordinary exigencies of life, but they are no use in professional work. It is the restfulest vocation there is. When the spirit of prophecy comes upon you, you merely take your intellect and lay it off in a cool place for a rest, and unship your jaw and leave it alone; it will work itself: the result is prophecy.

Every day a knight-errant or so came along, and the sight of them fired the king's martial spirit every time. He would have forgotten himself, sure, and said something to them in a style a suspicious shade or so above his ostensible degree, and so I always got him well out of the road in time. Then he would stand and look with all his eyes; and a proud light would flash from them, and his nostrils would inflate like a war-horse's, and I knew he was longing for a brush with them. But about noon of the third day I had stopped in the road to take a precaution which had been suggested by the whip-stroke that had fallen to my share two days before; a precaution which I had afterward decided to leave untaken, I was so loath to institute it; but now I had just had a fresh reminder: while striding heedlessly along, with jaw spread and intellect at rest, for I was prophesying, I stubbed my toe and fell sprawling. I was so pale I couldn't think for a moment; then I got softly and carefully up and unstrapped my knapsack. I had that dynamite bomb in it, done up in wool in a box. It was a good thing to have along; the time would come when I could do a valuable miracle with it, maybe, but it was a nervous thing to have about me, and I didn't like to ask the king to carry it. Yet I must either throw it away or think up some safe way to get along with its society. I got it out and slipped it into my srip, and just then here came a couple of knights. The king stood, stately as a statue, gazing toward them—had forgotten himself again, of course—and before I could get a word of warning out, it was time for him to skip, and well that he did it, too. He supposed they would turn aside. Turn aside to avoid trampling peasant dirt under foot? When had he ever turned aside himself—or ever had the chance to do it, if a peasant saw him or any other noble knight in time to judiciously save

him the trouble? The knights paid no attention to the king at all; it was his place to look out himself, and if he hadn't skipped he would have been placidly ridden down, and laughed at besides.

The king was in a flaming fury, and launched out his challenge and epithets with a most royal vigor. The knights were some little distance by now. They halted, greatly surprised, and turned in their saddles and looked back, as if wondering if it might be worth while to bother with such scum as we. Then they wheeled and started for us. Not a moment must be lost. I started for *them*. I passed them at a rattling gait, and as I went by I flung out a hair-lifting soul-scorching thirteen-jointed insult which made the king's effort poor and cheap by comparison. I got it out of the nineteenth century where they know how. They had such headway that they were nearly to the king before they could check up; then, frantic with rage, they stood up their horses on their hind hoofs and whirled them around, and the next moment here they came, breast to breast. I was seventy yards off, then, and scrambling up a great boulder at the roadside.

When they were within thirty yards of me they let their long lances droop to a level, depressed their mailed heads, and so, with their horse-hair plumes streaming straight out behind, most gallant to see, this lightning express came tearing for me! When they were within fifteen yards, I sent that bomb with a sure aim, and it struck the ground just under the horses' noses.

Yes, it was a neat thing, very neat and pretty to see. It resembled a steamboat explosion on the Mississippi; and during the next fifteen minutes we stood under a steady drizzle of microscopic fragments of knights and hardware and horse-flesh. I say we, for the king joined the audience, of course, as soon as he had got his breath again. There was a hole there which would afford steady work for all the people in that region for some years to come—in trying to explain it, I mean; as for filling it up, that service would be comparatively prompt, and would fall to the lot of a select few—peasants of that seignory; and they wouldn't get anything for it, either.

But I explained it to the king myself. I said it was done with a dynamite bomb. This information did him no damage, because it left him as intelligent as he was before. However, it was a noble miracle, in his eyes, and was another settler for Merlin. I thought it well enough to explain that this was a miracle of so rare a sort that it couldn't be done except when the atmospheric conditions were just right. Otherwise he would be encoring it every time we had a good subject, and that would be inconvenient, because I hadn't any more bombs along.

## CHAPTER XXVIII. DRILLING THE KING

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On the morning of the fourth day, when it was just sunrise, and we had been tramping an hour in the chill dawn, I came to a resolution: the king *must* be drilled; things could not go on so, he must be taken in hand and deliberately and conscientiously drilled, or we couldn't ever venture to enter a dwelling; the very cats would know this masquerader for a humbug and no peasant. So I called a halt and said:

"Sire, as between clothes and countenance, you are all right, there is no discrepancy; but as between your clothes and your bearing, you are all wrong, there is a most noticeable discrepancy. Your soldierly stride, your lordly port—these will not do. You stand too straight, your looks are too high, too confident.

The cares of a kingdom do not stoop the shoulders, they do not droop the chin, they do not depress the high level of the eye-glance, they do not put doubt and fear in the heart and hang out the signs of them in slouching body and unsure step. It is the sordid cares of the lowly born that do these things. You must learn the trick; you must imitate the trademarks of poverty, misery, oppression, insult, and the other several and common inhumanities that sap the manliness out of a man and make him a loyal and proper and approved subject and a satisfaction to his masters, or the very infants will know you for better than your disguise, and we shall go to pieces at the first hut we stop at. Pray try to walk like this."

The king took careful note, and then tried an imitation.

"Pretty fair—pretty fair. Chin a little lower, please—there, very good. Eyes too high; pray don't look at the horizon, look at the ground, ten steps in front of you. Ah—that is better, that is very good. Wait, please; you betray too much vigor, too much decision; you want more of a shamble. Look at me, please—this is what I mean.... Now you are getting it; that is the idea—at least, it sort of approaches it.... Yes, that is pretty fair. *But!* There is a great big something wanting, I don't quite know what it is. Please walk thirty yards, so that I can get a perspective on the thing.... Now, then—your head's right, speed's right, shoulders right, eyes right, chin right, gait, carriage, general style right—everything's right! And yet the fact remains, the aggregate's wrong. The account don't balance. Do it again, please.... Now I think I begin to see what it

is. Yes, I've struck it. You see, the genuine spiritlessness is wanting; that's what's the trouble. It's all *amateur*—mechanical details all right, almost to a hair; everything about the delusion perfect, except that it don't delude."

"What, then, must one do, to prevail?"

"Let me think... I can't seem to quite get at it. In fact, there isn't anything that can right the matter but practice. This is a good place for it: roots and stony ground to break up your stately gait, a region not liable to interruption, only one field and one hut in sight, and they so far away that nobody could see us from there. It will be well to move a little off the road and put in the whole day drilling you, sire."

After the drill had gone on a little while, I said:

"Now, sire, imagine that we are at the door of the hut yonder, and the family are before us. Proceed, please—accost the head of the house."

The king unconsciously straightened up like a monument, and said, with frozen austerity:

"Varlet, bring a seat; and serve to me what cheer ye have."

"Ah, your grace, that is not well done."

"In what lacketh it?"

"These people do not call *each other* varlets."

"Nay, is that true?"

"Yes; only those above them call them so."

"Then must I try again. I will call him villein."

"No-no; for he may be a freeman."

"Ah—so. Then peradventure I should call him goodman."

"That would answer, your grace, but it would be still better if you said friend, or brother."

"Brother!—to dirt like that?"

"Ah, but *we* are pretending to be dirt like that, too."

"It is even true. I will say it. Brother, bring a seat, and thereto what cheer ye have, withal. Now 'tis right."

"Not quite, not wholly right. You have asked for one, not *us*—for one, not both; food for one, a seat for one."

The king looked puzzled—he wasn't a very heavy weight, intellectually. His head was an hour-glass; it could stow an idea, but it had to do it a grain at a time, not the whole idea at once.

"Would *you* have a seat also—and sit?"

"If I did not sit, the man would perceive that we were only pretending to be equals—and playing the deception pretty poorly, too."

"It is well and truly said! How wonderful is truth, come it in whatsoever

unexpected form it may! Yes, he must bring out seats and food for both, and in serving us present not ewer and napkin with more show of respect to the one than to the other."

"And there is even yet a detail that needs correcting. He must bring nothing outside; we will go in—in among the dirt, and possibly other repulsive things,—and take the food with the household, and after the fashion of the house, and all on equal terms, except the man be of the serf class; and finally, there will be no ewer and no napkin, whether he be serf or free. Please walk again, my liege.

There—it is better—it is the best yet; but not perfect. The shoulders have known no ignobler burden than iron mail, and they will not stoop."

"Give me, then, the bag. I will learn the spirit that goeth with burdens that have not honor. It is the spirit that stoopeth the shoulders, I ween, and not the weight; for armor is heavy, yet it is a proud burden, and a man standeth straight in it.... Nay, but me no buts, offer me no objections. I will have the thing. Strap it upon my back."

He was complete now with that knapsack on, and looked as little like a king as any man I had ever seen. But it was an obstinate pair of shoulders; they could not seem to learn the trick of stooping with any sort of deceptive naturalness. The drill went on, I prompting and correcting:

"Now, make believe you are in debt, and eaten up by relentless creditors; you are out of work—which is horse-shoeing, let us say—and can get none; and your wife is sick, your children are crying because they are hungry—"

And so on, and so on. I drilled him as representing in turn all sorts of people out of luck and suffering dire privations and misfortunes. But lord, it was only just words, words—they meant nothing in the world to him, I might just as well have whistled. Words realize nothing, vivify nothing to you, unless you have suffered in your own person the thing which the words try to describe. There are wise people who talk ever so knowingly and complacently about "the working classes," and satisfy themselves that a day's hard intellectual work is very much harder than a day's hard manual toil, and is righteously entitled to much bigger pay. Why, they really think that, you know, because they know all about the one, but haven't tried the other. But I know all about both; and so far as I am concerned, there isn't money enough in the universe to hire me to swing a pickaxe thirty days, but I will do the hardest kind of intellectual work for just as near nothing as you can cipher it down—and I will be satisfied, too.

Intellectual "work" is misnamed; it is a pleasure, a dissipation, and is its own highest reward. The poorest paid architect, engineer, general, author, sculptor, painter, lecturer, advocate, legislator, actor, preacher, singer is constructively in heaven when he is at work; and as for the musician with the fiddle-bow in his



hand who sits in the midst of a great orchestra with the ebbing and flowing tides of divine sound washing over him—why, certainly, he is at work, if you wish to call it that, but lord, it's a sarcasm just the same. The law of work does seem utterly unfair—but there it is, and nothing can change it: the higher the pay in enjoyment the worker gets out of it, the higher shall be his pay in cash, also. And it's also the very law of those transparent swindles, transmissible nobility and kingship.

## CHAPTER XXIX. THE SMALLPOX HUT

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When we arrived at that hut at mid-afternoon, we saw no signs of life about it. The field near by had been denuded of its crop some time before, and had a skinned look, so exhaustively had it been harvested and gleaned. Fences, sheds, everything had a ruined look, and were eloquent of poverty. No animal was around anywhere, no living thing in sight. The stillness was awful, it was like the stillness of death. The cabin was a one-story one, whose thatch was black with age, and ragged from lack of repair.

The door stood a trifle ajar. We approached it stealthily—on tiptoe and at half-breath—for that is the way one's feeling makes him do, at such a time. The king knocked. We waited. No answer. Knocked again. No answer. I pushed the door softly open and looked in. I made out some dim forms, and a woman started up from the ground and stared at me, as one does who is wakened from sleep. Presently she found her voice:

"Have mercy!" she pleaded. "All is taken, nothing is left."

"I have not come to take anything, poor woman."

"You are not a priest?"

"No."

"Nor come not from the lord of the manor?"

"No, I am a stranger."

"Oh, then, for the fear of God, who visits with misery and death such as be harmless, tarry not here, but fly! This place is under his curse—and his Church's."

"Let me come in and help you—you are sick and in trouble."

I was better used to the dim light now. I could see her hollow eyes fixed upon me. I could see how emaciated she was.

"I tell you the place is under the Church's ban. Save yourself—and go, before some straggler see thee here, and report it."

"Give yourself no trouble about me; I don't care anything for the Church's curse. Let me help you."

"Now all good spirits—if there be any such—bless thee for that word. Would God I had a sup of water!—but hold, hold, forget I said it, and fly; for

there is that here that even he that feareth not the Church must fear: this disease whereof we die. Leave us, thou brave, good stranger, and take with thee such whole and sincere blessing as them that be accursed can give."

But before this I had picked up a wooden bowl and was rushing past the king on my way to the brook. It was ten yards away. When I got back and entered, the king was within, and was opening the shutter that closed the window-hole, to let in air and light. The place was full of a foul stench. I put the bowl to the woman's lips, and as she gripped it with her eager talons the shutter came open and a strong light flooded her face. Smallpox!

I sprang to the king, and said in his ear:

"Out of the door on the instant, sire! the woman is dying of that disease that wasted the skirts of Camelot two years ago."

He did not budge.

"Of a truth I shall remain—and likewise help."

I whispered again:

"King, it must not be. You must go."

"Ye mean well, and ye speak not unwisely. But it were shame that a king should know fear, and shame that belted knight should withhold his hand where be such as need succor. Peace, I will not go. It is you who must go. The Church's ban is not upon me, but it forbiddeth you to be here, and she will deal with you with a heavy hand an word come to her of your trespass."

It was a desperate place for him to be in, and might cost him his life, but it was no use to argue with him. If he considered his knightly honor at stake here, that was the end of argument; he would stay, and nothing could prevent it; I was aware of that. And so I dropped the subject. The woman spoke:

"Fair sir, of your kindness will ye climb the ladder there, and bring me news of what ye find? Be not afraid to report, for times can come when even a mother's heart is past breaking—being already broke."

"Abide," said the king, "and give the woman to eat. I will go." And he put down the knapsack.

I turned to start, but the king had already started. He halted, and looked down upon a man who lay in a dim light, and had not noticed us thus far, or spoken.

"Is it your husband?" the king asked.

"Yes."

"Is he asleep?"

"God be thanked for that one charity, yes—these three hours. Where shall I pay to the full, my gratitude! for my heart is bursting with it for that sleep he sleepeth now."

I said:

"We will be careful. We will not wake him."

"Ah, no, that ye will not, for he is dead."

"Dead?"

"Yes, what triumph it is to know it! None can harm him, none insult him more. He is in heaven now, and happy; or if not there, he bides in hell and is content; for in that place he will find neither abbot nor yet bishop. We were boy and girl together; we were man and wife these five and twenty years, and never separated till this day. Think how long that is to love and suffer together. This morning was he out of his mind, and in his fancy we were boy and girl again and wandering in the happy fields; and so in that innocent glad converse wandered he far and farther, still lightly gossiping, and entered into those other fields we know not of, and was shut away from mortal sight. And so there was no parting, for in his fancy I went with him; he knew not but I went with him, my hand in his—my young soft hand, not this withered claw. Ah, yes, to go, and know it not; to separate and know it not; how could one go peace—fuller than that? It was his reward for a cruel life patiently borne."

There was a slight noise from the direction of the dim corner where the ladder was. It was the king descending. I could see that he was bearing something in one arm, and assisting himself with the other. He came forward into the light; upon his breast lay a slender girl of fifteen. She was but half conscious; she was dying of smallpox. Here was heroism at its last and loftiest possibility, its utmost summit; this was challenging death in the open field unarmed, with all the odds against the challenger, no reward set upon the contest, and no admiring world in silks and cloth of gold to gaze and applaud; and yet the king's bearing was as serenely brave as it had always been in those cheaper contests where knight meets knight in equal fight and clothed in protecting steel. He was great now; sublimely great. The rude statues of his ancestors in his palace should have an addition—I would see to that; and it would not be a mailed king killing a giant or a dragon, like the rest, it would be a king in commoner's garb bearing death in his arms that a peasant mother might look her last upon her child and be comforted.

He laid the girl down by her mother, who poured out endearments and caresses from an overflowing heart, and one could detect a flickering faint light of response in the child's eyes, but that was all. The mother hung over her, kissing her, petting her, and imploring her to speak, but the lips only moved and no sound came. I snatched my liquor flask from my knapsack, but the woman forbade me, and said:

"No—she does not suffer; it is better so. It might bring her back to life.

None that be so good and kind as ye are would do her that cruel hurt. For look you—what is left to live for? Her brothers are gone, her father is gone, her mother goeth, the Church's curse is upon her, and none may shelter or befriend her even though she lay perishing in the road. She is desolate. I have not asked you, good heart, if her sister be still on live, here overhead; I had no need; ye had gone back, else, and not left the poor thing forsaken—"

"She lieth at peace," interrupted the king, in a subdued voice.

"I would not change it. How rich is this day in happiness! Ah, my Annis, thou shalt join thy sister soon—thou'rt on thy way, and these be merciful friends that will not hinder."

And so she fell to murmuring and cooing over the girl again, and softly stroking her face and hair, and kissing her and calling her by endearing names; but there was scarcely sign of response now in the glazing eyes. I saw tears well from the king's eyes, and trickle down his face. The woman noticed them, too, and said:

"Ah, I know that sign: thou'st a wife at home, poor soul, and you and she have gone hungry to bed, many's the time, that the little ones might have your crust; you know what poverty is, and the daily insults of your betters, and the heavy hand of the Church and the king."

The king winced under this accidental home-shot, but kept still; he was learning his part; and he was playing it well, too, for a pretty dull beginner. I struck up a diversion. I offered the woman food and liquor, but she refused both.

She would allow nothing to come between her and the release of death. Then I slipped away and brought the dead child from aloft, and laid it by her. This broke her down again, and there was another scene that was full of heartbreak. By and by I made another diversion, and beguiled her to sketch her story.

"Ye know it well yourselves, having suffered it—for truly none of our condition in Britain escape it. It is the old, weary tale. We fought and struggled and succeeded; meaning by success, that we lived and did not die; more than that is not to be claimed. No troubles came that we could not outlive, till this year brought them; then came they all at once, as one might say, and overwhelmed us. Years ago the lord of the manor planted certain fruit trees on our farm; in the best part of it, too—a grievous wrong and shame—"

"But it was his right," interrupted the king.

"None denieth that, indeed; an the law mean anything, what is the lord's is his, and what is mine is his also. Our farm was ours by lease, therefore 'twas likewise his, to do with it as he would. Some little time ago, three of those trees were found hewn down. Our three grown sons ran frightened to report the crime. Well, in his lordship's dungeon there they lie, who saith there shall they

lie and rot till they confess. They have naught to confess, being innocent, wherefore there will they remain until they die.

Ye know that right well, I ween. Think how this left us; a man, a woman and two children, to gather a crop that was planted by so much greater force, yes, and protect it night and day from pigeons and prowling animals that be sacred and must not be hurt by any of our sort. When my lord's crop was nearly ready for the harvest, so also was ours; when his bell rang to call us to his fields to harvest his crop for nothing, he would not allow that I and my two girls should count for our three captive sons, but for only two of them; so, for the lacking one were we daily fined. All this time our own crop was perishing through neglect; and so both the priest and his lordship fined us because their shares of it were suffering through damage. In the end the fines ate up our crop—and they took it all; they took it all and made us harvest it for them, without pay or food, and we starving.

Then the worst came when I, being out of my mind with hunger and loss of my boys, and grief to see my husband and my little maids in rags and misery and despair, uttered a deep blasphemy—oh! a thousand of them!—against the Church and the Church's ways. It was ten days ago. I had fallen sick with this disease, and it was to the priest I said the words, for he was come to chide me for lack of due humility under the chastening hand of God. He carried my trespass to his betters; I was stubborn; wherefore, presently upon my head and upon all heads that were dear to me, fell the curse of Rome.

"Since that day we are avoided, shunned with horror. None has come near this hut to know whether we live or not. The rest of us were taken down. Then I roused me and got up, as wife and mother will. It was little they could have eaten in any case; it was less than little they had to eat. But there was water, and I gave them that. How they craved it! and how they blessed it! But the end came yesterday; my strength broke down. Yesterday was the last time I ever saw my husband and this youngest child alive. I have lain here all these hours—these ages, ye may say—listening, listening for any sound up there that—"

She gave a sharp quick glance at her eldest daughter, then cried out, "Oh, my darling!" and feebly gathered the stiffening form to her sheltering arms. She had recognized the death-rattle.

## CHAPTER XXX. THE TRAGEDY OF THE MANOR-HOUSE

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At midnight all was over, and we sat in the presence of four corpses. We covered them with such rags as we could find, and started away, fastening the door behind us. Their home must be these people's grave, for they could not have Christian burial, or be admitted to consecrated ground. They were as dogs, wild beasts, lepers, and no soul that valued its hope of eternal life would throw it away by meddling in any sort with these rebuked and smitten outcasts.

We had not moved four steps when I caught a sound as of footsteps upon gravel. My heart flew to my throat. We must not be seen coming from that house. I plucked at the king's robe and we drew back and took shelter behind the corner of the cabin.

"Now we are safe," I said, "but it was a close call—so to speak. If the night had been lighter he might have seen us, no doubt, he seemed to be so near."

"Mayhap it is but a beast and not a man at all."

"True. But man or beast, it will be wise to stay here a minute and let it get by and out of the way."

"Hark! It cometh hither."

True again. The step was coming toward us—straight toward the hut. It must be a beast, then, and we might as well have saved our trepidation. I was going to step out, but the king laid his hand upon my arm. There was a moment of silence, then we heard a soft knock on the cabin door. It made me shiver.

Presently the knock was repeated, and then we heard these words in a guarded voice:

"Mother! Father! Open—we have got free, and we bring news to pale your cheeks but glad your hearts; and we may not tarry, but must fly! And—but they answer not. Mother! father!—"

I drew the king toward the other end of the hut and whispered:

"Come—now we can get to the road."

The king hesitated, was going to demur; but just then we heard the door give way, and knew that those desolate men were in the presence of their dead.

"Come, my liege! in a moment they will strike a light, and then will follow

that which it would break your heart to hear."

He did not hesitate this time. The moment we were in the road I ran; and after a moment he threw dignity aside and followed. I did not want to think of what was happening in the hut—I couldn't bear it; I wanted to drive it out of my mind; so I struck into the first subject that lay under that one in my mind:

"I have had the disease those people died of, and so have nothing to fear; but if you have not had it also—"

He broke in upon me to say he was in trouble, and it was his conscience that was troubling him:

"These young men have got free, they say—but *how* ? It is not likely that their lord hath set them free."

"Oh, no, I make no doubt they escaped."

"That is my trouble; I have a fear that this is so, and your suspicion doth confirm it, you having the same fear."

"I should not call it by that name though. I do suspect that they escaped, but if they did, I am not sorry, certainly."

"I am not sorry, I *think*—but—"

"What is it? What is there for one to be troubled about?"

"*If* they did escape, then are we bound in duty to lay hands upon them and deliver them again to their lord; for it is not seemly that one of his quality should suffer a so insolent and high-handed outrage from persons of their base degree."

There it was again. He could see only one side of it. He was born so, educated so, his veins were full of ancestral blood that was rotten with this sort of unconscious brutality, brought down by inheritance from a long procession of hearts that had each done its share toward poisoning the stream. To imprison these men without proof, and starve their kindred, was no harm, for they were merely peasants and subject to the will and pleasure of their lord, no matter what fearful form it might take; but for these men to break out of unjust captivity was insult and outrage, and a thing not to be countenanced by any conscientious person who knew his duty to his sacred caste.

I worked more than half an hour before I got him to change the subject—and even then an outside matter did it for me. This was a something which caught our eyes as we struck the summit of a small hill—a red glow, a good way off.

"That's a fire," said I.

Fires interested me considerably, because I was getting a good deal of an insurance business started, and was also training some horses and building some steam fire-engines, with an eye to a paid fire department by and by. The priests opposed both my fire and life insurance, on the ground that it was an insolent attempt to hinder the decrees of God; and if you pointed out that they did not



hinder the decrees in the least, but only modified the hard consequences of them if you took out policies and had luck, they retorted that that was gambling against the decrees of God, and was just as bad. So they managed to damage those industries more or less, but I got even on my accident business. As a rule, a knight is a lummux, and some times even a labrick, and hence open to pretty poor arguments when they come glibly from a superstition-monger, but even *he* could see the practical side of a thing once in a while; and so of late you couldn't clean up a tournament and pile the result without finding one of my accident-tickets in every helmet.

We stood there awhile, in the thick darkness and stillness, looking toward the red blur in the distance, and trying to make out the meaning of a far-away murmur that rose and fell fitfully on the night. Sometimes it swelled up and for a moment seemed less remote; but when we were hopefully expecting it to betray its cause and nature, it dulled and sank again, carrying its mystery with it. We started down the hill in its direction, and the winding road plunged us at once into almost solid darkness—darkness that was packed and crammed in between two tall forest walls. We groped along down for half a mile, perhaps, that murmur growing more and more distinct all the time. The coming storm threatening more and more, with now and then a little shiver of wind, a faint show of lightning, and dull grumblings of distant thunder. I was in the lead. I ran against something—a soft heavy something which gave, slightly, to the impulse of my weight; at the same moment the lightning glared out, and within a foot of my face was the writhing face of a man who was hanging from the limb of a tree! That is, it seemed to be writhing, but it was not. It was a grewsome sight. Straightway there was an ear-splitting explosion of thunder, and the bottom of heaven fell out; the rain poured down in a deluge. No matter, we must try to cut this man down, on the chance that there might be life in him yet, mustn't we? The lightning came quick and sharp now, and the place was alternately noonday and midnight. One moment the man would be hanging before me in an intense light, and the next he was blotted out again in the darkness. I told the king we must cut him down. The king at once objected.

"If he hanged himself, he was willing to lose his property to his lord; so let him be. If others hanged him, belike they had the right—let him hang."

"But—"

"But me no buts, but even leave him as he is. And for yet another reason. When the lightning cometh again—there, look abroad."

Two others hanging, within fifty yards of us!

"It is not weather meet for doing useless courtesies unto dead folk. They are past thanking you. Come—it is unprofitable to tarry here."

There was reason in what he said, so we moved on. Within the next mile we counted six more hanging forms by the blaze of the lightning, and altogether it was a grisly excursion. That murmur was a murmur no longer, it was a roar; a roar of men's voices. A man came flying by now, dimly through the darkness, and other men chasing him. They disappeared. Presently another case of the kind occurred, and then another and another. Then a sudden turn of the road brought us in sight of that fire—it was a large manor-house, and little or nothing was left of it—and everywhere men were flying and other men raging after them in pursuit.

I warned the king that this was not a safe place for strangers. We would better get away from the light, until matters should improve. We stepped back a little, and hid in the edge of the wood. From this hiding-place we saw both men and women hunted by the mob. The fearful work went on until nearly dawn.

Then, the fire being out and the storm spent, the voices and flying footsteps presently ceased, and darkness and stillness reigned again.

We ventured out, and hurried cautiously away; and although we were worn out and sleepy, we kept on until we had put this place some miles behind us.

Then we asked hospitality at the hut of a charcoal burner, and got what was to be had. A woman was up and about, but the man was still asleep, on a straw shake-down, on the clay floor. The woman seemed uneasy until I explained that we were travelers and had lost our way and been wandering in the woods all night. She became talkative, then, and asked if we had heard of the terrible goings-on at the manor-house of Abblasoure. Yes, we had heard of them, but what we wanted now was rest and sleep. The king broke in:

"Sell us the house and take yourselves away, for we be perilous company, being late come from people that died of the Spotted Death."

It was good of him, but unnecessary. One of the commonest decorations of the nation was the waffle-iron face. I had early noticed that the woman and her husband were both so decorated. She made us entirely welcome, and had no fears; and plainly she was immensely impressed by the king's proposition; for, of course, it was a good deal of an event in her life to run across a person of the king's humble appearance who was ready to buy a man's house for the sake of a night's lodging. It gave her a large respect for us, and she strained the lean possibilities of her hovel to the utmost to make us comfortable.

We slept till far into the afternoon, and then got up hungry enough to make cotter fare quite palatable to the king, the more particularly as it was scant in quantity. And also in variety; it consisted solely of onions, salt, and the national black bread made out of horse-feed. The woman told us about the affair of the evening before. At ten or eleven at night, when everybody was in bed, the

manor-house burst into flames. The country-side swarmed to the rescue, and the family were saved, with one exception, the master. He did not appear.

Everybody was frantic over this loss, and two brave yeomen sacrificed their lives in ransacking the burning house seeking that valuable personage. But after a while he was found—what was left of him—which was his corpse. It was in a copse three hundred yards away, bound, gagged, stabbed in a dozen places.

Who had done this? Suspicion fell upon a humble family in the neighborhood who had been lately treated with peculiar harshness by the baron; and from these people the suspicion easily extended itself to their relatives and familiars. A suspicion was enough; my lord's liveried retainers proclaimed an instant crusade against these people, and were promptly joined by the community in general. The woman's husband had been active with the mob, and had not returned home until nearly dawn. He was gone now to find out what the general result had been. While we were still talking he came back from his quest. His report was revolting enough. Eighteen persons hanged or butchered, and two yeomen and thirteen prisoners lost in the fire.

"And how many prisoners were there altogether in the vaults?"

"Thirteen."

"Then every one of them was lost?"

"Yes, all."

"But the people arrived in time to save the family; how is it they could save none of the prisoners?"

The man looked puzzled, and said:

"Would one unlock the vaults at such a time? Marry, some would have escaped."

"Then you mean that nobody *did* unlock them?"

"None went near them, either to lock or unlock. It standeth to reason that the bolts were fast; wherefore it was only needful to establish a watch, so that if any broke the bonds he might not escape, but be taken. None were taken."

"Natheless, three did escape," said the king, "and ye will do well to publish it and set justice upon their track, for these murdered the baron and fired the house."

I was just expecting he would come out with that. For a moment the man and his wife showed an eager interest in this news and an impatience to go out and spread it; then a sudden something else betrayed itself in their faces, and they began to ask questions. I answered the questions myself, and narrowly watched the effects produced. I was soon satisfied that the knowledge of who these three prisoners were had somehow changed the atmosphere; that our hosts' continued eagerness to go and spread the news was now only pretended and not

real. The king did not notice the change, and I was glad of that. I worked the conversation around toward other details of the night's proceedings, and noted that these people were relieved to have it take that direction.

The painful thing observable about all this business was the alacrity with which this oppressed community had turned their cruel hands against their own class in the interest of the common oppressor. This man and woman seemed to feel that in a quarrel between a person of their own class and his lord, it was the natural and proper and rightful thing for that poor devil's whole caste to side with the master and fight his battle for him, without ever stopping to inquire into the rights or wrongs of the matter. This man had been out helping to hang his neighbors, and had done his work with zeal, and yet was aware that there was nothing against them but a mere suspicion, with nothing back of it describable as evidence, still neither he nor his wife seemed to see anything horrible about it.

This was depressing—to a man with the dream of a republic in his head. It reminded me of a time thirteen centuries away, when the "poor whites" of our South who were always despised and frequently insulted by the slave-lords around them, and who owed their base condition simply to the presence of slavery in their midst, were yet pusillanimously ready to side with the slave-lords in all political moves for the upholding and perpetuating of slavery, and did also finally shoulder their muskets and pour out their lives in an effort to prevent the destruction of that very institution which degraded them. And there was only one redeeming feature connected with that pitiful piece of history; and that was, that secretly the "poor white" did detest the slave-lord, and did feel his own shame. That feeling was not brought to the surface, but the fact that it was there and could have been brought out, under favoring circumstances, was something—in fact, it was enough; for it showed that a man is at bottom a man, after all, even if it doesn't show on the outside.

Well, as it turned out, this charcoal burner was just the twin of the Southern "poor white" of the far future. The king presently showed impatience, and said:

"An ye prattle here all the day, justice will miscarry. Think ye the criminals will abide in their father's house? They are fleeing, they are not waiting. You should look to it that a party of horse be set upon their track."

The woman paled slightly, but quite perceptibly, and the man looked flustered and irresolute. I said:

"Come, friend, I will walk a little way with you, and explain which direction I think they would try to take. If they were merely resisters of the gabelle or some kindred absurdity I would try to protect them from capture; but when men murder a person of high degree and likewise burn his house, that is another matter."

The last remark was for the king—to quiet him. On the road the man pulled his resolution together, and began the march with a steady gait, but there was no eagerness in it. By and by I said:

"What relation were these men to you—cousins?"

He turned as white as his layer of charcoal would let him, and stopped, trembling.

"Ah, my God, how know ye that?"

"I didn't know it; it was a chance guess."

"Poor lads, they are lost. And good lads they were, too."

"Were you actually going yonder to tell on them?"

He didn't quite know how to take that; but he said, hesitatingly:

"Ye-s."

"Then I think you are a damned scoundrel!"

It made him as glad as if I had called him an angel.

"Say the good words again, brother! for surely ye mean that ye would not betray me an I failed of my duty."

"Duty? There is no duty in the matter, except the duty to keep still and let those men get away. They've done a righteous deed."

He looked pleased; pleased, and touched with apprehension at the same time. He looked up and down the road to see that no one was coming, and then said in a cautious voice:

"From what land come you, brother, that you speak such perilous words, and seem not to be afraid?"

"They are not perilous words when spoken to one of my own caste, I take it. You would not tell anybody I said them?"

"I? I would be drawn asunder by wild horses first."

"Well, then, let me say my say. I have no fears of your repeating it. I think devil's work has been done last night upon those innocent poor people. That old baron got only what he deserved. If I had my way, all his kind should have the same luck."

Fear and depression vanished from the man's manner, and gratefulness and a brave animation took their place:

"Even though you be a spy, and your words a trap for my undoing, yet are they such refreshment that to hear them again and others like to them, I would go to the gallows happy, as having had one good feast at least in a starved life. And I will say my say now, and ye may report it if ye be so minded. I helped to hang my neighbors for that it were peril to my own life to show lack of zeal in the master's cause; the others helped for none other reason. All rejoice to-day that he is dead, but all do go about seemingly sorrowing, and shedding the hypocrite's

tear, for in that lies safety. I have said the words, I have said the words! the only ones that have ever tasted good in my mouth, and the reward of that taste is sufficient. Lead on, an ye will, be it even to the scaffold, for I am ready."

There it was, you see. A man is a man, at bottom. Whole ages of abuse and oppression cannot crush the manhood clear out of him. Whoever thinks it a mistake is himself mistaken. Yes, there is plenty good enough material for a republic in the most degraded people that ever existed—even the Russians; plenty of manhood in them—even in the Germans—if one could but force it out of its timid and suspicious privacy, to overthrow and trample in the mud any throne that ever was set up and any nobility that ever supported it. We should see certain things yet, let us hope and believe. First, a modified monarchy, till Arthur's days were done, then the destruction of the throne, nobility abolished, every member of it bound out to some useful trade, universal suffrage instituted, and the whole government placed in the hands of the men and women of the nation there to remain. Yes, there was no occasion to give up my dream yet a while.

## CHAPTER XXXI. MARCO

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We strolled along in a sufficiently indolent fashion now, and talked. We must dispose of about the amount of time it ought to take to go to the little hamlet of Abblasoure and put justice on the track of those murderers and get back home again. And meantime I had an auxiliary interest which had never paled yet, never lost its novelty for me since I had been in Arthur's kingdom: the behavior—born of nice and exact subdivisions of caste—of chance passers-by toward each other. Toward the shaven monk who trudged along with his cowl tilted back and the sweat washing down his fat jowls, the coal-burner was deeply reverent; to the gentleman he was abject; with the small farmer and the free mechanic he was cordial and gossipy; and when a slave passed by with a countenance respectfully lowered, this chap's nose was in the air—he couldn't even see him. Well, there are times when one would like to hang the whole human race and finish the farce.

Presently we struck an incident. A small mob of half-naked boys and girls came tearing out of the woods, scared and shrieking. The eldest among them were not more than twelve or fourteen years old. They implored help, but they were so beside themselves that we couldn't make out what the matter was. However, we plunged into the wood, they skurrying in the lead, and the trouble was quickly revealed: they had hanged a little fellow with a bark rope, and he was kicking and struggling, in the process of choking to death. We rescued him, and fetched him around. It was some more human nature; the admiring little folk imitating their elders; they were playing mob, and had achieved a success which promised to be a good deal more serious than they had bargained for.

It was not a dull excursion for me. I managed to put in the time very well. I made various acquaintanceships, and in my quality of stranger was able to ask as many questions as I wanted to. A thing which naturally interested me, as a statesman, was the matter of wages. I picked up what I could under that head during the afternoon. A man who hasn't had much experience, and doesn't think, is apt to measure a nation's prosperity or lack of prosperity by the mere size of the prevailing wages; if the wages be high, the nation is prosperous; if low, it isn't. Which is an error. It isn't what sum you get, it's how much you can buy

with it, that's the important thing; and it's that that tells whether your wages are high in fact or only high in name. I could remember how it was in the time of our great civil war in the nineteenth century. In the North a carpenter got three dollars a day, gold valuation; in the South he got fifty—payable in Confederate shinplasters worth a dollar a bushel. In the North a suit of overalls cost three dollars—a day's wages; in the South it cost seventy-five—which was two days' wages. Other things were in proportion. Consequently, wages were twice as high in the North as they were in the South, because the one wage had that much more purchasing power than the other had.

Yes, I made various acquaintances in the hamlet and a thing that gratified me a good deal was to find our new coins in circulation—lots of milrays, lots of mills, lots of cents, a good many nickels, and some silver; all this among the artisans and commonalty generally; yes, and even some gold—but that was at the bank, that is to say, the goldsmith's. I dropped in there while Marco, the son of Marco, was haggling with a shopkeeper over a quarter of a pound of salt, and asked for change for a twenty-dollar gold piece. They furnished it—that is, after they had chewed the piece, and rung it on the counter, and tried acid on it, and asked me where I got it, and who I was, and where I was from, and where I was going to, and when I expected to get there, and perhaps a couple of hundred more questions; and when they got aground, I went right on and furnished them a lot of information voluntarily; told them I owned a dog, and his name was Watch, and my first wife was a Free Will Baptist, and her grandfather was a Prohibitionist, and I used to know a man who had two thumbs on each hand and a wart on the inside of his upper lip, and died in the hope of a glorious resurrection, and so on, and so on, and so on, till even that hungry village questioner began to look satisfied, and also a shade put out; but he had to respect a man of my financial strength, and so he didn't give me any lip, but I noticed he took it out of his underlings, which was a perfectly natural thing to do. Yes, they changed my twenty, but I judged it strained the bank a little, which was a thing to be expected, for it was the same as walking into a paltry village store in the nineteenth century and requiring the boss of it to change a two thousand-dollar bill for you all of a sudden. He could do it, maybe; but at the same time he would wonder how a small farmer happened to be carrying so much money around in his pocket; which was probably this goldsmith's thought, too; for he followed me to the door and stood there gazing after me with reverent admiration.

Our new money was not only handsomely circulating, but its language was already glibly in use; that is to say, people had dropped the names of the former moneys, and spoke of things as being worth so many dollars or cents or mills or



milrays now. It was very gratifying. We were progressing, that was sure.

I got to know several master mechanics, but about the most interesting fellow among them was the blacksmith, Dowley. He was a live man and a brisk talker, and had two journeymen and three apprentices, and was doing a raging business. In fact, he was getting rich, hand over fist, and was vastly respected.

Marco was very proud of having such a man for a friend. He had taken me there ostensibly to let me see the big establishment which bought so much of his charcoal, but really to let me see what easy and almost familiar terms he was on with this great man. Dowley and I fraternized at once; I had had just such picked men, splendid fellows, under me in the Colt Arms Factory. I was bound to see more of him, so I invited him to come out to Marco's Sunday, and dine with us. Marco was appalled, and held his breath; and when the grandee accepted, he was so grateful that he almost forgot to be astonished at the condescension.

Marco's joy was exuberant—but only for a moment; then he grew thoughtful, then sad; and when he heard me tell Dowley I should have Dickon, the boss mason, and Smug, the boss wheelwright, out there, too, the coal-dust on his face turned to chalk, and he lost his grip. But I knew what was the matter with him; it was the expense. He saw ruin before him; he judged that his financial days were numbered. However, on our way to invite the others, I said:

"You must allow me to have these friends come; and you must also allow me to pay the costs."

His face cleared, and he said with spirit:

"But not all of it, not all of it. Ye cannot well bear a burden like to this alone."

I stopped him, and said:

"Now let's understand each other on the spot, old friend. I am only a farm bailiff, it is true; but I am not poor, nevertheless. I have been very fortunate this year—you would be astonished to know how I have thriven. I tell you the honest truth when I say I could squander away as many as a dozen feasts like this and never care *that* for the expense!" and I snapped my fingers. I could see myself rise a foot at a time in Marco's estimation, and when I fetched out those last words I was become a very tower for style and altitude. "So you see, you must let me have my way. You can't contribute a cent to this orgy, that's *settled*."

"It's grand and good of you—"

"No, it isn't. You've opened your house to Jones and me in the most generous way; Jones was remarking upon it to-day, just before you came back from the village; for although he wouldn't be likely to say such a thing to you—

because Jones isn't a talker, and is diffident in society—he has a good heart and a grateful, and knows how to appreciate it when he is well treated; yes, you and your wife have been very hospitable toward us—"

"Ah, brother, 'tis nothing—*such* hospitality!"

"But it *is* something; the best a man has, freely given, is always something, and is as good as a prince can do, and ranks right along beside it—for even a prince can but do his best. And so we'll shop around and get up this layout now, and don't you worry about the expense. I'm one of the worst spendthrifts that ever was born. Why, do you know, sometimes in a single week I spend—but never mind about that—you'd never believe it anyway."

And so we went gadding along, dropping in here and there, pricing things, and gossiping with the shopkeepers about the riot, and now and then running across pathetic reminders of it, in the persons of shunned and tearful and houseless remnants of families whose homes had been taken from them and their parents butchered or hanged. The raiment of Marco and his wife was of coarse tow-linen and linsey-woolsey respectively, and resembled township maps, it being made up pretty exclusively of patches which had been added, township by township, in the course of five or six years, until hardly a hand's-breadth of the original garments was surviving and present. Now I wanted to fit these people out with new suits, on account of that swell company, and I didn't know just how to get at it—with delicacy, until at last it struck me that as I had already been liberal in inventing wordy gratitude for the king, it would be just the thing to back it up with evidence of a substantial sort; so I said:

"And Marco, there's another thing which you must permit—out of kindness for Jones—because you wouldn't want to offend him. He was very anxious to testify his appreciation in some way, but he is so diffident he couldn't venture it himself, and so he begged me to buy some little things and give them to you and Dame Phyllis and let him pay for them without your ever knowing they came from him—you know how a delicate person feels about that sort of thing—and so I said I would, and we would keep mum. Well, his idea was, a new outfit of clothes for you both—"

"Oh, it is wastefulness! It may not be, brother, it may not be. Consider the vastness of the sum—"

"Hang the vastness of the sum! Try to keep quiet for a moment, and see how it would seem; a body can't get in a word edgeways, you talk so much. You ought to cure that, Marco; it isn't good form, you know, and it will grow on you if you don't check it. Yes, we'll step in here now and price this man's stuff—and don't forget to remember to not let on to Jones that you know he had anything to do with it. You can't think how curiously sensitive and proud he is. He's a

farmer—pretty fairly well-to-do farmer—and I'm his bailiff; *but*—the imagination of that man! Why, sometimes when he forgets himself and gets to blowing off, you'd think he was one of the swells of the earth; and you might listen to him a hundred years and never take him for a farmer—especially if he talked agriculture. He *thinks* he's a Sheol of a farmer; thinks he's old Grayback from Wayback; but between you and me privately he don't know as much about farming as he does about running a kingdom—still, whatever he talks about, you want to drop your underjaw and listen, the same as if you had never heard such incredible wisdom in all your life before, and were afraid you might die before you got enough of it. That will please Jones."

It tickled Marco to the marrow to hear about such an odd character; but it also prepared him for accidents; and in my experience when you travel with a king who is letting on to be something else and can't remember it more than about half the time, you can't take too many precautions.

This was the best store we had come across yet; it had everything in it, in small quantities, from anvils and drygoods all the way down to fish and pinchbeck jewelry. I concluded I would bunch my whole invoice right here, and not go pricing around any more. So I got rid of Marco, by sending him off to invite the mason and the wheelwright, which left the field free to me. For I never care to do a thing in a quiet way; it's got to be theatrical or I don't take any interest in it. I showed up money enough, in a careless way, to corral the shopkeeper's respect, and then I wrote down a list of the things I wanted, and handed it to him to see if he could read it. He could, and was proud to show that he could. He said he had been educated by a priest, and could both read and write. He ran it through, and remarked with satisfaction that it was a pretty heavy bill. Well, and so it was, for a little concern like that. I was not only providing a swell dinner, but some odds and ends of extras. I ordered that the things be carted out and delivered at the dwelling of Marco, the son of Marco, by Saturday evening, and send me the bill at dinner-time Sunday. He said I could depend upon his promptness and exactitude, it was the rule of the house. He also observed that he would throw in a couple of miller-guns for the Marcos gratis—that everybody was using them now. He had a mighty opinion of that clever device. I said:

"And please fill them up to the middle mark, too; and add that to the bill."

He would, with pleasure. He filled them, and I took them with me. I couldn't venture to tell him that the miller-gun was a little invention of my own, and that I had officially ordered that every shopkeeper in the kingdom keep them on hand and sell them at government price—which was the merest trifle, and the shopkeeper got that, not the government. We furnished them for nothing.

The king had hardly missed us when we got back at nightfall. He had early dropped again into his dream of a grand invasion of Gaul with the whole strength of his kingdom at his back, and the afternoon had slipped away without his ever coming to himself again.

## CHAPTER XXXII. DOWLEY'S HUMILIATION

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Well, when that cargo arrived toward sunset, Saturday afternoon, I had my hands full to keep the Marcos from fainting. They were sure Jones and I were ruined past help, and they blamed themselves as accessories to this bankruptcy.

You see, in addition to the dinner-materials, which called for a sufficiently round sum, I had bought a lot of extras for the future comfort of the family: for instance, a big lot of wheat, a delicacy as rare to the tables of their class as was ice-cream to a hermit's; also a sizeable deal dinner-table; also two entire pounds of salt, which was another piece of extravagance in those people's eyes; also crockery, stools, the clothes, a small cask of beer, and so on. I instructed the Marcos to keep quiet about this sumptuousness, so as to give me a chance to surprise the guests and show off a little. Concerning the new clothes, the simple couple were like children; they were up and down, all night, to see if it wasn't nearly daylight, so that they could put them on, and they were into them at last as much as an hour before dawn was due. Then their pleasure—not to say delirium—was so fresh and novel and inspiring that the sight of it paid me well for the interruptions which my sleep had suffered. The king had slept just as usual—like the dead. The Marcos could not thank him for their clothes, that being forbidden; but they tried every way they could think of to make him see how grateful they were. Which all went for nothing: he didn't notice any change.

It turned out to be one of those rich and rare fall days which is just a June day toned down to a degree where it is heaven to be out of doors. Toward noon the guests arrived, and we assembled under a great tree and were soon as sociable as old acquaintances. Even the king's reserve melted a little, though it was some little trouble to him to adjust himself to the name of Jones along at first. I had asked him to try to not forget that he was a farmer; but I had also considered it prudent to ask him to let the thing stand at that, and not elaborate it any. Because he was just the kind of person you could depend on to spoil a little thing like that if you didn't warn him, his tongue was so handy, and his spirit so willing, and his information so uncertain.

Dowley was in fine feather, and I early got him started, and then adroitly worked him around onto his own history for a text and himself for a hero, and

then it was good to sit there and hear him hum. Self-made man, you know.

They know how to talk. They do deserve more credit than any other breed of men, yes, that is true; and they are among the very first to find it out, too. He told how he had begun life an orphan lad without money and without friends able to help him; how he had lived as the slaves of the meanest master lived; how his day's work was from sixteen to eighteen hours long, and yielded him only enough black bread to keep him in a half-fed condition; how his faithful endeavors finally attracted the attention of a good blacksmith, who came near knocking him dead with kindness by suddenly offering, when he was totally unprepared, to take him as his bound apprentice for nine years and give him board and clothes and teach him the trade—or "mystery" as Dowley called it.

That was his first great rise, his first gorgeous stroke of fortune; and you saw that he couldn't yet speak of it without a sort of eloquent wonder and delight that such a gilded promotion should have fallen to the lot of a common human being.

He got no new clothing during his apprenticeship, but on his graduation day his master tricked him out in spang-new tow-linens and made him feel unspeakably rich and fine.

"I remember me of that day!" the wheelwright sang out, with enthusiasm.

"And I likewise!" cried the mason. "I would not believe they were thine own; in faith I could not."

"Nor other!" shouted Dowley, with sparkling eyes. "I was like to lose my character, the neighbors wending I had mayhap been stealing. It was a great day, a great day; one forgetteth not days like that."

Yes, and his master was a fine man, and prosperous, and always had a great feast of meat twice in the year, and with it white bread, true wheaten bread; in fact, lived like a lord, so to speak. And in time Dowley succeeded to the business and married the daughter.

"And now consider what is come to pass," said he, impressively. "Two times in every month there is fresh meat upon my table." He made a pause here, to let that fact sink home, then added—"and eight times salt meat."

"It is even true," said the wheelwright, with bated breath.

"I know it of mine own knowledge," said the mason, in the same reverent fashion.

"On my table appeareth white bread every Sunday in the year," added the master smith, with solemnity. "I leave it to your own consciences, friends, if this is not also true?"

"By my head, yes," cried the mason.

"I can testify it—and I do," said the wheelwright.

"And as to furniture, ye shall say yourselves what mine equipment is." He

waved his hand in fine gesture of granting frank and unhampered freedom of speech, and added: "Speak as ye are moved; speak as ye would speak; an I were not here."

"Ye have five stools, and of the sweetest workmanship at that, albeit your family is but three," said the wheelwright, with deep respect.

"And six wooden goblets, and six platters of wood and two of pewter to eat and drink from withal," said the mason, impressively. "And I say it as knowing God is my judge, and we tarry not here alway, but must answer at the last day for the things said in the body, be they false or be they sooth."

"Now ye know what manner of man I am, brother Jones," said the smith, with a fine and friendly condescension, "and doubtless ye would look to find me a man jealous of his due of respect and but sparing of outgo to strangers till their rating and quality be assured, but trouble yourself not, as concerning that; wit ye well ye shall find me a man that regardeth not these matters but is willing to receive any he as his fellow and equal that carrieth a right heart in his body, be his worldly estate howsoever modest. And in token of it, here is my hand; and I say with my own mouth we are equals—equals"—and he smiled around on the company with the satisfaction of a god who is doing the handsome and gracious thing and is quite well aware of it.

The king took the hand with a poorly disguised reluctance, and let go of it as willingly as a lady lets go of a fish; all of which had a good effect, for it was mistaken for an embarrassment natural to one who was being called upon by greatness.

The dame brought out the table now, and set it under the tree. It caused a visible stir of surprise, it being brand new and a sumptuous article of deal. But the surprise rose higher still when the dame, with a body oozing easy indifference at every pore, but eyes that gave it all away by absolutely flaming with vanity, slowly unfolded an actual simon-pure tablecloth and spread it. That was a notch above even the blacksmith's domestic grandeurs, and it hit him hard; you could see it. But Marco was in Paradise; you could see that, too. Then the dame brought two fine new stools—whew! that was a sensation; it was visible in the eyes of every guest. Then she brought two more—as calmly as she could. Sensation again—with awed murmurs. Again she brought two—walking on air, she was so proud. The guests were petrified, and the mason muttered:

"There is that about earthly pomps which doth ever move to reverence."

As the dame turned away, Marco couldn't help slapping on the climax while the thing was hot; so he said with what was meant for a languid composure but was a poor imitation of it:

"These suffice; leave the rest."

So there were more yet! It was a fine effect. I couldn't have played the hand better myself.

From this out, the madam piled up the surprises with a rush that fired the general astonishment up to a hundred and fifty in the shade, and at the same time paralyzed expression of it down to gasped "Oh's" and "Ah's," and mute upliftings of hands and eyes. She fetched crockery—new, and plenty of it; new wooden goblets and other table furniture; and beer, fish, chicken, a goose, eggs, roast beef, roast mutton, a ham, a small roast pig, and a wealth of genuine white wheaten bread. Take it by and large, that spread laid everything far and away in the shade that ever that crowd had seen before. And while they sat there just simply stupefied with wonder and awe, I sort of waved my hand as if by accident, and the storekeeper's son emerged from space and said he had come to collect.

"That's all right," I said, indifferently. "What is the amount? give us the items."

Then he read off this bill, while those three amazed men listened, and serene waves of satisfaction rolled over my soul and alternate waves of terror and admiration surged over Marco's:

He ceased. There was a pale and awful silence. Not a limb stirred. Not a nostril betrayed the passage of breath.

"Is that all?" I asked, in a voice of the most perfect calmness.

"All, fair sir, save that certain matters of light moment are placed together under a head high sundries. If it would like you, I will sepa—"

"It is of no consequence," I said, accompanying the words with a gesture of the most utter indifference; "give me the grand total, please."

The clerk leaned against the tree to stay himself, and said:

"Thirty-nine thousand one hundred and fifty milrays!"

The wheelwright fell off his stool, the others grabbed the table to save themselves, and there was a deep and general ejaculation of:

"God be with us in the day of disaster!"

The clerk hastened to say:

"My father chargeth me to say he cannot honorably require you to pay it all at this time, and therefore only prayeth you—"

I paid no more heed than if it were the idle breeze, but, with an air of indifference amounting almost to weariness, got out my money and tossed four dollars on to the table. Ah, you should have seen them stare!

The clerk was astonished and charmed. He asked me to retain one of the dollars as security, until he could go to town and—I interrupted:

"What, and fetch back nine cents? Nonsense! Take the whole. Keep the



change."

There was an amazed murmur to this effect:

"Verily this being is *made* of money! He throweth it away even as if it were dirt."

The blacksmith was a crushed man.

The clerk took his money and reeled away drunk with fortune. I said to Marco and his wife:

"Good folk, here is a little trifle for you"—handing the miller-guns as if it were a matter of no consequence, though each of them contained fifteen cents in solid cash; and while the poor creatures went to pieces with astonishment and gratitude, I turned to the others and said as calmly as one would ask the time of day:

"Well, if we are all ready, I judge the dinner is. Come, fall to."

Ah, well, it was immense; yes, it was a daisy. I don't know that I ever put a situation together better, or got happier spectacular effects out of the materials available. The blacksmith—well, he was simply mashed. Land! I wouldn't have felt what that man was feeling, for anything in the world. Here he had been blowing and bragging about his grand meat-feast twice a year, and his fresh meat twice a month, and his salt meat twice a week, and his white bread every Sunday the year round—all for a family of three; the entire cost for the year not above 69.2.6 (sixty-nine cents, two mills and six milrays), and all of a sudden here comes along a man who slashes out nearly four dollars on a single blow-out; and not only that, but acts as if it made him tired to handle such small sums. Yes, Dowley was a good deal wilted, and shrunk-up and collapsed; he had the aspect of a bladder-balloon that's been stepped on by a cow.

## CHAPTER XXXIII. SIXTH CENTURY POLITICAL ECONOMY

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However, I made a dead set at him, and before the first third of the dinner was reached, I had him happy again. It was easy to do—in a country of ranks and castes. You see, in a country where they have ranks and castes, a man isn't ever a man, he is only part of a man, he can't ever get his full growth. You prove your superiority over him in station, or rank, or fortune, and that's the end of it—he knuckles down. You can't insult him after that. No, I don't mean quite that; of course you *can* insult him, I only mean it's difficult; and so, unless you've got a lot of useless time on your hands it doesn't pay to try. I had the smith's reverence now, because I was apparently immensely prosperous and rich; I could have had his adoration if I had had some little gimcrack title of nobility. And not only his, but any commoner's in the land, though he were the mightiest production of all the ages, in intellect, worth, and character, and I bankrupt in all three. This was to remain so, as long as England should exist in the earth. With the spirit of prophecy upon me, I could look into the future and see her erect statues and monuments to her unspeakable Georges and other royal and noble clothes-horses, and leave unhonored the creators of this world—after God—Gutenberg, Watt, Arkwright, Whitney, Morse, Stephenson, Bell.

The king got his cargo aboard, and then, the talk not turning upon battle, conquest, or iron-clad duel, he dulled down to drowsiness and went off to take a nap. Mrs. Marco cleared the table, placed the beer keg handy, and went away to eat her dinner of leavings in humble privacy, and the rest of us soon drifted into matters near and dear to the hearts of our sort—business and wages, of course.

At a first glance, things appeared to be exceeding prosperous in this little tributary kingdom—whose lord was King Bagdemagus—as compared with the state of things in my own region. They had the "protection" system in full force here, whereas we were working along down toward free-trade, by easy stages, and were now about half way. Before long, Dowley and I were doing all the talking, the others hungrily listening. Dowley warmed to his work, snuffed an advantage in the air, and began to put questions which he considered pretty awkward ones for me, and they did have something of that look:

"In your country, brother, what is the wage of a master bailiff, master hind, carter, shepherd, swineherd?"

"Twenty-five milrays a day; that is to say, a quarter of a cent."

The smith's face beamed with joy. He said:

"With us they are allowed the double of it! And what may a mechanic get—carpenter, dauber, mason, painter, blacksmith, wheelwright, and the like?"

"On the average, fifty milrays; half a cent a day."

"Ho-ho! With us they are allowed a hundred! With us any good mechanic is allowed a cent a day! I count out the tailor, but not the others—they are all allowed a cent a day, and in driving times they get more—yes, up to a hundred and ten and even fifteen milrays a day. I've paid a hundred and fifteen myself, within the week. 'Rah for protection—to Sheol with free-trade!"

And his face shone upon the company like a sunburst. But I didn't scare at all. I rigged up my pile-driver, and allowed myself fifteen minutes to drive him into the earth—drive him *all* in—drive him in till not even the curve of his skull should show above ground. Here is the way I started in on him. I asked:

"What do you pay a pound for salt?"

"A hundred milrays."

"We pay forty. What do you pay for beef and mutton—when you buy it?" That was a neat hit; it made the color come.

"It varieth somewhat, but not much; one may say seventy-five milrays the pound."

"We pay thirty-three. What do you pay for eggs?"

"Fifty milrays the dozen."

"We pay twenty. What do you pay for beer?"

"It costeth us eight and one-half milrays the pint."

"We get it for four; twenty-five bottles for a cent. What do you pay for wheat?"

"At the rate of nine hundred milrays the bushel."

"We pay four hundred. What do you pay for a man's tow-linen suit?"

"Thirteen cents."

"We pay six. What do you pay for a stuff gown for the wife of the laborer or the mechanic?"

"We pay eight cents, four mills."

"Well, observe the difference: you pay eight cents and four mills, we pay only four cents." I prepared now to sock it to him. I said: "Look here, dear friend, *what's become of your high wages you were bragging so about a few minutes ago?*"—and I looked around on the company with placid satisfaction, for I had slipped up on him gradually and tied him hand and foot, you see,

without his ever noticing that he was being tied at all. "What's become of those noble high wages of yours?—I seem to have knocked the stuffing all out of them, it appears to me."

But if you will believe me, he merely looked surprised, that is all! he didn't grasp the situation at all, didn't know he had walked into a trap, didn't discover that he was *in* a trap. I could have shot him, from sheer vexation. With cloudy eye and a struggling intellect he fetched this out:

"Marry, I seem not to understand. It is *proved* that our wages be double thine; how then may it be that thou'st knocked therefrom the stuffing?—an miscall not the wonderly word, this being the first time under grace and providence of God it hath been granted me to hear it."

Well, I was stunned; partly with this unlooked-for stupidity on his part, and partly because his fellows so manifestly sided with him and were of his mind—if you might call it mind. My position was simple enough, plain enough; how could it ever be simplified more? However, I must try:

"Why, look here, brother Dowley, don't you see? Your wages are merely higher than ours in *name*, not in *fact*."

"Hear him! They are the *double*—ye have confessed it yourself."

"Yes-yes, I don't deny that at all. But that's got nothing to do with it; the *amount* of the wages in mere coins, with meaningless names attached to them to know them by, has got nothing to do with it. The thing is, how much can you *buy* with your wages?—that's the idea. While it is true that with you a good mechanic is allowed about three dollars and a half a year, and with us only about a dollar and seventy-five—"

"There—ye're confessing it again, ye're confessing it again!"

"Confound it, I've never denied it, I tell you! What I say is this. With us *half* a dollar buys more than a *dollar* buys with you—and *therefore* it stands to reason and the commonest kind of common-sense, that our wages are *higher* than yours."

He looked dazed, and said, despairingly:

"Verily, I cannot make it out. Ye've just said ours are the higher, and with the same breath ye take it back."

"Oh, great Scott, isn't it possible to get such a simple thing through your head? Now look here—let me illustrate. We pay four cents for a woman's stuff gown, you pay 8.4.0, which is four mills more than *double*. What do you allow a laboring woman who works on a farm?"

"Two mills a day."

"Very good; we allow but half as much; we pay her only a tenth of a cent a day; and—"

"Again ye're conf—"

"Wait! Now, you see, the thing is very simple; this time you'll understand it. For instance, it takes your woman 42 days to earn her gown, at 2 mills a day—7 weeks' work; but ours earns hers in forty days—two days *short* of 7 weeks. Your woman has a gown, and her whole seven weeks wages are gone; ours has a gown, and two days' wages left, to buy something else with. There—*now* you understand it!"

He looked—well, he merely looked dubious, it's the most I can say; so did the others. I waited—to let the thing work. Dowley spoke at last—and betrayed the fact that he actually hadn't gotten away from his rooted and grounded superstitions yet. He said, with a trifle of hesitancy:

"But—but—ye cannot fail to grant that two mills a day is better than one."

Shucks! Well, of course, I hated to give it up. So I chanced another flyer:

"Let us suppose a case. Suppose one of your journeymen goes out and buys the following articles:

"1 pound of salt; 1 dozen eggs; 1 dozen pints of beer; 1 bushel of wheat; 1 tow-linen suit; 5 pounds of beef; 5 pounds of mutton.

"The lot will cost him 32 cents. It takes him 32 working days to earn the money—5 weeks and 2 days. Let him come to us and work 32 days at *half* the wages; he can buy all those things for a shade under 14 1/2 cents; they will cost him a shade under 29 days' work, and he will have about half a week's wages over. Carry it through the year; he would save nearly a week's wages every two months, *your* man nothing; thus saving five or six weeks' wages in a year, your man not a cent. *Now* I reckon you understand that 'high wages' and 'low wages' are phrases that don't mean anything in the world until you find out which of them will *buy* the most!"

It was a crusher.

But, alas! it didn't crush. No, I had to give it up. What those people valued was *high wages*; it didn't seem to be a matter of any consequence to them whether the high wages would buy anything or not. They stood for "protection," and swore by it, which was reasonable enough, because interested parties had gulled them into the notion that it was protection which had created their high wages. I proved to them that in a quarter of a century their wages had advanced but 30 per cent., while the cost of living had gone up 100; and that with us, in a shorter time, wages had advanced 40 per cent. while the cost of living had gone steadily down. But it didn't do any good. Nothing could unseat their strange beliefs.

Well, I was smarting under a sense of defeat. Undeserved defeat, but what of that? That didn't soften the smart any. And to think of the circumstances! the

first statesman of the age, the capablest man, the best-informed man in the entire world, the loftiest uncrowned head that had moved through the clouds of any political firmament for centuries, sitting here apparently defeated in argument by an ignorant country blacksmith! And I could see that those others were sorry for me—which made me blush till I could smell my whiskers scorching. Put yourself in my place; feel as mean as I did, as ashamed as I felt—wouldn't *you* have struck below the belt to get even? Yes, you would; it is simply human nature. Well, that is what I did. I am not trying to justify it; I'm only saying that I was mad, and *anybody* would have done it.

Well, when I make up my mind to hit a man, I don't plan out a love-tap; no, that isn't my way; as long as I'm going to hit him at all, I'm going to hit him a lifter. And I don't jump at him all of a sudden, and risk making a blundering half-way business of it; no, I get away off yonder to one side, and work up on him gradually, so that he never suspects that I'm going to hit him at all; and by and by, all in a flash, he's flat on his back, and he can't tell for the life of him how it all happened. That is the way I went for brother Dowley. I started to talking lazy and comfortable, as if I was just talking to pass the time; and the oldest man in the world couldn't have taken the bearings of my starting place and guessed where I was going to fetch up:

"Boys, there's a good many curious things about law, and custom, and usage, and all that sort of thing, when you come to look at it; yes, and about the drift and progress of human opinion and movement, too. There are written laws—they perish; but there are also unwritten laws—they are eternal. Take the unwritten law of wages: it says they've got to advance, little by little, straight through the centuries. And notice how it works. We know what wages are now, here and there and yonder; we strike an average, and say that's the wages of to-day. We know what the wages were a hundred years ago, and what they were two hundred years ago; that's as far back as we can get, but it suffices to give us the law of progress, the measure and rate of the periodical augmentation; and so, without a document to help us, we can come pretty close to determining what the wages were three and four and five hundred years ago. Good, so far. Do we stop there? No. We stop looking backward; we face around and apply the law to the future. My friends, I can tell you what people's wages are going to be at any date in the future you want to know, for hundreds and hundreds of years."

"What, goodman, what!"

"Yes. In seven hundred years wages will have risen to six times what they are now, here in your region, and farm hands will be allowed 3 cents a day, and mechanics 6."

"I would't I might die now and live then!" interrupted Smug, the

wheelwright, with a fine avaricious glow in his eye.

"And that isn't all; they'll get their board besides—such as it is: it won't bloat them. Two hundred and fifty years later—pay attention now—a mechanic's wages will be—mind you, this is law, not guesswork; a mechanic's wages will then be *twenty* cents a day!"

There was a general gasp of awed astonishment, Dickon the mason murmured, with raised eyes and hands:

"More than three weeks' pay for one day's work!"

"Riches!—of a truth, yes, riches!" muttered Marco, his breath coming quick and short, with excitement.

"Wages will keep on rising, little by little, little by little, as steadily as a tree grows, and at the end of three hundred and forty years more there'll be at least *one* country where the mechanic's average wage will be *two hundred* cents a day!"

It knocked them absolutely dumb! Not a man of them could get his breath for upwards of two minutes. Then the coal-burner said prayerfully:

"Might I but live to see it!"

"It is the income of an earl!" said Smug.

"An earl, say ye?" said Dowley; "ye could say more than that and speak no lie; there's no earl in the realm of Bagdemagus that hath an income like to that. Income of an earl—mf! it's the income of an angel!"

"Now, then, that is what is going to happen as regards wages. In that remote day, that man will earn, with *one* week's work, that bill of goods which it takes you upwards of *fifty* weeks to earn now. Some other pretty surprising things are going to happen, too. Brother Dowley, who is it that determines, every spring, what the particular wage of each kind of mechanic, laborer, and servant shall be for that year?"

"Sometimes the courts, sometimes the town council; but most of all, the magistrate. Ye may say, in general terms, it is the magistrate that fixes the wages."

"Doesn't ask any of those poor devils to *help* him fix their wages for them, does he?"

"Hm! That *were* an idea! The master that's to pay him the money is the one that's rightly concerned in that matter, ye will notice."

"Yes—but I thought the other man might have some little trifle at stake in it, too; and even his wife and children, poor creatures. The masters are these: nobles, rich men, the prosperous generally. These few, who do no work, determine what pay the vast hive shall have who *do* work. You see? They're a 'combine'—a trade union, to coin a new phrase—who band themselves together

to force their lowly brother to take what they choose to give. Thirteen hundred years hence—so says the unwritten law—the 'combine' will be the other way, and then how these fine people's posterity will fume and fret and grit their teeth over the insolent tyranny of trade unions! Yes, indeed! the magistrate will tranquilly arrange the wages from now clear away down into the nineteenth century; and then all of a sudden the wage-earner will consider that a couple of thousand years or so is enough of this one-sided sort of thing; and he will rise up and take a hand in fixing his wages himself. Ah, he will have a long and bitter account of wrong and humiliation to settle."

"Do ye believe—"

"That he actually will help to fix his own wages? Yes, indeed. And he will be strong and able, then."

"Brave times, brave times, of a truth!" sneered the prosperous smith.

"Oh,—and there's another detail. In that day, a master may hire a man for only just one day, or one week, or one month at a time, if he wants to."

"What?"

"It's true. Moreover, a magistrate won't be able to force a man to work for a master a whole year on a stretch whether the man wants to or not."

"Will there be *no* law or sense in that day?"

"Both of them, Dowley. In that day a man will be his own property, not the property of magistrate and master. And he can leave town whenever he wants to, if the wages don't suit him!—and they can't put him in the pillory for it."

"Perdition catch such an age!" shouted Dowley, in strong indignation. "An age of dogs, an age barren of reverence for superiors and respect for authority! The pillory—"

"Oh, wait, brother; say no good word for that institution. I think the pillory ought to be abolished."

"A most strange idea. Why?"

"Well, I'll tell you why. Is a man ever put in the pillory for a capital crime?"

"No."

"Is it right to condemn a man to a slight punishment for a small offense and then kill him?"

There was no answer. I had scored my first point! For the first time, the smith wasn't up and ready. The company noticed it. Good effect.

"You don't answer, brother. You were about to glorify the pillory a while ago, and shed some pity on a future age that isn't going to use it. I think the pillory ought to be abolished. What usually happens when a poor fellow is put in the pillory for some little offense that didn't amount to anything in the world? The mob try to have some fun with him, don't they?"



"Yes."

"They begin by clodding him; and they laugh themselves to pieces to see him try to dodge one clod and get hit with another?"

"Yes."

"Then they throw dead cats at him, don't they?"

"Yes."

"Well, then, suppose he has a few personal enemies in that mob and here and there a man or a woman with a secret grudge against him—and suppose especially that he is unpopular in the community, for his pride, or his prosperity, or one thing or another—stones and bricks take the place of clods and cats presently, don't they?"

"There is no doubt of it."

"As a rule he is crippled for life, isn't he?—jaws broken, teeth smashed out?—or legs mutilated, gangrened, presently cut off?—or an eye knocked out, maybe both eyes?"

"It is true, God knoweth it."

"And if he is unpopular he can depend on *dying*, right there in the stocks, can't he?"

"He surely can! One may not deny it."

"I take it none of *you* are unpopular—by reason of pride or insolence, or conspicuous prosperity, or any of those things that excite envy and malice among the base scum of a village? *You* wouldn't think it much of a risk to take a chance in the stocks?"

Dowley winced, visibly. I judged he was hit. But he didn't betray it by any spoken word. As for the others, they spoke out plainly, and with strong feeling. They said they had seen enough of the stocks to know what a man's chance in them was, and they would never consent to enter them if they could compromise on a quick death by hanging.

"Well, to change the subject—for I think I've established my point that the stocks ought to be abolished. I think some of our laws are pretty unfair. For instance, if I do a thing which ought to deliver me to the stocks, and you know I did it and yet keep still and don't report me, *you* will get the stocks if anybody informs on you."

"Ah, but that would serve you but right," said Dowley, "for you *must* inform. So saith the law."

The others coincided.

"Well, all right, let it go, since you vote me down. But there's one thing which certainly isn't fair. The magistrate fixes a mechanic's wage at one cent a day, for instance. The law says that if any master shall venture, even under

utmost press of business, to pay anything *over* that cent a day, even for a single day, he shall be both fined and pilloried for it; and whoever knows he did it and doesn't inform, they also shall be fined and pilloried. Now it seems to me unfair, Dowley, and a deadly peril to all of us, that because you thoughtlessly confessed, a while ago, that within a week you have paid a cent and fifteen mil—"

Oh, I tell *you* it was a smasher! You ought to have seen them to go to pieces, the whole gang. I had just slipped up on poor smiling and complacent Dowley so nice and easy and softly, that he never suspected anything was going to happen till the blow came crashing down and knocked him all to rags.

A fine effect. In fact, as fine as any I ever produced, with so little time to work it up in.

But I saw in a moment that I had overdone the thing a little. I was expecting to scare them, but I wasn't expecting to scare them to death. They were mighty near it, though. You see they had been a whole lifetime learning to appreciate the pillory; and to have that thing staring them in the face, and every one of them distinctly at the mercy of me, a stranger, if I chose to go and report—well, it was awful, and they couldn't seem to recover from the shock, they couldn't seem to pull themselves together. Pale, shaky, dumb, pitiful? Why, they weren't any better than so many dead men. It was very uncomfortable. Of course, I thought they would appeal to me to keep mum, and then we would shake hands, and take a drink all round, and laugh it off, and there an end. But no; you see I was an unknown person, among a cruelly oppressed and suspicious people, a people always accustomed to having advantage taken of their helplessness, and never expecting just or kind treatment from any but their own families and very closest intimates. Appeal to *me* to be gentle, to be fair, to be generous? Of course, they wanted to, but they couldn't dare.

## CHAPTER XXXIV. THE YANKEE AND THE KING SOLD AS SLAVES

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Well, what had I better do? Nothing in a hurry, sure. I must get up a diversion; anything to employ me while I could think, and while these poor fellows could have a chance to come to life again. There sat Marco, petrified in the act of trying to get the hang of his miller-gun—turned to stone, just in the attitude he was in when my pile-driver fell, the toy still gripped in his unconscious fingers. So I took it from him and proposed to explain its mystery. Mystery! a simple little thing like that; and yet it was mysterious enough, for that race and that age.

I never saw such an awkward people, with machinery; you see, they were totally unused to it. The miller-gun was a little double-barreled tube of toughened glass, with a neat little trick of a spring to it, which upon pressure would let a shot escape. But the shot wouldn't hurt anybody, it would only drop into your hand. In the gun were two sizes—wee mustard-seed shot, and another sort that were several times larger. They were money. The mustard-seed shot represented milrays, the larger ones mills. So the gun was a purse; and very handy, too; you could pay out money in the dark with it, with accuracy; and you could carry it in your mouth; or in your vest pocket, if you had one. I made them of several sizes—one size so large that it would carry the equivalent of a dollar. Using shot for money was a good thing for the government; the metal cost nothing, and the money couldn't be counterfeited, for I was the only person in the kingdom who knew how to manage a shot tower. "Paying the shot" soon came to be a common phrase. Yes, and I knew it would still be passing men's lips, away down in the nineteenth century, yet none would suspect how and when it originated.

The king joined us, about this time, mightily refreshed by his nap, and feeling good. Anything could make me nervous now, I was so uneasy—for our lives were in danger; and so it worried me to detect a complacent something in the king's eye which seemed to indicate that he had been loading himself up for a performance of some kind or other; confound it, why must he go and choose such a time as this?

I was right. He began, straight off, in the most innocently artful, and transparent, and lubberly way, to lead up to the subject of agriculture. The cold sweat broke out all over me. I wanted to whisper in his ear, "Man, we are in awful danger! every moment is worth a principality till we get back these men's confidence; *don't* waste any of this golden time." But of course I couldn't do it.

Whisper to him? It would look as if we were conspiring. So I had to sit there and look calm and pleasant while the king stood over that dynamite mine and mooned along about his damned onions and things. At first the tumult of my own thoughts, summoned by the danger-signal and swarming to the rescue from every quarter of my skull, kept up such a hurrah and confusion and fifeing and drumming that I couldn't take in a word; but presently when my mob of gathering plans began to crystallize and fall into position and form line of battle, a sort of order and quiet ensued and I caught the boom of the king's batteries, as if out of remote distance:

"—were not the best way, methinks, albeit it is not to be denied that authorities differ as concerning this point, some contending that the onion is but an unwholesome berry when stricken early from the tree—"

The audience showed signs of life, and sought each other's eyes in a surprised and troubled way.

"—whileas others do yet maintain, with much show of reason, that this is not of necessity the case, instancing that plums and other like cereals do be always dug in the unripe state—"

The audience exhibited distinct distress; yes, and also fear.

"—yet are they clearly wholesome, the more especially when one doth assuage the asperities of their nature by admixture of the tranquilizing juice of the wayward cabbage—"

The wild light of terror began to glow in these men's eyes, and one of them muttered, "These be errors, every one—God hath surely smitten the mind of this farmer." I was in miserable apprehension; I sat upon thorns.

"—and further instancing the known truth that in the case of animals, the young, which may be called the green fruit of the creature, is the better, all confessing that when a goat is ripe, his fur doth heat and sore engame his flesh, the which defect, taken in connection with his several rancid habits, and fulsome appetites, and godless attitudes of mind, and bilious quality of morals—"

They rose and went for him! With a fierce shout, "The one would betray us, the other is mad! Kill them! Kill them!" they flung themselves upon us. What joy flamed up in the king's eye! He might be lame in agriculture, but this kind of thing was just in his line. He had been fasting long, he was hungry for a fight. He hit the blacksmith a crack under the jaw that lifted him clear off his feet and

stretched him flat on his back. "St. George for Britain!" and he downed the wheelwright. The mason was big, but I laid him out like nothing. The three gathered themselves up and came again; went down again; came again; and kept on repeating this, with native British pluck, until they were battered to jelly, reeling with exhaustion, and so blind that they couldn't tell us from each other; and yet they kept right on, hammering away with what might was left in them.

Hammering each other—for we stepped aside and looked on while they rolled, and struggled, and gouged, and pounded, and bit, with the strict and wordless attention to business of so many bulldogs. We looked on without apprehension, for they were fast getting past ability to go for help against us, and the arena was far enough from the public road to be safe from intrusion.

Well, while they were gradually playing out, it suddenly occurred to me to wonder what had become of Marco. I looked around; he was nowhere to be seen. Oh, but this was ominous! I pulled the king's sleeve, and we glided away and rushed for the hut. No Marco there, no Phyllis there! They had gone to the road for help, sure. I told the king to give his heels wings, and I would explain later. We made good time across the open ground, and as we darted into the shelter of the wood I glanced back and saw a mob of excited peasants swarm into view, with Marco and his wife at their head. They were making a world of noise, but that couldn't hurt anybody; the wood was dense, and as soon as we were well into its depths we would take to a tree and let them whistle. Ah, but then came another sound—dogs! Yes, that was quite another matter. It magnified our contract—we must find running water.

We tore along at a good gait, and soon left the sounds far behind and modified to a murmur. We struck a stream and darted into it. We waded swiftly down it, in the dim forest light, for as much as three hundred yards, and then came across an oak with a great bough sticking out over the water. We climbed up on this bough, and began to work our way along it to the body of the tree; now we began to hear those sounds more plainly; so the mob had struck our trail.

For a while the sounds approached pretty fast. And then for another while they didn't. No doubt the dogs had found the place where we had entered the stream, and were now waltzing up and down the shores trying to pick up the trail again.

When we were snugly lodged in the tree and curtained with foliage, the king was satisfied, but I was doubtful. I believed we could crawl along a branch and get into the next tree, and I judged it worth while to try. We tried it, and made a success of it, though the king slipped, at the junction, and came near failing to connect. We got comfortable lodgment and satisfactory concealment among the foliage, and then we had nothing to do but listen to the hunt.

Presently we heard it coming—and coming on the jump, too; yes, and down

both sides of the stream. Louder—louder—next minute it swelled swiftly up into a roar of shoutings, barkings, tramlings, and swept by like a cyclone.

"I was afraid that the overhanging branch would suggest something to them," said I, "but I don't mind the disappointment. Come, my liege, it were well that we make good use of our time. We've flanked them. Dark is coming on, presently. If we can cross the stream and get a good start, and borrow a couple of horses from somebody's pasture to use for a few hours, we shall be safe enough."

We started down, and got nearly to the lowest limb, when we seemed to hear the hunt returning. We stopped to listen.

"Yes," said I, "they're baffled, they've given it up, they're on their way home. We will climb back to our roost again, and let them go by."

So we climbed back. The king listened a moment and said:

"They still search—I wit the sign. We did best to abide."

He was right. He knew more about hunting than I did. The noise approached steadily, but not with a rush. The king said:

"They reason that we were advantaged by no parlous start of them, and being on foot are as yet no mighty way from where we took the water."

"Yes, sire, that is about it, I am afraid, though I was hoping better things."

The noise drew nearer and nearer, and soon the van was drifting under us, on both sides of the water. A voice called a halt from the other bank, and said:

"An they were so minded, they could get to yon tree by this branch that overhangs, and yet not touch ground. Ye will do well to send a man up it."

"Marry, that we will do!"

I was obliged to admire my cuteness in foreseeing this very thing and swapping trees to beat it. But, don't you know, there are some things that can beat smartness and foresight? Awkwardness and stupidity can. The best swordsman in the world doesn't need to fear the second best swordsman in the world; no, the person for him to be afraid of is some ignorant antagonist who has never had a sword in his hand before; he doesn't do the thing he ought to do, and so the expert isn't prepared for him; he does the thing he ought not to do; and often it catches the expert out and ends him on the spot. Well, how could I, with all my gifts, make any valuable preparation against a near-sighted, cross-eyed, pudding-headed clown who would aim himself at the wrong tree and hit the right one? And that is what he did. He went for the wrong tree, which was, of course, the right one by mistake, and up he started.

Matters were serious now. We remained still, and awaited developments. The peasant toiled his difficult way up. The king raised himself up and stood; he made a leg ready, and when the comer's head arrived in reach of it there was a

dull thud, and down went the man floundering to the ground. There was a wild outbreak of anger below, and the mob swarmed in from all around, and there we were treed, and prisoners. Another man started up; the bridging bough was detected, and a volunteer started up the tree that furnished the bridge. The king ordered me to play Horatius and keep the bridge. For a while the enemy came thick and fast; but no matter, the head man of each procession always got a buffet that dislodged him as soon as he came in reach. The king's spirits rose, his joy was limitless. He said that if nothing occurred to mar the prospect we should have a beautiful night, for on this line of tactics we could hold the tree against the whole country-side.

However, the mob soon came to that conclusion themselves; wherefore they called off the assault and began to debate other plans. They had no weapons, but there were plenty of stones, and stones might answer. We had no objections. A stone might possibly penetrate to us once in a while, but it wasn't very likely; we were well protected by boughs and foliage, and were not visible from any good aiming point. If they would but waste half an hour in stone-throwing, the dark would come to our help. We were feeling very well satisfied. We could smile; almost laugh.

But we didn't; which was just as well, for we should have been interrupted. Before the stones had been raging through the leaves and bouncing from the boughs fifteen minutes, we began to notice a smell. A couple of sniffs of it was enough of an explanation—it was smoke! Our game was up at last. We recognized that. When smoke invites you, you have to come. They raised their pile of dry brush and damp weeds higher and higher, and when they saw the thick cloud begin to roll up and smother the tree, they broke out in a storm of joy-clamors. I got enough breath to say:

"Proceed, my liege; after you is manners."

The king gasped:

"Follow me down, and then back thyself against one side of the trunk, and leave me the other. Then will we fight. Let each pile his dead according to his own fashion and taste."

Then he descended, barking and coughing, and I followed. I struck the ground an instant after him; we sprang to our appointed places, and began to give and take with all our might. The powwow and racket were prodigious; it was a tempest of riot and confusion and thick-falling blows. Suddenly some horsemen tore into the midst of the crowd, and a voice shouted:

"Hold—or ye are dead men!"

How good it sounded! The owner of the voice bore all the marks of a gentleman: picturesque and costly raiment, the aspect of command, a hard

countenance, with complexion and features marred by dissipation. The mob fell humbly back, like so many spaniels. The gentleman inspected us critically, then said sharply to the peasants:

"What are ye doing to these people?"

"They be madmen, worshipful sir, that have come wandering we know not whence, and—"

"Ye know not whence? Do ye pretend ye know them not?"

"Most honored sir, we speak but the truth. They are strangers and unknown to any in this region; and they be the most violent and bloodthirsty madmen that ever—"

"Peace! Ye know not what ye say. They are not mad. Who are ye? And whence are ye? Explain."

"We are but peaceful strangers, sir," I said, "and traveling upon our own concerns. We are from a far country, and unacquainted here. We have purposed no harm; and yet but for your brave interference and protection these people would have killed us. As you have divined, sir, we are not mad; neither are we violent or bloodthirsty."

The gentleman turned to his retinue and said calmly: "Lash me these animals to their kennels!"

The mob vanished in an instant; and after them plunged the horsemen, laying about them with their whips and pitilessly riding down such as were witless enough to keep the road instead of taking to the bush. The shrieks and supplications presently died away in the distance, and soon the horsemen began to straggle back. Meantime the gentleman had been questioning us more closely, but had dug no particulars out of us. We were lavish of recognition of the service he was doing us, but we revealed nothing more than that we were friendless strangers from a far country. When the escort were all returned, the gentleman said to one of his servants:

"Bring the led-horses and mount these people."

"Yes, my lord."

We were placed toward the rear, among the servants. We traveled pretty fast, and finally drew rein some time after dark at a roadside inn some ten or twelve miles from the scene of our troubles. My lord went immediately to his room, after ordering his supper, and we saw no more of him. At dawn in the morning we breakfasted and made ready to start.

My lord's chief attendant sauntered forward at that moment with indolent grace, and said:

"Ye have said ye should continue upon this road, which is our direction likewise; wherefore my lord, the earl Grip, hath given commandment that ye



retain the horses and ride, and that certain of us ride with ye a twenty mile to a fair town that hight Cambenet, whenso ye shall be out of peril."

We could do nothing less than express our thanks and accept the offer. We jogged along, six in the party, at a moderate and comfortable gait, and in conversation learned that my lord Grip was a very great personage in his own region, which lay a day's journey beyond Cambenet. We loitered to such a degree that it was near the middle of the forenoon when we entered the market square of the town. We dismounted, and left our thanks once more for my lord, and then approached a crowd assembled in the center of the square, to see what might be the object of interest. It was the remnant of that old peregrinating band of slaves! So they had been dragging their chains about, all this weary time.

That poor husband was gone, and also many others; and some few purchases had been added to the gang. The king was not interested, and wanted to move along, but I was absorbed, and full of pity. I could not take my eyes away from these worn and wasted wrecks of humanity. There they sat, grounded upon the ground, silent, uncomplaining, with bowed heads, a pathetic sight. And by hideous contrast, a redundant orator was making a speech to another gathering not thirty steps away, in fulsome laudation of "our glorious British liberties!"

I was boiling. I had forgotten I was a plebeian, I was remembering I was a man. Cost what it might, I would mount that rostrum and—

Click! the king and I were handcuffed together! Our companions, those servants, had done it; my lord Grip stood looking on. The king burst out in a fury, and said:

"What meaneth this ill-mannered jest?"

My lord merely said to his head miscreant, coolly:

"Put up the slaves and sell them!"

*Slaves!* The word had a new sound—and how unspeakably awful! The king lifted his manacles and brought them down with a deadly force; but my lord was out of the way when they arrived. A dozen of the rascal's servants sprang forward, and in a moment we were helpless, with our hands bound behind us.

We so loudly and so earnestly proclaimed ourselves freemen, that we got the interested attention of that liberty-mouthing orator and his patriotic crowd, and they gathered about us and assumed a very determined attitude. The orator said:

"If, indeed, ye are freemen, ye have nought to fear—the God-given liberties of Britain are about ye for your shield and shelter! (Applause.) Ye shall soon see. Bring forth your proofs."

"What proofs?"

"Proof that ye are freemen."

Ah—I remembered! I came to myself; I said nothing. But the king stormed

out:

"Thou'rt insane, man. It were better, and more in reason, that this thief and scoundrel here prove that we are *not* freemen."

You see, he knew his own laws just as other people so often know the laws; by words, not by effects. They take a *meaning*, and get to be very vivid, when you come to apply them to yourself.

All hands shook their heads and looked disappointed; some turned away, no longer interested. The orator said—and this time in the tones of business, not of sentiment:

"An ye do not know your country's laws, it were time ye learned them. Ye are strangers to us; ye will not deny that. Ye may be freemen, we do not deny that; but also ye may be slaves. The law is clear: it doth not require the claimant to prove ye are slaves, it requireth you to prove ye are not."

I said:

"Dear sir, give us only time to send to Astolat; or give us only time to send to the Valley of Holiness—"

"Peace, good man, these are extraordinary requests, and you may not hope to have them granted. It would cost much time, and would unwarrantably inconvenience your master—"

"*Master*, idiot!" stormed the king. "I have no master, I myself am the m—"

"Silence, for God's sake!"

I got the words out in time to stop the king. We were in trouble enough already; it could not help us any to give these people the notion that we were lunatics.

There is no use in stringing out the details. The earl put us up and sold us at auction. This same infernal law had existed in our own South in my own time, more than thirteen hundred years later, and under it hundreds of freemen who could not prove that they were freemen had been sold into lifelong slavery without the circumstance making any particular impression upon me; but the minute law and the auction block came into my personal experience, a thing which had been merely improper before became suddenly hellish. Well, that's the way we are made.

Yes, we were sold at auction, like swine. In a big town and an active market we should have brought a good price; but this place was utterly stagnant and so we sold at a figure which makes me ashamed, every time I think of it. The King of England brought seven dollars, and his prime minister nine; whereas the king was easily worth twelve dollars and I as easily worth fifteen. But that is the way things always go; if you force a sale on a dull market, I don't care what the property is, you are going to make a poor business of it, and you can make up

your mind to it. If the earl had had wit enough to—

However, there is no occasion for my working my sympathies up on his account. Let him go, for the present; I took his number, so to speak.

The slave-dealer bought us both, and hitched us onto that long chain of his, and we constituted the rear of his procession. We took up our line of march and passed out of Cambenet at noon; and it seemed to me unaccountably strange and odd that the King of England and his chief minister, marching manacled and fettered and yoked, in a slave convoy, could move by all manner of idle men and women, and under windows where sat the sweet and the lovely, and yet never attract a curious eye, never provoke a single remark. Dear, dear, it only shows that there is nothing diviner about a king than there is about a tramp, after all.

He is just a cheap and hollow artificiality when you don't know he is a king. But reveal his quality, and dear me it takes your very breath away to look at him. I reckon we are all fools. Born so, no doubt.

## CHAPTER XXXV. A PITIFUL INCIDENT

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It's a world of surprises. The king brooded; this was natural. What would he brood about, should you say? Why, about the prodigious nature of his fall, of course—from the loftiest place in the world to the lowest; from the most illustrious station in the world to the obscurest; from the grandest vocation among men to the basest. No, I take my oath that the thing that graveled him most, to start with, was not this, but the price he had fetched! He couldn't seem to get over that seven dollars. Well, it stunned me so, when I first found it out, that I couldn't believe it; it didn't seem natural. But as soon as my mental sight cleared and I got a right focus on it, I saw I was mistaken; it *was* natural. For this reason: a king is a mere artificiality, and so a king's feelings, like the impulses of an automatic doll, are mere artificialities; but as a man, he is a reality, and his feelings, as a man, are real, not phantoms. It shames the average man to be valued below his own estimate of his worth, and the king certainly wasn't anything more than an average man, if he was up that high.

Confound him, he wearied me with arguments to show that in anything like a fair market he would have fetched twenty-five dollars, sure—a thing which was plainly nonsense, and full or the baldest conceit; I wasn't worth it myself. But it was tender ground for me to argue on. In fact, I had to simply shirk argument and do the diplomatic instead. I had to throw conscience aside, and brazenly concede that he ought to have brought twenty-five dollars; whereas I was quite well aware that in all the ages, the world had never seen a king that was worth half the money, and during the next thirteen centuries wouldn't see one that was worth the fourth of it. Yes, he tired me. If he began to talk about the crops; or about the recent weather; or about the condition of politics; or about dogs, or cats, or morals, or theology—no matter what—I sighed, for I knew what was coming; he was going to get out of it a palliation of that tiresome seven-dollar sale. Wherever we halted where there was a crowd, he would give me a look which said plainly: "if that thing could be tried over again now, with this kind of folk, you would see a different result." Well, when he was first sold, it secretly tickled me to see him go for seven dollars; but before he was done with his sweating and worrying I wished he had fetched a hundred. The thing never got a

chance to die, for every day, at one place or another, possible purchasers looked us over, and, as often as any other way, their comment on the king was something like this:

"Here's a two-dollar-and-a-half chump with a thirty-dollar style. Pity but style was marketable."

At last this sort of remark produced an evil result. Our owner was a practical person and he perceived that this defect must be mended if he hoped to find a purchaser for the king. So he went to work to take the style out of his sacred majesty. I could have given the man some valuable advice, but I didn't; you mustn't volunteer advice to a slave-driver unless you want to damage the cause you are arguing for. I had found it a sufficiently difficult job to reduce the king's style to a peasant's style, even when he was a willing and anxious pupil; now then, to undertake to reduce the king's style to a slave's style—and by force—go to! it was a stately contract. Never mind the details—it will save me trouble to let you imagine them. I will only remark that at the end of a week there was plenty of evidence that lash and club and fist had done their work well; the king's body was a sight to see—and to weep over; but his spirit?—why, it wasn't even phased. Even that dull clod of a slave-driver was able to see that there can be such a thing as a slave who will remain a man till he dies; whose bones you can break, but whose manhood you can't. This man found that from his first effort down to his latest, he couldn't ever come within reach of the king, but the king was ready to plunge for him, and did it. So he gave up at last, and left the king in possession of his style unimpaired. The fact is, the king was a good deal more than a king, he was a man; and when a man is a man, you can't knock it out of him.

We had a rough time for a month, tramping to and fro in the earth, and suffering. And what Englishman was the most interested in the slavery question by that time? His grace the king! Yes; from being the most indifferent, he was become the most interested. He was become the bitterest hater of the institution I had ever heard talk. And so I ventured to ask once more a question which I had asked years before and had gotten such a sharp answer that I had not thought it prudent to meddle in the matter further. Would he abolish slavery?

His answer was as sharp as before, but it was music this time; I shouldn't ever wish to hear pleasanter, though the profanity was not good, being awkwardly put together, and with the crash-word almost in the middle instead of at the end, where, of course, it ought to have been.

I was ready and willing to get free now; I hadn't wanted to get free any sooner. No, I cannot quite say that. I had wanted to, but I had not been willing to take desperate chances, and had always dissuaded the king from them. But

now—ah, it was a new atmosphere! Liberty would be worth any cost that might be put upon it now. I set about a plan, and was straightway charmed with it. It would require time, yes, and patience, too, a great deal of both. One could invent quicker ways, and fully as sure ones; but none that would be as picturesque as this; none that could be made so dramatic. And so I was not going to give this one up. It might delay us months, but no matter, I would carry it out or break something.

Now and then we had an adventure. One night we were overtaken by a snow-storm while still a mile from the village we were making for. Almost instantly we were shut up as in a fog, the driving snow was so thick. You couldn't see a thing, and we were soon lost. The slave-driver lashed us desperately, for he saw ruin before him, but his lashings only made matters worse, for they drove us further from the road and from likelihood of succor. So we had to stop at last and slump down in the snow where we were. The storm continued until toward midnight, then ceased. By this time two of our feebler men and three of our women were dead, and others past moving and threatened with death. Our master was nearly beside himself. He stirred up the living, and made us stand, jump, slap ourselves, to restore our circulation, and he helped as well as he could with his whip.

Now came a diversion. We heard shrieks and yells, and soon a woman came running and crying; and seeing our group, she flung herself into our midst and begged for protection. A mob of people came tearing after her, some with torches, and they said she was a witch who had caused several cows to die by a strange disease, and practiced her arts by help of a devil in the form of a black cat. This poor woman had been stoned until she hardly looked human, she was so battered and bloody. The mob wanted to burn her.

Well, now, what do you suppose our master did? When we closed around this poor creature to shelter her, he saw his chance. He said, burn her here, or they shouldn't have her at all. Imagine that! They were willing. They fastened her to a post; they brought wood and piled it about her; they applied the torch while she shrieked and pleaded and strained her two young daughters to her breast; and our brute, with a heart solely for business, lashed us into position about the stake and warmed us into life and commercial value by the same fire which took away the innocent life of that poor harmless mother. That was the sort of master we had. I took *his* number. That snow-storm cost him nine of his flock; and he was more brutal to us than ever, after that, for many days together, he was so enraged over his loss.

We had adventures all along. One day we ran into a procession. And such a procession! All the riffraff of the kingdom seemed to be comprehended in it;

and all drunk at that. In the van was a cart with a coffin in it, and on the coffin sat a comely young girl of about eighteen suckling a baby, which she squeezed to her breast in a passion of love every little while, and every little while wiped from its face the tears which her eyes rained down upon it; and always the foolish little thing smiled up at her, happy and content, kneading her breast with its dimpled fat hand, which she patted and fondled right over her breaking heart.

Men and women, boys and girls, trotted along beside or after the cart, hooting, shouting profane and ribald remarks, singing snatches of foul song, skipping, dancing—a very holiday of hellions, a sickening sight. We had struck a suburb of London, outside the walls, and this was a sample of one sort of London society. Our master secured a good place for us near the gallows. A priest was in attendance, and he helped the girl climb up, and said comforting words to her, and made the under-sheriff provide a stool for her. Then he stood there by her on the gallows, and for a moment looked down upon the mass of upturned faces at his feet, then out over the solid pavement of heads that stretched away on every side occupying the vacancies far and near, and then began to tell the story of the case. And there was pity in his voice—how seldom a sound that was in that ignorant and savage land! I remember every detail of what he said, except the words he said it in; and so I change it into my own words:

"Law is intended to mete out justice. Sometimes it fails. This cannot be helped. We can only grieve, and be resigned, and pray for the soul of him who falls unfairly by the arm of the law, and that his fellows may be few. A law sends this poor young thing to death—and it is right. But another law had placed her where she must commit her crime or starve with her child—and before God that law is responsible for both her crime and her ignominious death!

"A little while ago this young thing, this child of eighteen years, was as happy a wife and mother as any in England; and her lips were blithe with song, which is the native speech of glad and innocent hearts. Her young husband was as happy as she; for he was doing his whole duty, he worked early and late at his handicraft, his bread was honest bread well and fairly earned, he was prospering, he was furnishing shelter and sustenance to his family, he was adding his mite to the wealth of the nation. By consent of a treacherous law, instant destruction fell upon this holy home and swept it away! That young husband was waylaid and impressed, and sent to sea. The wife knew nothing of it. She sought him everywhere, she moved the hardest hearts with the supplications of her tears, the broken eloquence of her despair. Weeks dragged by, she watching, waiting, hoping, her mind going slowly to wreck under the burden of her misery. Little by little all her small possessions went for food. When she could no longer pay

her rent, they turned her out of doors. She begged, while she had strength; when she was starving at last, and her milk failing, she stole a piece of linen cloth of the value of a fourth part of a cent, thinking to sell it and save her child. But she was seen by the owner of the cloth. She was put in jail and brought to trial. The man testified to the facts. A plea was made for her, and her sorrowful story was told in her behalf. She spoke, too, by permission, and said she did steal the cloth, but that her mind was so disordered of late by trouble that when she was overborne with hunger all acts, criminal or other, swam meaningless through her brain and she knew nothing rightly, except that she was so hungry! For a moment all were touched, and there was disposition to deal mercifully with her, seeing that she was so young and friendless, and her case so piteous, and the law that robbed her of her support to blame as being the first and only cause of her transgression; but the prosecuting officer replied that whereas these things were all true, and most pitiful as well, still there was much small theft in these days, and mistimed mercy here would be a danger to property—oh, my God, is there no property in ruined homes, and orphaned babes, and broken hearts that British law holds precious!—and so he must require sentence.

"When the judge put on his black cap, the owner of the stolen linen rose trembling up, his lip quivering, his face as gray as ashes; and when the awful words came, he cried out, 'Oh, poor child, poor child, I did not know it was death!' and fell as a tree falls. When they lifted him up his reason was gone; before the sun was set, he had taken his own life. A kindly man; a man whose heart was right, at bottom; add his murder to this that is to be now done here; and charge them both where they belong—to the rulers and the bitter laws of Britain. The time is come, my child; let me pray over thee—not *for* thee, dear abused poor heart and innocent, but for them that be guilty of thy ruin and death, who need it more."

After his prayer they put the noose around the young girl's neck, and they had great trouble to adjust the knot under her ear, because she was devouring the baby all the time, wildly kissing it, and snatching it to her face and her breast, and drenching it with tears, and half moaning, half shrieking all the while, and the baby crowing, and laughing, and kicking its feet with delight over what it took for romp and play. Even the hangman couldn't stand it, but turned away.

When all was ready the priest gently pulled and tugged and forced the child out of the mother's arms, and stepped quickly out of her reach; but she clasped her hands, and made a wild spring toward him, with a shriek; but the rope—and the under-sheriff—held her short. Then she went on her knees and stretched out her hands and cried:

"One more kiss—oh, my God, one more, one more,—it is the dying that begs



it!"

She got it; she almost smothered the little thing. And when they got it away again, she cried out:

"Oh, my child, my darling, it will die! It has no home, it has no father, no friend, no mother—"

"It has them all!" said that good priest. "All these will I be to it till I die."

You should have seen her face then! Gratitude? Lord, what do you want with words to express that? Words are only painted fire; a look is the fire itself.

She gave that look, and carried it away to the treasury of heaven, where all things that are divine belong.

## CHAPTER XXXVI. AN ENCOUNTER IN THE DARK

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London—to a slave—was a sufficiently interesting place. It was merely a great big village; and mainly mud and thatch. The streets were muddy, crooked, unpaved. The populace was an ever flocking and drifting swarm of rags, and splendors, of nodding plumes and shining armor. The king had a palace there; he saw the outside of it. It made him sigh; yes, and swear a little, in a poor juvenile sixth century way. We saw knights and grandees whom we knew, but they didn't know us in our rags and dirt and raw welts and bruises, and wouldn't have recognized us if we had hailed them, nor stopped to answer, either, it being unlawful to speak with slaves on a chain. Sandy passed within ten yards of me on a mule—hunting for me, I imagined. But the thing which clean broke my heart was something which happened in front of our old barrack in a square, while we were enduring the spectacle of a man being boiled to death in oil for counterfeiting pennies. It was the sight of a newsboy—and I couldn't get at him!

Still, I had one comfort—here was proof that Clarence was still alive and banging away. I meant to be with him before long; the thought was full of cheer.

I had one little glimpse of another thing, one day, which gave me a great uplift. It was a wire stretching from housetop to housetop. Telegraph or telephone, sure. I did very much wish I had a little piece of it. It was just what I needed, in order to carry out my project of escape. My idea was to get loose some night, along with the king, then gag and bind our master, change clothes with him, batter him into the aspect of a stranger, hitch him to the slave-chain, assume possession of the property, march to Camelot, and—

But you get my idea; you see what a stunning dramatic surprise I would wind up with at the palace. It was all feasible, if I could only get hold of a slender piece of iron which I could shape into a lock-pick. I could then undo the lumbering padlocks with which our chains were fastened, whenever I might choose. But I never had any luck; no such thing ever happened to fall in my way.

However, my chance came at last. A gentleman who had come twice before to dicker for me, without result, or indeed any approach to a result, came again. I was far from expecting ever to belong to him, for the price asked for me from

the time I was first enslaved was exorbitant, and always provoked either anger or derision, yet my master stuck stubbornly to it—twenty-two dollars. He wouldn't bate a cent. The king was greatly admired, because of his grand physique, but his kingly style was against him, and he wasn't salable; nobody wanted that kind of a slave. I considered myself safe from parting from him because of my extravagant price. No, I was not expecting to ever belong to this gentleman whom I have spoken of, but he had something which I expected would belong to me eventually, if he would but visit us often enough. It was a steel thing with a long pin to it, with which his long cloth outside garment was fastened together in front. There were three of them. He had disappointed me twice, because he did not come quite close enough to me to make my project entirely safe; but this time I succeeded; I captured the lower clasp of the three, and when he missed it he thought he had lost it on the way.

I had a chance to be glad about a minute, then straightway a chance to be sad again. For when the purchase was about to fail, as usual, the master suddenly spoke up and said what would be worded thus—in modern English:

"I'll tell you what I'll do. I'm tired supporting these two for no good. Give me twenty-two dollars for this one, and I'll throw the other one in."

The king couldn't get his breath, he was in such a fury. He began to choke and gag, and meantime the master and the gentleman moved away discussing.

"An ye will keep the offer open—"

""Tis open till the morrow at this hour."

"Then I will answer you at that time," said the gentleman, and disappeared, the master following him.

I had a time of it to cool the king down, but I managed it. I whispered in his ear, to this effect:

"Your grace *will* go for nothing, but after another fashion. And so shall I. To-night we shall both be free."

"Ah! How is that?"

"With this thing which I have stolen, I will unlock these locks and cast off these chains to-night. When he comes about nine-thirty to inspect us for the night, we will seize him, gag him, batter him, and early in the morning we will march out of this town, proprietors of this caravan of slaves."

That was as far as I went, but the king was charmed and satisfied. That evening we waited patiently for our fellow-slaves to get to sleep and signify it by the usual sign, for you must not take many chances on those poor fellows if you can avoid it. It is best to keep your own secrets. No doubt they fidgeted only about as usual, but it didn't seem so to me. It seemed to me that they were going to be forever getting down to their regular snoring. As the time dragged on I got

nervously afraid we shouldn't have enough of it left for our needs; so I made several premature attempts, and merely delayed things by it; for I couldn't seem to touch a padlock, there in the dark, without starting a rattle out of it which interrupted somebody's sleep and made him turn over and wake some more of the gang.

But finally I did get my last iron off, and was a free man once more. I took a good breath of relief, and reached for the king's irons. Too late! in comes the master, with a light in one hand and his heavy walking-staff in the other. I snuggled close among the wallow of snorers, to conceal as nearly as possible that I was naked of irons; and I kept a sharp lookout and prepared to spring for my man the moment he should bend over me.

But he didn't approach. He stopped, gazed absently toward our dusky mass a minute, evidently thinking about something else; then set down his light, moved musingly toward the door, and before a body could imagine what he was going to do, he was out of the door and had closed it behind him.

"Quick!" said the king. "Fetch him back!"

Of course, it was the thing to do, and I was up and out in a moment. But, dear me, there were no lamps in those days, and it was a dark night. But I glimpsed a dim figure a few steps away. I darted for it, threw myself upon it, and then there was a state of things and lively! We fought and scuffled and struggled, and drew a crowd in no time. They took an immense interest in the fight and encouraged us all they could, and, in fact, couldn't have been pleasanter or more cordial if it had been their own fight. Then a tremendous row broke out behind us, and as much as half of our audience left us, with a rush, to invest some sympathy in that. Lanterns began to swing in all directions; it was the watch gathering from far and near. Presently a halberd fell across my back, as a reminder, and I knew what it meant. I was in custody. So was my adversary.

We were marched off toward prison, one on each side of the watchman. Here was disaster, here was a fine scheme gone to sudden destruction! I tried to imagine what would happen when the master should discover that it was I who had been fighting him; and what would happen if they jailed us together in the general apartment for brawlers and petty law-breakers, as was the custom; and what might—

Just then my antagonist turned his face around in my direction, the freckled light from the watchman's tin lantern fell on it, and, by George, he was the wrong man!

## CHAPTER XXXVII. AN AWFUL PREDICAMENT

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Sleep? It was impossible. It would naturally have been impossible in that noisome cavern of a jail, with its mangy crowd of drunken, quarrelsome, and song-singing rascallions. But the thing that made sleep all the more a thing not to be dreamed of, was my racking impatience to get out of this place and find out the whole size of what might have happened yonder in the slave-quarters in consequence of that intolerable miscarriage of mine.

It was a long night, but the morning got around at last. I made a full and frank explanation to the court. I said I was a slave, the property of the great Earl Grip, who had arrived just after dark at the Tabard inn in the village on the other side of the water, and had stopped there over night, by compulsion, he being taken deadly sick with a strange and sudden disorder. I had been ordered to cross to the city in all haste and bring the best physician; I was doing my best; naturally I was running with all my might; the night was dark, I ran against this common person here, who seized me by the throat and began to pummel me, although I told him my errand, and implored him, for the sake of the great earl my master's mortal peril—

The common person interrupted and said it was a lie; and was going to explain how I rushed upon him and attacked him without a word—

"Silence, sirrah!" from the court. "Take him hence and give him a few stripes whereby to teach him how to treat the servant of a nobleman after a different fashion another time. Go!"

Then the court begged my pardon, and hoped I would not fail to tell his lordship it was in no wise the court's fault that this high-handed thing had happened. I said I would make it all right, and so took my leave. Took it just in time, too; he was starting to ask me why I didn't fetch out these facts the moment I was arrested. I said I would if I had thought of it—which was true—but that I was so battered by that man that all my wit was knocked out of me—and so forth and so on, and got myself away, still mumbling.

I didn't wait for breakfast. No grass grew under my feet. I was soon at the slave quarters. Empty—everybody gone! That is, everybody except one body—the slave-master's. It lay there all battered to pulp; and all about were the

evidences of a terrific fight. There was a rude board coffin on a cart at the door, and workmen, assisted by the police, were thinning a road through the gaping crowd in order that they might bring it in.

I picked out a man humble enough in life to condescend to talk with one so shabby as I, and got his account of the matter.

"There were sixteen slaves here. They rose against their master in the night, and thou seest how it ended."

"Yes. How did it begin?"

"There was no witness but the slaves. They said the slave that was most valuable got free of his bonds and escaped in some strange way—by magic arts 'twas thought, by reason that he had no key, and the locks were neither broke nor in any wise injured. When the master discovered his loss, he was mad with despair, and threw himself upon his people with his heavy stick, who resisted and brake his back and in other and divers ways did give him hurts that brought him swiftly to his end."

"This is dreadful. It will go hard with the slaves, no doubt, upon the trial."

"Marry, the trial is over."

"Over!"

"Would they be a week, think you—and the matter so simple? They were not the half of a quarter of an hour at it."

"Why, I don't see how they could determine which were the guilty ones in so short a time."

"*Which* ones? Indeed, they considered not particulars like to that. They condemned them in a body. Wit ye not the law?—which men say the Romans left behind them here when they went—that if one slave killeth his master all the slaves of that man must die for it."

"True. I had forgotten. And when will these die?"

"Belike within a four and twenty hours; albeit some say they will wait a pair of days more, if peradventure they may find the missing one meantime."

The missing one! It made me feel uncomfortable.

"Is it likely they will find him?"

"Before the day is spent—yes. They seek him everywhere. They stand at the gates of the town, with certain of the slaves who will discover him to them if he cometh, and none can pass out but he will be first examined."

"Might one see the place where the rest are confined?"

"The outside of it—yes. The inside of it—but ye will not want to see that."

I took the address of that prison for future reference and then sauntered off. At the first second-hand clothing shop I came to, up a back street, I got a rough rig suitable for a common seaman who might be going on a cold voyage, and

bound up my face with a liberal bandage, saying I had a toothache. This concealed my worst bruises. It was a transformation. I no longer resembled my former self. Then I struck out for that wire, found it and followed it to its den. It was a little room over a butcher's shop—which meant that business wasn't very brisk in the telegraphic line. The young chap in charge was drowsing at his table. I locked the door and put the vast key in my bosom. This alarmed the young fellow, and he was going to make a noise; but I said:

"Save your wind; if you open your mouth you are dead, sure. Tackle your instrument. Lively, now! Call Camelot."

"This doth amaze me! How should such as you know aught of such matters as—"

"Call Camelot! I am a desperate man. Call Camelot, or get away from the instrument and I will do it myself."

"What—you?"

"Yes—certainly. Stop gabbling. Call the palace."

He made the call.

"Now, then, call Clarence."

"Clarence *who*?"

"Never mind Clarence who. Say you want Clarence; you'll get an answer."

He did so. We waited five nerve-straining minutes—ten minutes—how long it did seem!—and then came a click that was as familiar to me as a human voice; for Clarence had been my own pupil.

"Now, my lad, vacate! They would have known *my* touch, maybe, and so your call was surest; but I'm all right now."

He vacated the place and cocked his ear to listen—but it didn't win. I used a cipher. I didn't waste any time in sociabilities with Clarence, but squared away for business, straight-off—thus:

"The king is here and in danger. We were captured and brought here as slaves. We should not be able to prove our identity—and the fact is, I am not in a position to try. Send a telegram for the palace here which will carry conviction with it."

His answer came straight back:

"They don't know anything about the telegraph; they haven't had any experience yet, the line to London is so new. Better not venture that. They might hang you. Think up something else."

Might hang us! Little he knew how closely he was crowding the facts. I couldn't think up anything for the moment. Then an idea struck me, and I started it along:

"Send five hundred picked knights with Launcelot in the lead; and send them

on the jump. Let them enter by the southwest gate, and look out for the man with a white cloth around his right arm."

The answer was prompt:

"They shall start in half an hour."

"All right, Clarence; now tell this lad here that I'm a friend of yours and a dead-head; and that he must be discreet and say nothing about this visit of mine."

The instrument began to talk to the youth and I hurried away. I fell to ciphering. In half an hour it would be nine o'clock. Knights and horses in heavy armor couldn't travel very fast. These would make the best time they could, and now that the ground was in good condition, and no snow or mud, they would probably make a seven-mile gait; they would have to change horses a couple of times; they would arrive about six, or a little after; it would still be plenty light enough; they would see the white cloth which I should tie around my right arm, and I would take command. We would surround that prison and have the king out in no time. It would be showy and picturesque enough, all things considered, though I would have preferred noonday, on account of the more theatrical aspect the thing would have.

Now, then, in order to increase the strings to my bow, I thought I would look up some of those people whom I had formerly recognized, and make myself known. That would help us out of our scrape, without the knights. But I must proceed cautiously, for it was a risky business. I must get into sumptuous raiment, and it wouldn't do to run and jump into it. No, I must work up to it by degrees, buying suit after suit of clothes, in shops wide apart, and getting a little finer article with each change, until I should finally reach silk and velvet, and be ready for my project. So I started.

But the scheme fell through like scat! The first corner I turned, I came plump upon one of our slaves, snooping around with a watchman. I coughed at the moment, and he gave me a sudden look that bit right into my marrow. I judge he thought he had heard that cough before. I turned immediately into a shop and worked along down the counter, pricing things and watching out of the corner of my eye. Those people had stopped, and were talking together and looking in at the door. I made up my mind to get out the back way, if there was a back way, and I asked the shopwoman if I could step out there and look for the escaped slave, who was believed to be in hiding back there somewhere, and said I was an officer in disguise, and my pard was yonder at the door with one of the murderers in charge, and would she be good enough to step there and tell him he needn't wait, but had better go at once to the further end of the back alley and be ready to head him off when I roused him out.

She was blazing with eagerness to see one of those already celebrated



murderers, and she started on the errand at once. I slipped out the back way, locked the door behind me, put the key in my pocket and started off, chuckling to myself and comfortable.

Well, I had gone and spoiled it again, made another mistake. A double one, in fact. There were plenty of ways to get rid of that officer by some simple and plausible device, but no, I must pick out a picturesque one; it is the crying defect of my character. And then, I had ordered my procedure upon what the officer, being human, would *naturally* do; whereas when you are least expecting it, a man will now and then go and do the very thing which it's *not* natural for him to do. The natural thing for the officer to do, in this case, was to follow straight on my heels; he would find a stout oaken door, securely locked, between him and me; before he could break it down, I should be far away and engaged in slipping into a succession of baffling disguises which would soon get me into a sort of raiment which was a surer protection from meddling law-dogs in Britain than any amount of mere innocence and purity of character. But instead of doing the natural thing, the officer took me at my word, and followed my instructions.

And so, as I came trotting out of that cul de sac, full of satisfaction with my own cleverness, he turned the corner and I walked right into his handcuffs. If I had known it was a cul de sac—however, there isn't any excusing a blunder like that, let it go. Charge it up to profit and loss.

Of course, I was indignant, and swore I had just come ashore from a long voyage, and all that sort of thing—just to see, you know, if it would deceive that slave. But it didn't. He knew me. Then I reproached him for betraying me. He was more surprised than hurt. He stretched his eyes wide, and said:

"What, wouldst have me let thee, of all men, escape and not hang with us, when thou'rt the very *cause* of our hanging? Go to!"

"Go to" was their way of saying "I should smile!" or "I like that!" Queer talkers, those people.

Well, there was a sort of bastard justice in his view of the case, and so I dropped the matter. When you can't cure a disaster by argument, what is the use to argue? It isn't my way. So I only said:

"You're not going to be hanged. None of us are."

Both men laughed, and the slave said:

"Ye have not ranked as a fool—before. You might better keep your reputation, seeing the strain would not be for long."

"It will stand it, I reckon. Before to-morrow we shall be out of prison, and free to go where we will, besides."

The witty officer lifted at his left ear with his thumb, made a rasping noise in his throat, and said:

"Out of prison—yes—ye say true. And free likewise to go where ye will, so ye wander not out of his grace the Devil's sultry realm."

I kept my temper, and said, indifferently:

"Now I suppose you really think we are going to hang within a day or two."

"I thought it not many minutes ago, for so the thing was decided and proclaimed."

"Ah, then you've changed your mind, is that it?"

"Even that. I only *thought* , then; I *know* , now."

I felt sarcastical, so I said:

"Oh, sapient servant of the law, condescend to tell us, then, what you *know* ."

"That ye will all be hanged *to-day* , at mid-afternoon! Oho! that shot hit home! Lean upon me."

The fact is I did need to lean upon somebody. My knights couldn't arrive in time. They would be as much as three hours too late. Nothing in the world could save the King of England; nor me, which was more important. More important, not merely to me, but to the nation—the only nation on earth standing ready to blossom into civilization. I was sick. I said no more, there wasn't anything to say. I knew what the man meant; that if the missing slave was found, the postponement would be revoked, the execution take place to-day. Well, the missing slave was found.

## CHAPTER XXXVIII. SIR LAUNCELOT AND KNIGHTS TO THE RESCUE

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Nearing four in the afternoon. The scene was just outside the walls of London. A cool, comfortable, superb day, with a brilliant sun; the kind of day to make one want to live, not die. The multitude was prodigious and far-reaching; and yet we fifteen poor devils hadn't a friend in it. There was something painful in that thought, look at it how you might. There we sat, on our tall scaffold, the butt of the hate and mockery of all those enemies. We were being made a holiday spectacle. They had built a sort of grandstand for the nobility and gentry, and these were there in full force, with their ladies. We recognized a good many of them.

The crowd got a brief and unexpected dash of diversion out of the king. The moment we were freed of our bonds he sprang up, in his fantastic rags, with face bruised out of all recognition, and proclaimed himself Arthur, King of Britain, and denounced the awful penalties of treason upon every soul there present if hair of his sacred head were touched. It startled and surprised him to hear them break into a vast roar of laughter. It wounded his dignity, and he locked himself up in silence. Then, although the crowd begged him to go on, and tried to provoke him to it by catcalls, jeers, and shouts of:

"Let him speak! The king! The king! his humble subjects hunger and thirst for words of wisdom out of the mouth of their master his Serene and Sacred Raggedness!"

But it went for nothing. He put on all his majesty and sat under this rain of contempt and insult unmoved. He certainly was great in his way. Absently, I had taken off my white bandage and wound it about my right arm. When the crowd noticed this, they began upon me. They said:

"Doubtless this sailor-man is his minister—observe his costly badge of office!"

I let them go on until they got tired, and then I said:

"Yes, I am his minister, The Boss; and to-morrow you will hear that from Camelot which—"

I got no further. They drowned me out with joyous derision. But presently

there was silence; for the sheriffs of London, in their official robes, with their subordinates, began to make a stir which indicated that business was about to begin. In the hush which followed, our crime was recited, the death warrant read, then everybody uncovered while a priest uttered a prayer.

Then a slave was blindfolded; the hangman unslung his rope. There lay the smooth road below us, we upon one side of it, the banked multitude wailing its other side—a good clear road, and kept free by the police—how good it would be to see my five hundred horsemen come tearing down it! But no, it was out of the possibilities. I followed its receding thread out into the distance—not a horseman on it, or sign of one.

There was a jerk, and the slave hung dangling; dangling and hideously squirming, for his limbs were not tied.

A second rope was unslung, in a moment another slave was dangling.

In a minute a third slave was struggling in the air. It was dreadful. I turned away my head a moment, and when I turned back I missed the king! They were blindfolding him! I was paralyzed; I couldn't move, I was choking, my tongue was petrified. They finished blindfolding him, they led him under the rope. I couldn't shake off that clinging impotence. But when I saw them put the noose around his neck, then everything let go in me and I made a spring to the rescue—and as I made it I shot one more glance abroad—by George! here they came, a-tilting!—five hundred mailed and belted knights on bicycles!

The grandest sight that ever was seen. Lord, how the plumes streamed, how the sun flamed and flashed from the endless procession of webby wheels!

I waved my right arm as Launcelot swept in—he recognized my rag—I tore away noose and bandage, and shouted:

"On your knees, every rascal of you, and salute the king! Who fails shall sup in hell to-night!"

I always use that high style when I'm climaxing an effect. Well, it was noble to see Launcelot and the boys swarm up onto that scaffold and heave sheriffs and such overboard. And it was fine to see that astonished multitude go down on their knees and beg their lives of the king they had just been deriding and insulting. And as he stood apart there, receiving this homage in rags, I thought to myself, well, really there is something peculiarly grand about the gait and bearing of a king, after all.

I was immensely satisfied. Take the whole situation all around, it was one of the gaudiest effects I ever instigated.

And presently up comes Clarence, his own self! and winks, and says, very modernly:

"Good deal of a surprise, wasn't it? I knew you'd like it. I've had the boys

practicing this long time, privately; and just hungry for a chance to show off."

## CHAPTER XXXIX. THE YANKEE'S FIGHT WITH THE KNIGHTS

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Home again, at Camelot. A morning or two later I found the paper, damp from the press, by my plate at the breakfast table. I turned to the advertising columns, knowing I should find something of personal interest to me there. It was this:

DE PAR LE ROI.

Know that the great lord and illustrious Knight, SIR SAGRAMOR LE DESIROUS having condescended to meet the King's Minister, Hank Morgan, the which is surnamed The Boss, for satisfgction of offence anciently given, these willL engage in the lists by Camelot about the fourth hour of the morning of the sixteenth day of this next succeeding month. The battle will be a l outrance, sith the said offence was of a deadly sort, admitting of no commmon Position.

Clarence's editorial reference to this affair was to this effect:

It will be observed, by a gl7nce at our advertising columns, that the community is to be favored with a treat of unusual interest in the tournament line. The n ames of the artists are warrant of good enterTemment. The box-office will be open at noon of the 13th; admission 3 cents, reserved seatsh 5; proceeds to go to the hospital fund The royal pair and all the Court will be present. With these exceptions, and the

press and the clergy, the free list is strictly suspended. Parties are hereby warned against buying tickets of speculators; they will not be good at the door.

Everybody knows and likes The Boss, everybody knows and likes Sir Sag.; come, let us give the lads a good send-off. Remember, the proceeds go to a great and free charity, and one whose broad benevolence stretches out its helping hand, warm with the blood of a loving heart, to all that suffer, regardless of race, creed, condition or color—the only charity yet established in the earth which has no politico-religious stopcock on its compassion, but says Here flows the stream, let ALL come and drink! Turn out, all hands! fetch along your doughnuts and your gum-drops and have a good time. Pie for sale on the grounds, and rocks to crack it with; and circus-lemonade—three drops of lime juice to a barrel of water.

N.B. This is the first tournament under the new law, which allow each combatant to use any weapon he may prefer. You may want to make a note of that.

Up to the day set, there was no talk in all Britain of anything but this combat. All other topics sank into insignificance and passed out of men's thoughts and interest. It was not because a tournament was a great matter, it was not because Sir Sagamor had found the Holy Grail, for he had not, but had failed; it was not because the second (official) personage in the kingdom was one of the duellists; no, all these features were commonplace. Yet there was abundant reason for the extraordinary interest which this coming fight was creating. It was born of the fact that all the nation knew that this was not to be a duel between mere men, so to speak, but a duel between two mighty magicians; a duel not of muscle but of mind, not of human skill but of superhuman art and craft; a final struggle for supremacy between the two master enchanters of the age. It was realized that

the most prodigious achievements of the most renowned knights could not be worthy of comparison with a spectacle like this; they could be but child's play, contrasted with this mysterious and awful battle of the gods. Yes, all the world knew it was going to be in reality a duel between Merlin and me, a measuring of his magic powers against mine. It was known that Merlin had been busy whole days and nights together, imbuing Sir Sagramor's arms and armor with supernal powers of offense and defense, and that he had procured for him from the spirits of the air a fleecy veil which would render the wearer invisible to his antagonist while still visible to other men. Against Sir Sagramor, so weaponed and protected, a thousand knights could accomplish nothing; against him no known enchantments could prevail. These facts were sure; regarding them there was no doubt, no reason for doubt. There was but one question: might there be still other enchantments, *unknown* to Merlin, which could render Sir Sagramor's veil transparent to me, and make his enchanted mail vulnerable to my weapons?

This was the one thing to be decided in the lists. Until then the world must remain in suspense.

So the world thought there was a vast matter at stake here, and the world was right, but it was not the one they had in their minds. No, a far vaster one was upon the cast of this die: *the life of knight-errantry*. I was a champion, it was true, but not the champion of the frivolous black arts, I was the champion of hard unsentimental common-sense and reason. I was entering the lists to either destroy knight-errantry or be its victim.

Vast as the show-grounds were, there were no vacant spaces in them outside of the lists, at ten o'clock on the morning of the 16th. The mammoth grand-stand was clothed in flags, streamers, and rich tapestries, and packed with several acres of small-fry tributary kings, their suites, and the British aristocracy; with our own royal gang in the chief place, and each and every individual a flashing prism of gaudy silks and velvets—well, I never saw anything to begin with it but a fight between an Upper Mississippi sunset and the aurora borealis. The huge camp of beflagged and gay-colored tents at one end of the lists, with a stiff-standing sentinel at every door and a shining shield hanging by him for challenge, was another fine sight. You see, every knight was there who had any ambition or any caste feeling; for my feeling toward their order was not much of a secret, and so here was their chance. If I won my fight with Sir Sagramor, others would have the right to call me out as long as I might be willing to respond.

Down at our end there were but two tents; one for me, and another for my servants. At the appointed hour the king made a sign, and the heralds, in their tabards, appeared and made proclamation, naming the combatants and stating the



cause of quarrel. There was a pause, then a ringing bugle-blast, which was the signal for us to come forth. All the multitude caught their breath, and an eager curiosity flashed into every face.

Out from his tent rode great Sir Sagramor, an imposing tower of iron, stately and rigid, his huge spear standing upright in its socket and grasped in his strong hand, his grand horse's face and breast cased in steel, his body clothed in rich trappings that almost dragged the ground—oh, a most noble picture. A great shout went up, of welcome and admiration.

And then out I came. But I didn't get any shout. There was a wondering and eloquent silence for a moment, then a great wave of laughter began to sweep along that human sea, but a warning bugle-blast cut its career short. I was in the simplest and comfortablest of gymnast costumes—flesh-colored tights from neck to heel, with blue silk puffings about my loins, and bareheaded. My horse was not above medium size, but he was alert, slender-limbed, muscled with watchsprings, and just a greyhound to go. He was a beauty, glossy as silk, and naked as he was when he was born, except for bridle and ranger-saddle.

The iron tower and the gorgeous bedquilt came cumbrously but gracefully pirouetting down the lists, and we tripped lightly up to meet them. We halted; the tower saluted, I responded; then we wheeled and rode side by side to the grand-stand and faced our king and queen, to whom we made obeisance. The queen exclaimed:

"Alack, Sir Boss, wilt fight naked, and without lance or sword or—"

But the king checked her and made her understand, with a polite phrase or two, that this was none of her business. The bugles rang again; and we separated and rode to the ends of the lists, and took position. Now old Merlin stepped into view and cast a dainty web of gossamer threads over Sir Sagramor which turned him into Hamlet's ghost; the king made a sign, the bugles blew, Sir Sagramor laid his great lance in rest, and the next moment here he came thundering down the course with his veil flying out behind, and I went whistling through the air like an arrow to meet him—cocking my ear the while, as if noting the invisible knight's position and progress by hearing, not sight. A chorus of encouraging shouts burst out for him, and one brave voice flung out a heartening word for me—said:

"Go it, slim Jim!"

It was an even bet that Clarence had procured that favor for me—and furnished the language, too. When that formidable lance-point was within a yard and a half of my breast I twitched my horse aside without an effort, and the big knight swept by, scoring a blank. I got plenty of applause that time. We turned, braced up, and down we came again. Another blank for the knight, a roar of

applause for me. This same thing was repeated once more; and it fetched such a whirlwind of applause that Sir Sagramor lost his temper, and at once changed his tactics and set himself the task of chasing me down. Why, he hadn't any show in the world at that; it was a game of tag, with all the advantage on my side; I whirled out of his path with ease whenever I chose, and once I slapped him on the back as I went to the rear. Finally I took the chase into my own hands; and after that, turn, or twist, or do what he would, he was never able to get behind me again; he found himself always in front at the end of his maneuver. So he gave up that business and retired to his end of the lists. His temper was clear gone now, and he forgot himself and flung an insult at me which disposed of mine. I slipped my lasso from the horn of my saddle, and grasped the coil in my right hand. This time you should have seen him come!—it was a business trip, sure; by his gait there was blood in his eye. I was sitting my horse at ease, and swinging the great loop of my lasso in wide circles about my head; the moment he was under way, I started for him; when the space between us had narrowed to forty feet, I sent the snaky spirals of the rope a-cleaving through the air, then darted aside and faced about and brought my trained animal to a halt with all his feet braced under him for a surge. The next moment the rope sprang taut and yanked Sir Sagramor out of the saddle! Great Scott, but there was a sensation!

Unquestionably, the popular thing in this world is novelty. These people had never seen anything of that cowboy business before, and it carried them clear off their feet with delight. From all around and everywhere, the shout went up:

"Encore! encore!"

I wondered where they got the word, but there was no time to cipher on philological matters, because the whole knight-errantry hive was just humming now, and my prospect for trade couldn't have been better. The moment my lasso was released and Sir Sagramor had been assisted to his tent, I hauled in the slack, took my station and began to swing my loop around my head again. I was sure to have use for it as soon as they could elect a successor for Sir Sagramor, and that couldn't take long where there were so many hungry candidates. Indeed, they elected one straight off—Sir Hervis de Revel.

*Bzz !* Here he came, like a house afire; I dodged: he passed like a flash, with my horse-hair coils settling around his neck; a second or so later, *fst !* his saddle was empty.

I got another encore; and another, and another, and still another. When I had snaked five men out, things began to look serious to the ironclads, and they stopped and consulted together. As a result, they decided that it was time to waive etiquette and send their greatest and best against me. To the astonishment of that little world, I lassoed Sir Lamorak de Galis, and after him Sir Galahad.

So you see there was simply nothing to be done now, but play their right bower—bring out the superbest of the superb, the mightiest of the mighty, the great Sir Launcelot himself!

A proud moment for me? I should think so. Yonder was Arthur, King of Britain; yonder was Guenever; yes, and whole tribes of little provincial kings and kinglets; and in the tented camp yonder, renowned knights from many lands; and likewise the selectest body known to chivalry, the Knights of the Table Round, the most illustrious in Christendom; and biggest fact of all, the very sun of their shining system was yonder couching his lance, the focal point of forty thousand adoring eyes; and all by myself, here was I laying for him. Across my mind flitted the dear image of a certain hello-girl of West Hartford, and I wished she could see me now. In that moment, down came the Invincible, with the rush of a whirlwind—the courtly world rose to its feet and bent forward—the fateful coils went circling through the air, and before you could wink I was towing Sir Launcelot across the field on his back, and kissing my hand to the storm of waving kerchiefs and the thunder-crash of applause that greeted me!

Said I to myself, as I coiled my lariat and hung it on my saddle-horn, and sat there drunk with glory, "The victory is perfect—no other will venture against me—knight-errantry is dead." Now imagine my astonishment—and everybody else's, too—to hear the peculiar bugle-call which announces that another competitor is about to enter the lists! There was a mystery here; I couldn't account for this thing. Next, I noticed Merlin gliding away from me; and then I noticed that my lasso was gone! The old sleight-of-hand expert had stolen it, sure, and slipped it under his robe.

The bugle blew again. I looked, and down came Sagramor riding again, with his dust brushed off and his veil nicely re-arranged. I trotted up to meet him, and pretended to find him by the sound of his horse's hoofs. He said:

"Thou'rt quick of ear, but it will not save thee from this!" and he touched the hilt of his great sword. "An ye are not able to see it, because of the influence of the veil, know that it is no cumbrous lance, but a sword—and I ween ye will not be able to avoid it."

His visor was up; there was death in his smile. I should never be able to dodge his sword, that was plain. Somebody was going to die this time. If he got the drop on me, I could name the corpse. We rode forward together, and saluted the royalties. This time the king was disturbed. He said:

"Where is thy strange weapon?"

"It is stolen, sire."

"Hast another at hand?"

"No, sire, I brought only the one."

Then Merlin mixed in:

"He brought but the one because there was but the one to bring. There exists none other but that one. It belongeth to the king of the Demons of the Sea. This man is a pretender, and ignorant, else he had known that that weapon can be used in but eight bouts only, and then it vanisheth away to its home under the sea."

"Then is he weaponless," said the king. "Sir Sagramore, ye will grant him leave to borrow."

"And I will lend!" said Sir Launcelot, limping up. "He is as brave a knight of his hands as any that be on live, and he shall have mine."

He put his hand on his sword to draw it, but Sir Sagramor said:

"Stay, it may not be. He shall fight with his own weapons; it was his privilege to choose them and bring them. If he has erred, on his head be it."

"Knight!" said the king. "Thou'rt overwrought with passion; it disorders thy mind. Wouldst kill a naked man?"

"An he do it, he shall answer it to me," said Sir Launcelot.

"I will answer it to any he that desireth!" retorted Sir Sagramor hotly.

Merlin broke in, rubbing his hands and smiling his lowdownest smile of malicious gratification:

"'Tis well said, right well said! And 'tis enough of parleying, let my lord the king deliver the battle signal."

The king had to yield. The bugle made proclamation, and we turned apart and rode to our stations. There we stood, a hundred yards apart, facing each other, rigid and motionless, like horsed statues. And so we remained, in a soundless hush, as much as a full minute, everybody gazing, nobody stirring. It seemed as if the king could not take heart to give the signal. But at last he lifted his hand, the clear note of the bugle followed, Sir Sagramor's long blade described a flashing curve in the air, and it was superb to see him come. I sat still. On he came. I did not move. People got so excited that they shouted to me:

"Fly, fly! Save thyself! This is murther!"

I never budged so much as an inch till that thundering apparition had got within fifteen paces of me; then I snatched a dragoon revolver out of my holster, there was a flash and a roar, and the revolver was back in the holster before anybody could tell what had happened.

Here was a riderless horse plunging by, and yonder lay Sir Sagramor, stone dead.

The people that ran to him were stricken dumb to find that the life was actually gone out of the man and no reason for it visible, no hurt upon his body,

nothing like a wound. There was a hole through the breast of his chain-mail, but they attached no importance to a little thing like that; and as a bullet wound there produces but little blood, none came in sight because of the clothing and swaddlings under the armor. The body was dragged over to let the king and the swells look down upon it. They were stupefied with astonishment naturally. I was requested to come and explain the miracle. But I remained in my tracks, like a statue, and said:

"If it is a command, I will come, but my lord the king knows that I am where the laws of combat require me to remain while any desire to come against me."

I waited. Nobody challenged. Then I said:

"If there are any who doubt that this field is well and fairly won, I do not wait for them to challenge me, I challenge them."

"It is a gallant offer," said the king, "and well beseems you. Whom will you name first?"

"I name none, I challenge all! Here I stand, and dare the chivalry of England to come against me—not by individuals, but in mass!"

"What!" shouted a score of knights.

"You have heard the challenge. Take it, or I proclaim you recreant knights and vanquished, every one!"

It was a "bluff" you know. At such a time it is sound judgment to put on a bold face and play your hand for a hundred times what it is worth; forty-nine times out of fifty nobody dares to "call," and you rake in the chips. But just this once—well, things looked squally! In just no time, five hundred knights were scrambling into their saddles, and before you could wink a widely scattering drove were under way and clattering down upon me. I snatched both revolvers from the holsters and began to measure distances and calculate chances.

Bang! One saddle empty. Bang! another one. Bang—bang, and I bagged two. Well, it was nip and tuck with us, and I knew it. If I spent the eleventh shot without convincing these people, the twelfth man would kill me, sure. And so I never did feel so happy as I did when my ninth downed its man and I detected the wavering in the crowd which is premonitory of panic. An instant lost now could knock out my last chance. But I didn't lose it. I raised both revolvers and pointed them—the halted host stood their ground just about one good square moment, then broke and fled.

The day was mine. Knight-errantry was a doomed institution. The march of civilization was begun. How did I feel? Ah, you never could imagine it.

And Brer Merlin? His stock was flat again. Somehow, every time the magic of fol-de-rol tried conclusions with the magic of science, the magic of fol-de-rol got left.

## CHAPTER XL. THREE YEARS LATER

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When I broke the back of knight-errantry that time, I no longer felt obliged to work in secret. So, the very next day I exposed my hidden schools, my mines, and my vast system of clandestine factories and workshops to an astonished world. That is to say, I exposed the nineteenth century to the inspection of the sixth.

Well, it is always a good plan to follow up an advantage promptly. The knights were temporarily down, but if I would keep them so I must just simply paralyze them—nothing short of that would answer. You see, I was "bluffing" that last time in the field; it would be natural for them to work around to that conclusion, if I gave them a chance. So I must not give them time; and I didn't.

I renewed my challenge, engraved it on brass, posted it up where any priest could read it to them, and also kept it standing in the advertising columns of the paper.

I not only renewed it, but added to its proportions. I said, name the day, and I would take fifty assistants and stand up *against the massed chivalry of the whole earth and destroy it*.

I was not bluffing this time. I meant what I said; I could do what I promised. There wasn't any way to misunderstand the language of that challenge. Even the dullest of the chivalry perceived that this was a plain case of "put up, or shut up." They were wise and did the latter. In all the next three years they gave me no trouble worth mentioning.

Consider the three years sped. Now look around on England. A happy and prosperous country, and strangely altered. Schools everywhere, and several colleges; a number of pretty good newspapers. Even authorship was taking a start; Sir Dinadan the Humorist was first in the field, with a volume of gray-headed jokes which I had been familiar with during thirteen centuries. If he had left out that old rancid one about the lecturer I wouldn't have said anything; but I couldn't stand that one. I suppressed the book and hanged the author.

Slavery was dead and gone; all men were equal before the law; taxation had been equalized. The telegraph, the telephone, the phonograph, the typewriter, the sewing-machine, and all the thousand willing and handy servants of steam

and electricity were working their way into favor. We had a steamboat or two on the Thames, we had steam warships, and the beginnings of a steam commercial marine; I was getting ready to send out an expedition to discover America.

We were building several lines of railway, and our line from Camelot to London was already finished and in operation. I was shrewd enough to make all offices connected with the passenger service places of high and distinguished honor. My idea was to attract the chivalry and nobility, and make them useful and keep them out of mischief. The plan worked very well, the competition for the places was hot. The conductor of the 4.33 express was a duke; there wasn't a passenger conductor on the line below the degree of earl. They were good men, every one, but they had two defects which I couldn't cure, and so had to wink at: they wouldn't lay aside their armor, and they would "knock down" fare—I mean rob the company.

There was hardly a knight in all the land who wasn't in some useful employment. They were going from end to end of the country in all manner of useful missionary capacities; their penchant for wandering, and their experience in it, made them altogether the most effective spreaders of civilization we had.

They went clothed in steel and equipped with sword and lance and battle-axe, and if they couldn't persuade a person to try a sewing-machine on the installment plan, or a melodeon, or a barbed-wire fence, or a prohibition journal, or any of the other thousand and one things they canvassed for, they removed him and passed on.

I was very happy. Things were working steadily toward a secretly longed-for point. You see, I had two schemes in my head which were the vastest of all my projects. The one was to overthrow the Catholic Church and set up the Protestant faith on its ruins—not as an Established Church, but a go-as-you-please one; and the other project was to get a decree issued by and by, commanding that upon Arthur's death unlimited suffrage should be introduced, and given to men and women alike—at any rate to all men, wise or unwise, and to all mothers who at middle age should be found to know nearly as much as their sons at twenty-one. Arthur was good for thirty years yet, he being about my own age—that is to say, forty—and I believed that in that time I could easily have the active part of the population of that day ready and eager for an event which should be the first of its kind in the history of the world—a rounded and complete governmental revolution without bloodshed. The result to be a republic. Well, I may as well confess, though I do feel ashamed when I think of it: I was beginning to have a base hankering to be its first president myself. Yes, there was more or less human nature in me; I found that out.

Clarence was with me as concerned the revolution, but in a modified way. His idea was a republic, without privileged orders, but with a hereditary royal family at the head of it instead of an elective chief magistrate. He believed that no nation that had ever known the joy of worshiping a royal family could ever be robbed of it and not fade away and die of melancholy. I urged that kings were dangerous. He said, then have cats. He was sure that a royal family of cats would answer every purpose. They would be as useful as any other royal family, they would know as much, they would have the same virtues and the same treacheries, the same disposition to get up shindies with other royal cats, they would be laughably vain and absurd and never know it, they would be wholly inexpensive; finally, they would have as sound a divine right as any other royal house, and "Tom VII, or Tom XI, or Tom XIV by the grace of God King," would sound as well as it would when applied to the ordinary royal tomcat with tights on. "And as a rule," said he, in his neat modern English, "the character of these cats would be considerably above the character of the average king, and this would be an immense moral advantage to the nation, for the reason that a nation always models its morals after its monarch's. The worship of royalty being founded in unreason, these graceful and harmless cats would easily become as sacred as any other royalties, and indeed more so, because it would presently be noticed that they hanged nobody, beheaded nobody, imprisoned nobody, inflicted no cruelties or injustices of any sort, and so must be worthy of a deeper love and reverence than the customary human king, and would certainly get it. The eyes of the whole harried world would soon be fixed upon this humane and gentle system, and royal butchers would presently begin to disappear; their subjects would fill the vacancies with catlings from our own royal house; we should become a factory; we should supply the thrones of the world; within forty years all Europe would be governed by cats, and we should furnish the cats. The reign of universal peace would begin then, to end no more forever.... Me-e-e-yow-ow-ow—fzt!—wow!"

Hang him, I supposed he was in earnest, and was beginning to be persuaded by him, until he exploded that cat-howl and startled me almost out of my clothes.

But he never could be in earnest. He didn't know what it was. He had pictured a distinct and perfectly rational and feasible improvement upon constitutional monarchy, but he was too feather-headed to know it, or care anything about it, either. I was going to give him a scolding, but Sandy came flying in at that moment, wild with terror, and so choked with sobs that for a minute she could not get her voice. I ran and took her in my arms, and lavished caresses upon her and said, beseechingly:

"Speak, darling, speak! What is it?"



Her head fell limp upon my bosom, and she gasped, almost inaudibly:

"*Hello-Central!*"

"Quick!" I shouted to Clarence; "telephone the king's homeopath to come!"

In two minutes I was kneeling by the child's crib, and Sandy was dispatching servants here, there, and everywhere, all over the palace. I took in the situation almost at a glance—membranous croup! I bent down and whispered:

"Wake up, sweetheart! *Hello-Central.*"

She opened her soft eyes languidly, and made out to say:

"Papa."

That was a comfort. She was far from dead yet. I sent for preparations of sulphur, I roused out the croup-kettle myself; for I don't sit down and wait for doctors when Sandy or the child is sick. I knew how to nurse both of them, and had had experience. This little chap had lived in my arms a good part of its small life, and often I could soothe away its troubles and get it to laugh through the tear-dews on its eye-lashes when even its mother couldn't.

Sir Launcelot, in his richest armor, came striding along the great hall now on his way to the stock-board; he was president of the stock-board, and occupied the Siege Perilous, which he had bought of Sir Galahad; for the stock-board consisted of the Knights of the Round Table, and they used the Round Table for business purposes now. Seats at it were worth—well, you would never believe the figure, so it is no use to state it. Sir Launcelot was a bear, and he had put up a corner in one of the new lines, and was just getting ready to squeeze the shorts to-day; but what of that? He was the same old Launcelot, and when he glanced in as he was passing the door and found out that his pet was sick, that was enough for him; bulls and bears might fight it out their own way for all him, he would come right in here and stand by little *Hello-Central* for all he was worth.

And that was what he did. He shied his helmet into the corner, and in half a minute he had a new wick in the alcohol lamp and was firing up on the croup-kettle. By this time Sandy had built a blanket canopy over the crib, and everything was ready.

Sir Launcelot got up steam, he and I loaded up the kettle with unslaked lime and carbolic acid, with a touch of lactic acid added thereto, then filled the thing up with water and inserted the steam-spout under the canopy. Everything was ship-shape now, and we sat down on either side of the crib to stand our watch. Sandy was so grateful and so comforted that she charged a couple of church-wardens with willow-bark and sumach-tobacco for us, and told us to smoke as much as we pleased, it couldn't get under the canopy, and she was used to smoke, being the first lady in the land who had ever seen a cloud blown. Well, there couldn't be a more contented or comfortable sight than Sir Launcelot in his

noble armor sitting in gracious serenity at the end of a yard of snowy churchwarden. He was a beautiful man, a lovely man, and was just intended to make a wife and children happy. But, of course Guenever—however, it's no use to cry over what's done and can't be helped.

Well, he stood watch-and-watch with me, right straight through, for three days and nights, till the child was out of danger; then he took her up in his great arms and kissed her, with his plumes falling about her golden head, then laid her softly in Sandy's lap again and took his stately way down the vast hall, between the ranks of admiring men-at-arms and menials, and so disappeared. And no instinct warned me that I should never look upon him again in this world! Lord, what a world of heart-break it is.

The doctors said we must take the child away, if we would coax her back to health and strength again. And she must have sea-air. So we took a man-of-war, and a suite of two hundred and sixty persons, and went cruising about, and after a fortnight of this we stepped ashore on the French coast, and the doctors thought it would be a good idea to make something of a stay there. The little king of that region offered us his hospitalities, and we were glad to accept. If he had had as many conveniences as he lacked, we should have been plenty comfortable enough; even as it was, we made out very well, in his queer old castle, by the help of comforts and luxuries from the ship.

At the end of a month I sent the vessel home for fresh supplies, and for news. We expected her back in three or four days. She would bring me, along with other news, the result of a certain experiment which I had been starting. It was a project of mine to replace the tournament with something which might furnish an escape for the extra steam of the chivalry, keep those bucks entertained and out of mischief, and at the same time preserve the best thing in them, which was their hardy spirit of emulation. I had had a choice band of them in private training for some time, and the date was now arriving for their first public effort.

This experiment was baseball. In order to give the thing vogue from the start, and place it out of the reach of criticism, I chose my nines by rank, not capacity. There wasn't a knight in either team who wasn't a sceptered sovereign.

As for material of this sort, there was a glut of it always around Arthur. You couldn't throw a brick in any direction and not cripple a king. Of course, I couldn't get these people to leave off their armor; they wouldn't do that when they bathed. They consented to differentiate the armor so that a body could tell one team from the other, but that was the most they would do. So, one of the teams wore chain-mail ulsters, and the other wore plate-armor made of my new Bessemer steel. Their practice in the field was the most fantastic thing I ever saw. Being ball-proof, they never skipped out of the way, but stood still and

took the result; when a Bessemer was at the bat and a ball hit him, it would bound a hundred and fifty yards sometimes. And when a man was running, and threw himself on his stomach to slide to his base, it was like an iron-clad coming into port. At first I appointed men of no rank to act as umpires, but I had to discontinue that. These people were no easier to please than other nines. The umpire's first decision was usually his last; they broke him in two with a bat, and his friends toted him home on a shutter. When it was noticed that no umpire ever survived a game, umpiring got to be unpopular. So I was obliged to appoint somebody whose rank and lofty position under the government would protect him.

Here are the names of the nines:

	EMPEROR	KING	KING
	ULSTERS LUCIUS.	KING LOGRIS.	MARHALT KING
BESSEMERS	KING	KING LOT	OF MORGANC
	ARTHUR. OF	NORTHGALIS.	IRELAND. KING OF
	LOTHIAN.		KING LITTLE
			MARSIL. BRITAIN.

The first public game would certainly draw fifty thousand people; and for solid fun would be worth going around the world to see. Everything would be favorable; it was balmy and beautiful spring weather now, and Nature was all tailored out in her new clothes.

## CHAPTER XLI. THE INTERDICT

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However, my attention was suddenly snatched from such matters; our child began to lose ground again, and we had to go to sitting up with her, her case became so serious. We couldn't bear to allow anybody to help in this service, so we two stood watch-and-watch, day in and day out. Ah, Sandy, what a right heart she had, how simple, and genuine, and good she was! She was a flawless wife and mother; and yet I had married her for no other particular reasons, except that by the customs of chivalry she was my property until some knight should win her from me in the field. She had hunted Britain over for me; had found me at the hanging-bout outside of London, and had straightway resumed her old place at my side in the placidest way and as of right. I was a New Englander, and in my opinion this sort of partnership would compromise her, sooner or later. She couldn't see how, but I cut argument short and we had a wedding.

Now I didn't know I was drawing a prize, yet that was what I did draw. Within the twelvemonth I became her worshiper; and ours was the dearest and perfectest comradeship that ever was. People talk about beautiful friendships between two persons of the same sex. What is the best of that sort, as compared with the friendship of man and wife, where the best impulses and highest ideals of both are the same? There is no place for comparison between the two friendships; the one is earthly, the other divine.

In my dreams, along at first, I still wandered thirteen centuries away, and my unsatisfied spirit went calling and harking all up and down the unreplying vacancies of a vanished world. Many a time Sandy heard that imploring cry come from my lips in my sleep. With a grand magnanimity she saddled that cry of mine upon our child, conceiving it to be the name of some lost darling of mine. It touched me to tears, and it also nearly knocked me off my feet, too, when she smiled up in my face for an earned reward, and played her quaint and pretty surprise upon me:

"The name of one who was dear to thee is here preserved, here made holy, and the music of it will abide alway in our ears. Now thou'lt kiss me, as knowing the name I have given the child."

But I didn't know it, all the same. I hadn't an idea in the world; but it would have been cruel to confess it and spoil her pretty game; so I never let on, but said:

"Yes, I know, sweetheart—how dear and good it is of you, too! But I want to hear these lips of yours, which are also mine, utter it first—then its music will be perfect."

Pleased to the marrow, she murmured:

"*Hello-Central!*"

I didn't laugh—I am always thankful for that—but the strain ruptured every cartilage in me, and for weeks afterward I could hear my bones clack when I walked. She never found out her mistake. The first time she heard that form of salute used at the telephone she was surprised, and not pleased; but I told her I had given order for it: that henceforth and forever the telephone must always be invoked with that reverent formality, in perpetual honor and remembrance of my lost friend and her small namesake. This was not true. But it answered.

Well, during two weeks and a half we watched by the crib, and in our deep solicitude we were unconscious of any world outside of that sick-room. Then our reward came: the center of the universe turned the corner and began to mend. Grateful? It isn't the term. There *isn't* any term for it. You know that yourself, if you've watched your child through the Valley of the Shadow and seen it come back to life and sweep night out of the earth with one all-illuminating smile that you could cover with your hand.

Why, we were back in this world in one instant! Then we looked the same startled thought into each other's eyes at the same moment; more than two weeks gone, and that ship not back yet!

In another minute I appeared in the presence of my train. They had been steeped in troubled bodings all this time—their faces showed it. I called an escort and we galloped five miles to a hilltop overlooking the sea. Where was my great commerce that so lately had made these glistening expanses populous and beautiful with its white-winged flocks? Vanished, every one! Not a sail, from verge to verge, not a smoke-bank—just a dead and empty solitude, in place of all that brisk and breezy life.

I went swiftly back, saying not a word to anybody. I told Sandy this ghastly news. We could imagine no explanation that would begin to explain. Had there been an invasion? an earthquake? a pestilence? Had the nation been swept out of existence? But guessing was profitless. I must go—at once. I borrowed the king's navy—a "ship" no bigger than a steam launch—and was soon ready.

The parting—ah, yes, that was hard. As I was devouring the child with last kisses, it brisked up and jabbered out its vocabulary!—the first time in more than

two weeks, and it made fools of us for joy. The darling mispronunciations of childhood!—dear me, there's no music that can touch it; and how one grieves when it wastes away and dissolves into correctness, knowing it will never visit his bereaved ear again. Well, how good it was to be able to carry that gracious memory away with me!

I approached England the next morning, with the wide highway of salt water all to myself. There were ships in the harbor, at Dover, but they were naked as to sails, and there was no sign of life about them. It was Sunday; yet at Canterbury the streets were empty; strangest of all, there was not even a priest in sight, and no stroke of a bell fell upon my ear. The mournfulness of death was everywhere. I couldn't understand it. At last, in the further edge of that town I saw a small funeral procession—just a family and a few friends following a coffin—no priest; a funeral without bell, book, or candle; there was a church there close at hand, but they passed it by weeping, and did not enter it; I glanced up at the belfry, and there hung the bell, shrouded in black, and its tongue tied back. Now I knew! Now I understood the stupendous calamity that had overtaken England. Invasion? Invasion is a triviality to it. It was the *Interdict!*

I asked no questions; I didn't need to ask any. The Church had struck; the thing for me to do was to get into a disguise, and go warily. One of my servants gave me a suit of clothes, and when we were safe beyond the town I put them on, and from that time I traveled alone; I could not risk the embarrassment of company.

A miserable journey. A desolate silence everywhere. Even in London itself. Traffic had ceased; men did not talk or laugh, or go in groups, or even in couples; they moved aimlessly about, each man by himself, with his head down, and woe and terror at his heart. The Tower showed recent war-scars. Verily, much had been happening.

Of course, I meant to take the train for Camelot. Train! Why, the station was as vacant as a cavern. I moved on. The journey to Camelot was a repetition of what I had already seen. The Monday and the Tuesday differed in no way from the Sunday. I arrived far in the night. From being the best electric-lighted town in the kingdom and the most like a recumbent sun of anything you ever saw, it was become simply a blot—a blot upon darkness—that is to say, it was darker and solider than the rest of the darkness, and so you could see it a little better; it made me feel as if maybe it was symbolical—a sort of sign that the Church was going to *keep* the upper hand now, and snuff out all my beautiful civilization just like that. I found no life stirring in the somber streets. I groped my way with a heavy heart. The vast castle loomed black upon the hilltop, not a spark visible about it. The drawbridge was down, the great gate stood wide, I

entered without challenge, my own heels making the only sound I heard—and it was sepulchral enough, in those huge vacant courts.

## CHAPTER XLII. WAR!

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I found Clarence alone in his quarters, drowned in melancholy; and in place of the electric light, he had reinstated the ancient rag-lamp, and sat there in a grisly twilight with all curtains drawn tight. He sprang up and rushed for me eagerly, saying: "Oh, it's worth a billion milrays to look upon a live person again!"

He knew me as easily as if I hadn't been disguised at all. Which frightened me; one may easily believe that.

"Quick, now, tell me the meaning of this fearful disaster," I said. "How did it come about?"

"Well, if there hadn't been any Queen Guenever, it wouldn't have come so early; but it would have come, anyway. It would have come on your own account by and by; by luck, it happened to come on the queen's."

"*And Sir Launcelot's?*"

"Just so."

"Give me the details."

"I reckon you will grant that during some years there has been only one pair of eyes in these kingdoms that has not been looking steadily askance at the queen and Sir Launcelot—"

"Yes, King Arthur's."

"—and only one heart that was without suspicion—"

"Yes—the king's; a heart that isn't capable of thinking evil of a friend."

"Well, the king might have gone on, still happy and unsuspecting, to the end of his days, but for one of your modern improvements—the stock-board. When you left, three miles of the London, Canterbury and Dover were ready for the rails, and also ready and ripe for manipulation in the stock-market. It was wildcat, and everybody knew it. The stock was for sale at a give-away. What does Sir Launcelot do, but—"

"Yes, I know; he quietly picked up nearly all of it for a song; then he bought about twice as much more, deliverable upon call; and he was about to call when I left."

"Very well, he did call. The boys couldn't deliver. Oh, he had them—and he



just settled his grip and squeezed them. They were laughing in their sleeves over their smartness in selling stock to him at 15 and 16 and along there that wasn't worth 10. Well, when they had laughed long enough on that side of their mouths, they rested-up that side by shifting the laugh to the other side. That was when they compromised with the Invincible at 283!"

"Good land!"

"He skinned them alive, and they deserved it—anyway, the whole kingdom rejoiced. Well, among the flayed were Sir Agravaine and Sir Mordred, nephews to the king. End of the first act. Act second, scene first, an apartment in Carlisle castle, where the court had gone for a few days' hunting. Persons present, the whole tribe of the king's nephews. Mordred and Agravaine propose to call the guileless Arthur's attention to Guenever and Sir Launcelot. Sir Gawaine, Sir Gareth, and Sir Gaheris will have nothing to do with it. A dispute ensues, with loud talk; in the midst of it enter the king. Mordred and Agravaine spring their devastating tale upon him. *Tableau*. A trap is laid for Launcelot, by the king's command, and Sir Launcelot walks into it. He made it sufficiently uncomfortable for the ambushed witnesses—to wit, Mordred, Agravaine, and twelve knights of lesser rank, for he killed every one of them but Mordred; but of course that couldn't straighten matters between Launcelot and the king, and didn't."

"Oh, dear, only one thing could result—I see that. War, and the knights of the realm divided into a king's party and a Sir Launcelot's party."

"Yes—that was the way of it. The king sent the queen to the stake, proposing to purify her with fire. Launcelot and his knights rescued her, and in doing it slew certain good old friends of yours and mine—in fact, some of the best we ever had; to wit, Sir Belias le Orgulous, Sir Segwarides, Sir Griflet le Fils de Dieu, Sir Brandiles, Sir Aglovale—"

"Oh, you tear out my heartstrings."

"—wait, I'm not done yet—Sir Tor, Sir Gauter, Sir Gillimer—"

"The very best man in my subordinate nine. What a handy right-fielder he was!"

"—Sir Reynold's three brothers, Sir Damus, Sir Priamus, Sir Kay the Stranger—"

"My peerless short-stop! I've seen him catch a daisy-cutter in his teeth. Come, I can't stand this!"

"—Sir Driant, Sir Lambegus, Sir Herminde, Sir Pertilope, Sir Perimones, and—whom do you think?"

"Rush! Go on."

"Sir Gaheris, and Sir Gareth—both!"

"Oh, incredible! Their love for Launcelot was indestructible."

"Well, it was an accident. They were simply onlookers; they were unarmed, and were merely there to witness the queen's punishment. Sir Launcelot smote down whoever came in the way of his blind fury, and he killed these without noticing who they were. Here is an instantaneous photograph one of our boys got of the battle; it's for sale on every news-stand. There—the figures nearest the queen are Sir Launcelot with his sword up, and Sir Gareth gasping his latest breath. You can catch the agony in the queen's face through the curling smoke. It's a rattling battle-picture."

"Indeed, it is. We must take good care of it; its historical value is incalculable. Go on."

"Well, the rest of the tale is just war, pure and simple. Launcelot retreated to his town and castle of Joyous Gard, and gathered there a great following of knights. The king, with a great host, went there, and there was desperate fighting during several days, and, as a result, all the plain around was paved with corpses and cast-iron. Then the Church patched up a peace between Arthur and Launcelot and the queen and everybody—everybody but Sir Gawaine. He was bitter about the slaying of his brothers, Gareth and Gaheris, and would not be appeased. He notified Launcelot to get him thence, and make swift preparation, and look to be soon attacked. So Launcelot sailed to his Duchy of Guienne with his following, and Gawaine soon followed with an army, and he beguiled Arthur to go with him. Arthur left the kingdom in Sir Mordred's hands until you should return—"

"Ah—a king's customary wisdom!"

"Yes. Sir Mordred set himself at once to work to make his kingship permanent. He was going to marry Guenever, as a first move; but she fled and shut herself up in the Tower of London. Mordred attacked; the Bishop of Canterbury dropped down on him with the Interdict. The king returned; Mordred fought him at Dover, at Canterbury, and again at Barham Down. Then there was talk of peace and a composition. Terms, Mordred to have Cornwall and Kent during Arthur's life, and the whole kingdom afterward."

"Well, upon my word! My dream of a republic to *be* a dream, and so remain."

"Yes. The two armies lay near Salisbury. Gawaine—Gawaine's head is at Dover Castle, he fell in the fight there—Gawaine appeared to Arthur in a dream, at least his ghost did, and warned him to refrain from conflict for a month, let the delay cost what it might. But battle was precipitated by an accident. Arthur had given order that if a sword was raised during the consultation over the proposed treaty with Mordred, sound the trumpet and fall on! for he had no confidence in

Mordred. Mordred had given a similar order to *his* people. Well, by and by an adder bit a knight's heel; the knight forgot all about the order, and made a slash at the adder with his sword. Inside of half a minute those two prodigious hosts came together with a crash! They butchered away all day. Then the king—however, we have started something fresh since you left—our paper has."

"No? What is that?"

"War correspondence!"

"Why, that's good."

"Yes, the paper was booming right along, for the Interdict made no impression, got no grip, while the war lasted. I had war correspondents with both armies. I will finish that battle by reading you what one of the boys says:

"Then the king looked about him, and then was he ware of all his host and of all his good knights were left no more on live but two knights, that was Sir Lucan de Butlere, and his brother Sir Bedivere: and they were full sore wounded. Jesu mercy, said the king, where are all my noble knights becomen? Alas that ever I should see this doleful day. For now, said Arthur, I am come to mine end. But would to God that I wist where were that traitor Sir Mordred, that hath caused all this mischief. Then was King Arthur ware where Sir Mordred leaned upon his sword among a great heap of dead men. Now give me my spear, said Arthur unto Sir Lucan, for yonder I have espied the traitor that all this woe hath wrought. Sir, let him be, said Sir Lucan, for he is unhappy; and if ye pass this unhappy day, ye shall be right well revenged upon him. Good lord, remember ye of your night's dream, and what the spirit of Sir Gawaine told you this night, yet God of his great goodness hath preserved you hitherto. Therefore, for God's sake, my lord, leave off by this. For blessed be God ye have won the field: for here we be three on live, and with Sir Mordred is none on live. And if ye leave off now, this wicked day of destiny is past. Tide me death, betide me life, saith the king, now I see him yonder alone, he shall never escape mine hands, for at a better

avail shall I never have him. God speed you well, said Sir Bedivere. Then the king gat his spear in both his hands, and ran toward Sir Mordred crying, Traitor, now is thy death day come. And when Sir Mordred heard Sir Arthur, he ran until him with his sword drawn in his hand. And then King Arthur smote Sir Mordred under the shield, with a foin of his spear throughout the body more than a fathom. And when Sir Mordred felt that he had his death's wound, he thrust himself, with the might that he had, up to the butt of King Arthur's spear. And right so he smote his father Arthur with his sword holden in both his hands, on the side of the head, that the sword pierced the helmet and the brain-pan, and therewithal Sir Mordred fell stark dead to the earth. And the noble Arthur fell in a swoon to the earth, and there he swooned oft-times—"

"That is a good piece of war correspondence, Clarence; you are a first-rate newspaper man. Well—is the king all right? Did he get well?"

"Poor soul, no. He is dead."

I was utterly stunned; it had not seemed to me that any wound could be mortal to him.

"And the queen, Clarence?"

"She is a nun, in Almesbury."

"What changes! and in such a short while. It is inconceivable. What next, I wonder?"

"I can tell you what next."

"Well?"

"Stake our lives and stand by them!"

"What do you mean by that?"

"The Church is master now. The Interdict included you with Mordred; it is not to be removed while you remain alive. The clans are gathering. The Church has gathered all the knights that are left alive, and as soon as you are discovered we shall have business on our hands."

"Stuff! With our deadly scientific war-material; with our hosts of trained—"

"Save your breath—we haven't sixty faithful left!"

"What are you saying? Our schools, our colleges, our vast workshops, our —"

"When those knights come, those establishments will empty themselves and go over to the enemy. Did you think you had educated the superstition out of those people?"

"I certainly did think it."

"Well, then, you may unthink it. They stood every strain easily—until the Interdict. Since then, they merely put on a bold outside—at heart they are quaking. Make up your mind to it—when the armies come, the mask will fall."

"It's hard news. We are lost. They will turn our own science against us."

"No they won't."

"Why?"

"Because I and a handful of the faithful have blocked that game. I'll tell you what I've done, and what moved me to it. Smart as you are, the Church was smarter. It was the Church that sent you cruising—through her servants, the doctors."

"Clarence!"

"It is the truth. I know it. Every officer of your ship was the Church's picked servant, and so was every man of the crew."

"Oh, come!"

"It is just as I tell you. I did not find out these things at once, but I found them out finally. Did you send me verbal information, by the commander of the ship, to the effect that upon his return to you, with supplies, you were going to leave Cadiz—"

"Cadiz! I haven't been at Cadiz at all!"

"—going to leave Cadiz and cruise in distant seas indefinitely, for the health of your family? Did you send me that word?"

"Of course not. I would have written, wouldn't I?"

"Naturally. I was troubled and suspicious. When the commander sailed again I managed to ship a spy with him. I have never heard of vessel or spy since. I gave myself two weeks to hear from you in. Then I resolved to send a ship to Cadiz. There was a reason why I didn't."

"What was that?"

"Our navy had suddenly and mysteriously disappeared! Also, as suddenly and as mysteriously, the railway and telegraph and telephone service ceased, the men all deserted, poles were cut down, the Church laid a ban upon the electric light! I had to be up and doing—and straight off. Your life was safe—nobody in these kingdoms but Merlin would venture to touch such a magician as you without ten thousand men at his back—I had nothing to think of but how to put preparations in the best trim against your coming. I felt safe myself—nobody would be anxious to touch a pet of yours. So this is what I did. From our

various works I selected all the men—boys I mean—whose faithfulness under whatsoever pressure I could swear to, and I called them together secretly and gave them their instructions. There are fifty-two of them; none younger than fourteen, and none above seventeen years old."

"Why did you select boys?"

"Because all the others were born in an atmosphere of superstition and reared in it. It is in their blood and bones. We imagined we had educated it out of them; they thought so, too; the Interdict woke them up like a thunderclap! It revealed them to themselves, and it revealed them to me, too. With boys it was different. Such as have been under our training from seven to ten years have had no acquaintance with the Church's terrors, and it was among these that I found my fifty-two. As a next move, I paid a private visit to that old cave of Merlin's—not the small one—the big one—"

"Yes, the one where we secretly established our first great electric plant when I was projecting a miracle."

"Just so. And as that miracle hadn't become necessary then, I thought it might be a good idea to utilize the plant now. I've provisioned the cave for a siege—"

"A good idea, a first-rate idea."

"I think so. I placed four of my boys there as a guard—inside, and out of sight. Nobody was to be hurt—while outside; but any attempt to enter—well, we said just let anybody try it! Then I went out into the hills and uncovered and cut the secret wires which connected your bedroom with the wires that go to the dynamite deposits under all our vast factories, mills, workshops, magazines, etc., and about midnight I and my boys turned out and connected that wire with the cave, and nobody but you and I suspects where the other end of it goes to. We laid it under ground, of course, and it was all finished in a couple of hours or so.

We sha'n't have to leave our fortress now when we want to blow up our civilization."

"It was the right move—and the natural one; military necessity, in the changed condition of things. Well, what changes *have* come! We expected to be besieged in the palace some time or other, but—however, go on."

"Next, we built a wire fence."

"Wire fence?"

"Yes. You dropped the hint of it yourself, two or three years ago."

"Oh, I remember—the time the Church tried her strength against us the first time, and presently thought it wise to wait for a hopefuler season. Well, how have you arranged the fence?"

"I start twelve immensely strong wires—naked, not insulated—from a big

dynamo in the cave—dynamo with no brushes except a positive and a negative one—"

"Yes, that's right."

"The wires go out from the cave and fence in a circle of level ground a hundred yards in diameter; they make twelve independent fences, ten feet apart—that is to say, twelve circles within circles—and their ends come into the cave again."

"Right; go on."

"The fences are fastened to heavy oaken posts only three feet apart, and these posts are sunk five feet in the ground."

"That is good and strong."

"Yes. The wires have no ground-connection outside of the cave. They go out from the positive brush of the dynamo; there is a ground-connection through the negative brush; the other ends of the wire return to the cave, and each is grounded independently."

"No, no, that won't do!"

"Why?"

"It's too expensive—uses up force for nothing. You don't want any ground-connection except the one through the negative brush. The other end of every wire must be brought back into the cave and fastened independently, and *without* any ground-connection. Now, then, observe the economy of it. A cavalry charge hurls itself against the fence; you are using no power, you are spending no money, for there is only one ground-connection till those horses come against the wire; the moment they touch it they form a connection with the negative brush *through the ground*, and drop dead. Don't you see?—you are using no energy until it is needed; your lightning is there, and ready, like the load in a gun; but it isn't costing you a cent till you touch it off. Oh, yes, the single ground-connection—"

"Of course! I don't know how I overlooked that. It's not only cheaper, but it's more effectual than the other way, for if wires break or get tangled, no harm is done."

"No, especially if we have a tell-tale in the cave and disconnect the broken wire. Well, go on. The gatlings?"

"Yes—that's arranged. In the center of the inner circle, on a spacious platform six feet high, I've grouped a battery of thirteen gatling guns, and provided plenty of ammunition."

"That's it. They command every approach, and when the Church's knights arrive, there's going to be music. The brow of the precipice over the cave—"

"I've got a wire fence there, and a gatling. They won't drop any rocks down

on us."

"Well, and the glass-cylinder dynamite torpedoes?"

"That's attended to. It's the prettiest garden that was ever planted. It's a belt forty feet wide, and goes around the outer fence—distance between it and the fence one hundred yards—kind of neutral ground that space is. There isn't a single square yard of that whole belt but is equipped with a torpedo. We laid them on the surface of the ground, and sprinkled a layer of sand over them. It's an innocent looking garden, but you let a man start in to hoe it once, and you'll see."

"You tested the torpedoes?"

"Well, I was going to, but—"

"But what? Why, it's an immense oversight not to apply a—"

"Test? Yes, I know; but they're all right; I laid a few in the public road beyond our lines and they've been tested."

"Oh, that alters the case. Who did it?"

"A Church committee."

"How kind!"

"Yes. They came to command us to make submission. You see they didn't really come to test the torpedoes; that was merely an incident."

"Did the committee make a report?"

"Yes, they made one. You could have heard it a mile."

"Unanimous?"

"That was the nature of it. After that I put up some signs, for the protection of future committees, and we have had no intruders since."

"Clarence, you've done a world of work, and done it perfectly."

"We had plenty of time for it; there wasn't any occasion for hurry."

We sat silent awhile, thinking. Then my mind was made up, and I said: "Yes, everything is ready; everything is shipshape, no detail is wanting. I know what to do now."

"So do I; sit down and wait."

"No, *sir* ! rise up and *strike* !"

"Do you mean it?"

"Yes, indeed! The *de* fensive isn't in my line, and the *of* fensive is. That is, when I hold a fair hand—two-thirds as good a hand as the enemy. Oh, yes, we'll rise up and strike; that's our game."

"A hundred to one you are right. When does the performance begin?"

"*Now!* We'll proclaim the Republic."

"Well, that *will* precipitate things, sure enough!"

"It will make them buzz, I tell you! England will be a hornets' nest before



noon to-morrow, if the Church's hand hasn't lost its cunning—and we know it hasn't. Now you write and I'll dictate thus:

## "PROCLAMATION

"BE IT KNOWN UNTO ALL. Whereas the king having died and left no heir, it becomes my duty to continue the executive authority vested in me, until a government shall have been created and set in motion. The monarchy has lapsed, it no longer exists. By consequence, all political power has reverted to its original source, the people of the nation. With the monarchy, its several adjuncts died also; wherefore there is no longer a nobility, no longer a privileged class, no longer an Established Church; all men are become exactly equal; they are upon one common level, and religion is free. *A Republic is hereby proclaimed*, as being the natural estate of a nation when other authority has ceased. It is the duty of the British people to meet together immediately, and by their votes elect representatives and deliver into their hands the government."

I signed it "The Boss," and dated it from Merlin's Cave. Clarence said—"Why, that tells where we are, and invites them to call right away."

"That is the idea. We *strike*—by the Proclamation—then it's their innings. Now have the thing set up and printed and posted, right off; that is, give the order; then, if you've got a couple of bicycles handy at the foot of the hill, ho for Merlin's Cave!"

"I shall be ready in ten minutes. What a cyclone there is going to be to-morrow when this piece of paper gets to work!... It's a pleasant old palace, this is; I wonder if we shall ever again—but never mind about that."

## CHAPTER XLIII. THE BATTLE OF THE SAND BELT

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In Merlin's Cave—Clarence and I and fifty-two fresh, bright, well-educated, clean-minded young British boys. At dawn I sent an order to the factories and to all our great works to stop operations and remove all life to a safe distance, as everything was going to be blown up by secret mines, "*and no telling at what moment—therefore, vacate at once.*" These people knew me, and had confidence in my word. They would clear out without waiting to part their hair, and I could take my own time about dating the explosion. You couldn't hire one of them to go back during the century, if the explosion was still impending.

We had a week of waiting. It was not dull for me, because I was writing all the time. During the first three days, I finished turning my old diary into this narrative form; it only required a chapter or so to bring it down to date. The rest of the week I took up in writing letters to my wife. It was always my habit to write to Sandy every day, whenever we were separate, and now I kept up the habit for love of it, and of her, though I couldn't do anything with the letters, of course, after I had written them. But it put in the time, you see, and was almost like talking; it was almost as if I was saying, "Sandy, if you and Hello-Central were here in the cave, instead of only your photographs, what good times we could have!" And then, you know, I could imagine the baby goo-gooing something out in reply, with its fists in its mouth and itself stretched across its mother's lap on its back, and she a-laughing and admiring and worshipping, and now and then tickling under the baby's chin to set it cackling, and then maybe throwing in a word of answer to me herself—and so on and so on—well, don't you know, I could sit there in the cave with my pen, and keep it up, that way, by the hour with them. Why, it was almost like having us all together again.

I had spies out every night, of course, to get news. Every report made things look more and more impressive. The hosts were gathering, gathering; down all the roads and paths of England the knights were riding, and priests rode with them, to hearten these original Crusaders, this being the Church's war. All the nobilities, big and little, were on their way, and all the gentry. This was all as was expected. We should thin out this sort of folk to such a degree that the

people would have nothing to do but just step to the front with their republic and

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Ah, what a donkey I was! Toward the end of the week I began to get this large and disenchanting fact through my head: that the mass of the nation had swung their caps and shouted for the republic for about one day, and there an end! The Church, the nobles, and the gentry then turned one grand, all-disapproving frown upon them and shriveled them into sheep! From that moment the sheep had begun to gather to the fold—that is to say, the camps—and offer their valueless lives and their valuable wool to the "righteous cause."

Why, even the very men who had lately been slaves were in the "righteous cause," and glorifying it, praying for it, sentimentally slabbering over it, just like all the other commoners. Imagine such human muck as this; conceive of this folly!

Yes, it was now "Death to the Republic!" everywhere—not a dissenting voice. All England was marching against us! Truly, this was more than I had bargained for.

I watched my fifty-two boys narrowly; watched their faces, their walk, their unconscious attitudes: for all these are a language—a language given us purposely that it may betray us in times of emergency, when we have secrets which we want to keep. I knew that that thought would keep saying itself over and over again in their minds and hearts, *All England is marching against us!* and ever more strenuously imploring attention with each repetition, ever more sharply realizing itself to their imaginations, until even in their sleep they would find no rest from it, but hear the vague and flitting creatures of the dreams say, *All England—All England!—is marching against you!* I knew all this would happen; I knew that ultimately the pressure would become so great that it would compel utterance; therefore, I must be ready with an answer at that time—an answer well chosen and tranquilizing.

I was right. The time came. They *had* to speak. Poor lads, it was pitiful to see, they were so pale, so worn, so troubled. At first their spokesman could hardly find voice or words; but he presently got both. This is what he said—and he put it in the neat modern English taught him in my schools:

"We have tried to forget what we are—English boys! We have tried to put reason before sentiment, duty before love; our minds approve, but our hearts reproach us. While apparently it was only the nobility, only the gentry, only the twenty-five or thirty thousand knights left alive out of the late wars, we were of one mind, and undisturbed by any troubling doubt; each and every one of these fifty-two lads who stand here before you, said, 'They have chosen—it is their affair.' But think!—the matter is altered—*All England is marching against us!*

Oh, sir, consider!—reflect!—these people are our people, they are bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh, we love them—do not ask us to destroy our nation!"

Well, it shows the value of looking ahead, and being ready for a thing when it happens. If I hadn't foreseen this thing and been fixed, that boy would have had me!—I couldn't have said a word. But I was fixed. I said:

"My boys, your hearts are in the right place, you have thought the worthy thought, you have done the worthy thing. You are English boys, you will remain English boys, and you will keep that name unsmirched. Give yourselves no further concern, let your minds be at peace. Consider this: while all England is marching against us, who is in the van? Who, by the commonest rules of war, will march in the front? Answer me."

"The mounted host of mailed knights."

"True. They are thirty thousand strong. Acres deep they will march. Now, observe: none but *they* will ever strike the sand-belt! Then there will be an episode! Immediately after, the civilian multitude in the rear will retire, to meet business engagements elsewhere. None but nobles and gentry are knights, and *none but these* will remain to dance to our music after that episode. It is absolutely true that we shall have to fight nobody but these thirty thousand knights. Now speak, and it shall be as you decide. Shall we avoid the battle, retire from the field?"

"NO!!!"

The shout was unanimous and hearty.

"Are you—are you—well, afraid of these thirty thousand knights?"

That joke brought out a good laugh, the boys' troubles vanished away, and they went gaily to their posts. Ah, they were a darling fifty-two! As pretty as girls, too.

I was ready for the enemy now. Let the approaching big day come along—it would find us on deck.

The big day arrived on time. At dawn the sentry on watch in the corral came into the cave and reported a moving black mass under the horizon, and a faint sound which he thought to be military music. Breakfast was just ready; we sat down and ate it.

This over, I made the boys a little speech, and then sent out a detail to man the battery, with Clarence in command of it.

The sun rose presently and sent its unobstructed splendors over the land, and we saw a prodigious host moving slowly toward us, with the steady drift and aligned front of a wave of the sea. Nearer and nearer it came, and more and more sublimely imposing became its aspect; yes, all England was there, apparently.

Soon we could see the innumerable banners fluttering, and then the sun struck

the sea of armor and set it all aflash. Yes, it was a fine sight; I hadn't ever seen anything to beat it.

At last we could make out details. All the front ranks, no telling how many acres deep, were horsemen—plumed knights in armor. Suddenly we heard the blare of trumpets; the slow walk burst into a gallop, and then—well, it was wonderful to see! Down swept that vast horse-shoe wave—it approached the sand-belt—my breath stood still; nearer, nearer—the strip of green turf beyond the yellow belt grew narrow—narrower still—became a mere ribbon in front of the horses—then disappeared under their hoofs. Great Scott! Why, the whole front of that host shot into the sky with a thunder-crash, and became a whirling tempest of rags and fragments; and along the ground lay a thick wall of smoke that hid what was left of the multitude from our sight.

Time for the second step in the plan of campaign! I touched a button, and shook the bones of England loose from her spine!

In that explosion all our noble civilization-factories went up in the air and disappeared from the earth. It was a pity, but it was necessary. We could not afford to let the enemy turn our own weapons against us.

Now ensued one of the dullest quarter-hours I had ever endured. We waited in a silent solitude enclosed by our circles of wire, and by a circle of heavy smoke outside of these. We couldn't see over the wall of smoke, and we couldn't see through it. But at last it began to shred away lazily, and by the end of another quarter-hour the land was clear and our curiosity was enabled to satisfy itself. No living creature was in sight! We now perceived that additions had been made to our defenses. The dynamite had dug a ditch more than a hundred feet wide, all around us, and cast up an embankment some twenty-five feet high on both borders of it. As to destruction of life, it was amazing. Moreover, it was beyond estimate. Of course, we could not *count* the dead, because they did not exist as individuals, but merely as homogeneous protoplasm, with alloys of iron and buttons.

No life was in sight, but necessarily there must have been some wounded in the rear ranks, who were carried off the field under cover of the wall of smoke; there would be sickness among the others—there always is, after an episode like that. But there would be no reinforcements; this was the last stand of the chivalry of England; it was all that was left of the order, after the recent annihilating wars. So I felt quite safe in believing that the utmost force that could for the future be brought against us would be but small; that is, of knights. I therefore issued a congratulatory proclamation to my army in these words:

# SOLDIERS, CHAMPIONS OF HUMAN LIBERTY AND EQUALITY:

Your General congratulates you! In the pride of his strength and the vanity of his renown, an arrogant enemy came against you. You were ready. The conflict was brief; on your side, glorious. This mighty victory, having been achieved utterly without loss, stands without example in history. So long as the planets shall continue to move in their orbits, the *Battle Of The Sand-Belt* will not perish out of the memories of men.

## THE BOSS.

I read it well, and the applause I got was very gratifying to me. I then wound up with these remarks:

"The war with the English nation, as a nation, is at an end. The nation has retired from the field and the war. Before it can be persuaded to return, war will have ceased. This campaign is the only one that is going to be fought. It will be brief—the briefest in history. Also the most destructive to life, considered from the standpoint of proportion of casualties to numbers engaged. We are done with the nation; henceforth we deal only with the knights. English knights can be killed, but they cannot be conquered. We know what is before us. While one of these men remains alive, our task is not finished, the war is not ended. We will kill them all." [Loud and long continued applause.]

I picketed the great embankments thrown up around our lines by the dynamite explosion—merely a lookout of a couple of boys to announce the enemy when he should appear again.

Next, I sent an engineer and forty men to a point just beyond our lines on the south, to turn a mountain brook that was there, and bring it within our lines and under our command, arranging it in such a way that I could make instant use of it in an emergency. The forty men were divided into two shifts of twenty each, and were to relieve each other every two hours. In ten hours the work was accomplished.

It was nightfall now, and I withdrew my pickets. The one who had had the northern outlook reported a camp in sight, but visible with the glass only. He also reported that a few knights had been feeling their way toward us, and had driven some cattle across our lines, but that the knights themselves had not come very near. That was what I had been expecting. They were feeling us, you see;

they wanted to know if we were going to play that red terror on them again. They would grow bolder in the night, perhaps. I believed I knew what project they would attempt, because it was plainly the thing I would attempt myself if I were in their places and as ignorant as they were. I mentioned it to Clarence.

"I think you are right," said he; "it is the obvious thing for them to try."

"Well, then," I said, "if they do it they are doomed."

"Certainly."

"They won't have the slightest show in the world."

"Of course they won't."

"It's dreadful, Clarence. It seems an awful pity."

The thing disturbed me so that I couldn't get any peace of mind for thinking of it and worrying over it. So, at last, to quiet my conscience, I framed this message to the knights:

TO THE HONORABLE THE COMMANDER OF THE INSURGENT  
CHIVALRY OF ENGLAND: YOU fight in vain. We know  
your strength—if one may call it by that name.  
We know that at the utmost you cannot bring  
against us above five and twenty thousand knights.  
Therefore, you have no chance—none whatever.  
Reflect: we are well equipped, well fortified, we  
number 54. Fifty-four what? Men? No, *minds*—the  
capablest in the world; a force against which  
mere animal might may no more hope to prevail than  
may the idle waves of the sea hope to prevail  
against the granite barriers of England. Be advised.  
We offer you your lives; for the sake of your  
families, do not reject the gift. We offer you  
this chance, and it is the last: throw down your  
arms; surrender unconditionally to the Republic,  
and all will be forgiven.

(Signed) THE BOSS.

I read it to Clarence, and said I proposed to send it by a flag of truce. He laughed the sarcastic laugh he was born with, and said:

"Somehow it seems impossible for you to ever fully realize what these nobilities are. Now let us save a little time and trouble. Consider me the commander of the knights yonder. Now, then, you are the flag of truce; approach and deliver me your message, and I will give you your answer."

I humored the idea. I came forward under an imaginary guard of the enemy's soldiers, produced my paper, and read it through. For answer, Clarence struck

the paper out of my hand, pursed up a scornful lip and said with lofty disdain:

"Dismember me this animal, and return him in a basket to the base-born knave who sent him; other answer have I none!"

How empty is theory in presence of fact! And this was just fact, and nothing else. It was the thing that would have happened, there was no getting around that. I tore up the paper and granted my mistimed sentimentalities a permanent rest.

Then, to business. I tested the electric signals from the gatling platform to the cave, and made sure that they were all right; I tested and retested those which commanded the fences—these were signals whereby I could break and renew the electric current in each fence independently of the others at will. I placed the brook-connection under the guard and authority of three of my best boys, who would alternate in two-hour watches all night and promptly obey my signal, if I should have occasion to give it—three revolver-shots in quick succession.

Sentry-duty was discarded for the night, and the corral left empty of life; I ordered that quiet be maintained in the cave, and the electric lights turned down to a glimmer.

As soon as it was good and dark, I shut off the current from all the fences, and then groped my way out to the embankment bordering our side of the great dynamite ditch. I crept to the top of it and lay there on the slant of the muck to watch. But it was too dark to see anything. As for sounds, there were none.

The stillness was deathlike. True, there were the usual night-sounds of the country—the whirl of night-birds, the buzzing of insects, the barking of distant dogs, the mellow lowing of far-off kine—but these didn't seem to break the stillness, they only intensified it, and added a grewsome melancholy to it into the bargain.

I presently gave up looking, the night shut down so black, but I kept my ears strained to catch the least suspicious sound, for I judged I had only to wait, and I shouldn't be disappointed. However, I had to wait a long time. At last I caught what you may call in distinct glimpses of sound dulled metallic sound. I pricked up my ears, then, and held my breath, for this was the sort of thing I had been waiting for. This sound thickened, and approached—from toward the north.

Presently, I heard it at my own level—the ridge-top of the opposite embankment, a hundred feet or more away. Then I seemed to see a row of black dots appear along that ridge—human heads? I couldn't tell; it mightn't be anything at all; you can't depend on your eyes when your imagination is out of focus. However, the question was soon settled. I heard that metallic noise descending into the great ditch. It augmented fast, it spread all along, and it unmistakably furnished me this fact: an armed host was taking up its quarters in



the ditch. Yes, these people were arranging a little surprise party for us. We could expect entertainment about dawn, possibly earlier.

I groped my way back to the corral now; I had seen enough. I went to the platform and signaled to turn the current on to the two inner fences. Then I went into the cave, and found everything satisfactory there—nobody awake but the working-watch. I woke Clarence and told him the great ditch was filling up with men, and that I believed all the knights were coming for us in a body. It was my notion that as soon as dawn approached we could expect the ditch's ambuscaded thousands to swarm up over the embankment and make an assault, and be followed immediately by the rest of their army.

Clarence said:

"They will be wanting to send a scout or two in the dark to make preliminary observations. Why not take the lightning off the outer fences, and give them a chance?"

"I've already done it, Clarence. Did you ever know me to be inhospitable?"

"No, you are a good heart. I want to go and—"

"Be a reception committee? I will go, too."

We crossed the corral and lay down together between the two inside fences. Even the dim light of the cave had disordered our eyesight somewhat, but the focus straightway began to regulate itself and soon it was adjusted for present circumstances. We had had to feel our way before, but we could make out to see the fence posts now. We started a whispered conversation, but suddenly Clarence broke off and said:

"What is that?"

"What is what?"

"That thing yonder."

"What thing—where?"

"There beyond you a little piece—dark something—a dull shape of some kind—against the second fence."

I gazed and he gazed. I said:

"Could it be a man, Clarence?"

"No, I think not. If you notice, it looks a lit—why, it *is* a man!—leaning on the fence."

"I certainly believe it is; let us go and see."

We crept along on our hands and knees until we were pretty close, and then looked up. Yes, it was a man—a dim great figure in armor, standing erect, with both hands on the upper wire—and, of course, there was a smell of burning flesh. Poor fellow, dead as a door-nail, and never knew what hurt him. He stood there like a statue—no motion about him, except that his plumes swished about a

little in the night wind. We rose up and looked in through the bars of his visor, but couldn't make out whether we knew him or not—features too dim and shadowed.

We heard muffled sounds approaching, and we sank down to the ground where we were. We made out another knight vaguely; he was coming very stealthily, and feeling his way. He was near enough now for us to see him put out a hand, find an upper wire, then bend and step under it and over the lower one. Now he arrived at the first knight—and started slightly when he discovered him. He stood a moment—no doubt wondering why the other one didn't move on; then he said, in a low voice, "Why dreamest thou here, good Sir Mar—" then he laid his hand on the corpse's shoulder—and just uttered a little soft moan and sunk down dead. Killed by a dead man, you see—killed by a dead friend, in fact. There was something awful about it.

These early birds came scattering along after each other, about one every five minutes in our vicinity, during half an hour. They brought no armor of offense but their swords; as a rule, they carried the sword ready in the hand, and put it forward and found the wires with it. We would now and then see a blue spark when the knight that caused it was so far away as to be invisible to us; but we knew what had happened, all the same; poor fellow, he had touched a charged wire with his sword and been electrocuted. We had brief intervals of grim stillness, interrupted with piteous regularity by the clash made by the falling of an iron-clad; and this sort of thing was going on, right along, and was very creepy there in the dark and lonesomeness.

We concluded to make a tour between the inner fences. We elected to walk upright, for convenience's sake; we argued that if discerned, we should be taken for friends rather than enemies, and in any case we should be out of reach of swords, and these gentry did not seem to have any spears along. Well, it was a curious trip. Everywhere dead men were lying outside the second fence—not plainly visible, but still visible; and we counted fifteen of those pathetic statues—dead knights standing with their hands on the upper wire.

One thing seemed to be sufficiently demonstrated: our current was so tremendous that it killed before the victim could cry out. Pretty soon we detected a muffled and heavy sound, and next moment we guessed what it was. It was a surprise in force coming! whispered Clarence to go and wake the army, and notify it to wait in silence in the cave for further orders. He was soon back, and we stood by the inner fence and watched the silent lightning do its awful work upon that swarming host. One could make out but little of detail; but he could note that a black mass was piling itself up beyond the second fence. That swelling bulk was dead men! Our camp was enclosed with a solid wall of the

dead—a bulwark, a breastwork, of corpses, you may say. One terrible thing about this thing was the absence of human voices; there were no cheers, no war cries; being intent upon a surprise, these men moved as noiselessly as they could; and always when the front rank was near enough to their goal to make it proper for them to begin to get a shout ready, of course they struck the fatal line and went down without testifying.

I sent a current through the third fence now; and almost immediately through the fourth and fifth, so quickly were the gaps filled up. I believed the time was come now for my climax; I believed that that whole army was in our trap. Anyway, it was high time to find out. So I touched a button and set fifty electric suns aflame on the top of our precipice.

Land, what a sight! We were enclosed in three walls of dead men! All the other fences were pretty nearly filled with the living, who were stealthily working their way forward through the wires. The sudden glare paralyzed this host, petrified them, you may say, with astonishment; there was just one instant for me to utilize their immobility in, and I didn't lose the chance. You see, in another instant they would have recovered their faculties, then they'd have burst into a cheer and made a rush, and my wires would have gone down before it; but that lost instant lost them their opportunity forever; while even that slight fragment of time was still unspent, I shot the current through all the fences and struck the whole host dead in their tracks! *There* was a groan you could *hear*!

It voiced the death-pang of eleven thousand men. It swelled out on the night with awful pathos.

A glance showed that the rest of the enemy—perhaps ten thousand strong—were between us and the encircling ditch, and pressing forward to the assault.

Consequently we had them *all!* and had them past help. Time for the last act of the tragedy. I fired the three appointed revolver shots—which meant:

"Turn on the water!"

There was a sudden rush and roar, and in a minute the mountain brook was raging through the big ditch and creating a river a hundred feet wide and twenty-five deep.

"Stand to your guns, men! Open fire!"

The thirteen gatlings began to vomit death into the fated ten thousand. They halted, they stood their ground a moment against that withering deluge of fire, then they broke, faced about and swept toward the ditch like chaff before a gale.

A full fourth part of their force never reached the top of the lofty embankment; the three-fourths reached it and plunged over—to death by drowning.

Within ten short minutes after we had opened fire, armed resistance was totally annihilated, the campaign was ended, we fifty-four were masters of

England. Twenty-five thousand men lay dead around us.

But how treacherous is fortune! In a little while—say an hour—happened a thing, by my own fault, which—but I have no heart to write that. Let the record end here.

## CHAPTER XLIV. A POSTSCRIPT BY CLARENCE

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I, Clarence, must write it for him. He proposed that we two go out and see if any help could be accorded the wounded. I was strenuous against the project. I said that if there were many, we could do but little for them; and it would not be wise for us to trust ourselves among them, anyway. But he could seldom be turned from a purpose once formed; so we shut off the electric current from the fences, took an escort along, climbed over the enclosing ramparts of dead knights, and moved out upon the field. The first wounded man who appealed for help was sitting with his back against a dead comrade. When The Boss bent over him and spoke to him, the man recognized him and stabbed him. That knight was Sir Meliagraunce, as I found out by tearing off his helmet. He will not ask for help any more.

We carried The Boss to the cave and gave his wound, which was not very serious, the best care we could. In this service we had the help of Merlin, though we did not know it. He was disguised as a woman, and appeared to be a simple old peasant goodwife. In this disguise, with brown-stained face and smooth shaven, he had appeared a few days after The Boss was hurt and offered to cook for us, saying her people had gone off to join certain new camps which the enemy were forming, and that she was starving. The Boss had been getting along very well, and had amused himself with finishing up his record.

We were glad to have this woman, for we were short handed. We were in a trap, you see—a trap of our own making. If we stayed where we were, our dead would kill us; if we moved out of our defenses, we should no longer be invincible. We had conquered; in turn we were conquered. The Boss recognized this; we all recognized it. If we could go to one of those new camps and patch up some kind of terms with the enemy—yes, but The Boss could not go, and neither could I, for I was among the first that were made sick by the poisonous air bred by those dead thousands. Others were taken down, and still others. To-morrow—

*To-morrow.* It is here. And with it the end. About midnight I awoke, and saw that hag making curious passes in the air about The Boss's head and face, and wondered what it meant. Everybody but the dynamo-watch lay steeped in

sleep; there was no sound. The woman ceased from her mysterious foolery, and started tip-toeing toward the door. I called out:

"Stop! What have you been doing?"

She halted, and said with an accent of malicious satisfaction:

"Ye were conquerors; ye are conquered! These others are perishing—you also. Ye shall all die in this place—every one—except *him*. He sleepeth now—and shall sleep thirteen centuries. I am Merlin!"

Then such a delirium of silly laughter overtook him that he reeled about like a drunken man, and presently fetched up against one of our wires. His mouth is spread open yet; apparently he is still laughing. I suppose the face will retain that petrified laugh until the corpse turns to dust.

The Boss has never stirred—sleeps like a stone. If he does not wake to-day we shall understand what kind of a sleep it is, and his body will then be borne to a place in one of the remote recesses of the cave where none will ever find it to desecrate it. As for the rest of us—well, it is agreed that if any one of us ever escapes alive from this place, he will write the fact here, and loyally hide this Manuscript with The Boss, our dear good chief, whose property it is, be he alive or dead.

THE END OF THE MANUSCRIPT

FINAL P.S. BY M.T.

The dawn was come when I laid the Manuscript aside. The rain had almost ceased, the world was gray and sad, the exhausted storm was sighing and sobbing itself to rest. I went to the stranger's room, and listened at his door, which was slightly ajar. I could hear his voice, and so I knocked. There was no answer, but I still heard the voice. I peeped in. The man lay on his back in bed, talking brokenly but with spirit, and punctuating with his arms, which he thrashed about, restlessly, as sick people do in delirium. I slipped in softly and bent over him. His mutterings and ejaculations went on. I spoke—merely a word, to call his attention. His glassy eyes and his ashy face were alight in an instant with pleasure, gratitude, gladness, welcome:

"Oh, Sandy, you are come at last—how I have longed for you! Sit by me—do not leave me—never leave me again, Sandy, never again. Where is your hand?—give it me, dear, let me hold it—there—now all is well, all is peace, and I am happy again—we are happy again, isn't it so, Sandy? You are so dim, so vague, you are but a mist, a cloud, but you are *here*, and that is blessedness sufficient; and I have your hand; don't take it away—it is for only a little while, I shall not require it long.... Was that the child?... Hello-Central!... she doesn't answer. Asleep, perhaps? Bring her when she wakes, and let me touch her hands, her face, her hair, and tell her good-bye.... Sandy! Yes, you are there. I

lost myself a moment, and I thought you were gone.... Have I been sick long? It must be so; it seems months to me. And such dreams! such strange and awful dreams, Sandy! Dreams that were as real as reality—delirium, of course, but so real! Why, I thought the king was dead, I thought you were in Gaul and couldn't get home, I thought there was a revolution; in the fantastic frenzy of these dreams, I thought that Clarence and I and a handful of my cadets fought and exterminated the whole chivalry of England! But even that was not the strangest. I seemed to be a creature out of a remote unborn age, centuries hence, and even *that* was as real as the rest! Yes, I seemed to have flown back out of that age into this of ours, and then forward to it again, and was set down, a stranger and forlorn in that strange England, with an abyss of thirteen centuries yawning between me and you! between me and my home and my friends! between me and all that is dear to me, all that could make life worth the living! It was awful—awfuler than you can ever imagine, Sandy. Ah, watch by me, Sandy—stay by me every moment—*don't* let me go out of my mind again; death is nothing, let it come, but not with those dreams, not with the torture of those hideous dreams—I cannot endure *that* again.... Sandy?..."

He lay muttering incoherently some little time; then for a time he lay silent, and apparently sinking away toward death. Presently his fingers began to pick busily at the coverlet, and by that sign I knew that his end was at hand with the first suggestion of the death-rattle in his throat he started up slightly, and seemed to listen: then he said:

"A bugle?... It is the king! The drawbridge, there! Man the battlements!—turn out the—"

He was getting up his last "effect"; but he never finished it.

# The Real King Arthur

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The historical basis of King Arthur is a source of considerable debate among historians. Due to the poverty of British records in the period 450-550 CE, historian Thomas Charles-Edwards noted that "at this stage of the enquiry, one can only say that there may well have been an historical Arthur the historian can as yet say nothing of value about him". Historian David Dumville summed up his position by saying, "I think we can dispose of him quite briefly. He owes his place in our history books to a 'no smoke without fire' school of thought ... The fact of the matter is that there is no historical evidence about Arthur; we must reject him from our histories and, above all, from the titles of our books."

Some have suggested that Arthur was a mythological or folklore figure, that other mythological figures also may have become historicised: one suggestion is that Hengest and Horsa were originally Kentish totemic horse-gods, ascribed a historical role by Bede. There is, however, no more early trace of this fictional Arthur than there is of a historical one.

Arthur appears in a historical context as a British soldier (miles in the original Latin) fighting alongside British kings against the invading Saxons in a Latin text of the 9th century, more than three centuries after his supposed floruit in 5th-6th century Sub-Roman Britain. The legendary king of the Britons of Arthurian legend develops from the 12th century after Geoffrey of Monmouth's influential *Historia Regum Britanniae*.



## The Name "Arthur"

The etymology of the Welsh name Arthur is uncertain, though most scholars favour either a derivation from the Roman gens name Artorius (ultimately of Messapic or Etruscan origin), or a native Brittonic compound based on the root \*arto- "bear" (which became arth in Medieval and Modern Welsh). Similar "bear" names appear throughout the Celtic-speaking world. Gildas does not give the name Arthur but he does mention a British king Cuneglasus who had been "charioteer to the bear". Those that favor a mythological origin for Arthur point out that a Gaulish bear goddess Artio is attested, but as yet no certain examples of Celtic male bear gods have been detected.

John Morris argues that the appearance of the name Arthur, as applied to the Scottish, Welsh and Pennine "Arthurs", and the lack of the name at any time earlier, suggests that in the early 6th century the name became popular amongst the indigenous British for a short time. He proposes that all of these occurrences were due to the importance of another Arthur, who may have ruled temporarily as Emperor of Britain. He suggests on the basis of archaeology that a period of Saxon advance was halted and turned back, before resuming again in the 570s. Morris also suggests that the Roman Camulodunum, modern Colchester, and capital of the Roman province of Britannia, is the origin of the name "Camelot".

The name Artúr is frequently attested in southern Scotland and northern England in the 7th and 8th centuries. For example, Artúr mac Conaing, who may have been named after his uncle Artúr mac Áedáin. Artúr son of Bicoir Britone, was another 'Arthur' reported in this period, who slew Morgan mac Fiachna of Ulster in 620/625 in Kintyre. A man named Feradach, apparently the grandson of an 'Artuir', was a signatory at the synod that enacted the Law of Adomnan in 697. Arthur ap Pedr was a prince in Dyfed, born around 570–580. Given the popularity of this name at the time, it is likely that others were named for a figure who was already established in folklore by that time.

## Early sources

### **Historia Brittonum**

Arthur is not mentioned in The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle (c. 890s), Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People (c. 731) or any other surviving work until 820, the date ascribed to the *Historia Brittonum*, usually attributed to Nennius, a Welsh ecclesiastic. Nennius lists twelve battles fought by Arthur and gives him the title of "dux bellorum", which can be translated as "war commander", saying that Arthur fought "alongside the kings of the Britons", rather than that Arthur was himself a king. Other accounts associating Arthur with one of those battles, that of Mount Badon, can be shown to derive directly or indirectly from the *Historia Brittonum*. The list is inserted between the death of Hengist and the reign of Ida in Bernicia, which suggests that the *Historia Brittonum*'s compiler believed Arthur's floruit to have been in the early-mid 6th century.

The battle of Mount Badon (Mons Badonicus) appears to be that great British victory mentioned by Gildas in his *De Excidio et Conquestu Britanniae* (On the Ruin and Conquest of Britain). Badon appears in several other texts but Arthur is not associated with it until the *Historia Brittonum*. Recent scholarship has further questioned the reliability of the *Historia Brittonum* and the *Annales Cambriae*.

### **Gildas and Badon**

A message dated to c. 446, known as the Groans of the Britons, is recorded by Gildas in his *De Excidio et Conquestu Britanniae* and later by Bede. It is a plea to Aetius, military leader of the Western Roman Empire who spent most of the 440s fighting insurgents in Gaul and Hispania, an attempt to persuade the late Western Roman Empire to help defend Britain from the rebelling Jutes, Angles and Saxons after the Roman withdrawal.

A variety of sources after Gildas name Arthur as the victor of the Battle of

Mount Badon, at which the Saxons were routed and their invasions halted for many years. Historians regard it as a probable historical event. Gildas' Latin is somewhat opaque: he does not name Arthur, or any other leader of the battle. He does discuss Ambrosius Aurelianus as a great scourge of the Saxons immediately prior, but seems to say some time passed between Ambrosius' victory and the battle of Badon. He also tells us that he was born in the same year as the battle (which he describes as taking place "in our times" and being one of the latest—and greatest—slaughters of the Saxons) and that, at the time of his writing, a new generation born after the battle of Badon, has come of age in Britain.

According to Gildas, Aurelianus stayed calm despite the fact that his parents had been killed in the attacks and became leader of the remaining British, organised them, and led them in their first victory against the Saxons, although subsequent battles went both ways. Gildas also writes that Aurelianus' parents "wore the purple", and thus were apparently descended from Roman emperors. The Aurelii were a noted Roman senatorial family and it is possible that Ambrosius was descended from them. Owing to a possible mistranslation of a word from Gildas, describing Aurelianus as either the "ancestor" or the "grandfather" of his descendants of Gildas' generation, it is possible that Aurelianus lived in the generation before the Battle of Badon. According to the Major Chronicle Annals, he rose to power in 479.

The date of the battle is uncertain, with most scholars accepting a date around 500. The location is also unknown, though locations have been proposed over the years, including southwest England, perhaps near the city of Bath or the nearby Solsbury Hill, where an ancient hill fort existed, and somewhere to the north, in or near modern Scotland. Some believe Badon Hill was fought between the British and the invading South Saxons under their Bretanwealda Aelle. It is theorised that Aelle may have died in the battle and that Sussex did not again attack the Celts until 571.

Geoffrey of Monmouth's History of the Kings of Britain also states that Arthur led the forces at Badon. Geoffrey makes Aurelianus (whom he calls Aurelius Ambrosius) a king of Britain, an older brother of Uther Pendragon, the father of King Arthur, thus relating Aurelianus and Arthur. He also states that Aurelianus was the son of a Breton ruler named Constantinus, brother of Aldroenus.

## **Annales Cambriae**

The 10th century *Annales Cambriae* give the date of Mons Badonicus as 516, and Arthur's death as occurring in 537 at Camlann. These annals survive in a version dating from the 10th century. All other sources relating to Arthur by name are later than these; that is, they were written at least four hundred years later than the events to which they refer.

## **Legends of the saints**

The *Legenda Sancti Goeznovii*, a hagiography of the Breton saint Goeznovius that claims to date from 1019, includes a brief segment dealing with Arthur and Vortigern: this early vita is one of only five insular saints' lives and two Breton ones that include a mention of Arthur that seems to be independent of Geoffrey of Monmouth's myth-making in *Historia Regum Britanniae*. Among other saint's vitae that mention Arthur are those of Cadoc, Carantoc, Illtud Gildas and Paternus.

## **Bardic sources**

There are a number of mentions of a legendary hero called Arthur in early Welsh and Breton poetry. These sources are preserved in High Medieval manuscripts, and cannot be dated with accuracy. They are mostly placed in the 9th to 10th century, although some authors make them as early as the 7th. The earliest of these would appear to be the Old Welsh poem, *Y Gododdin*, preserved in an 11th-century manuscript. It refers to a warrior who "glutted black ravens on the rampart of the stronghold, although he was no Arthur".

The Welsh poem *Geraint, son of Erbin*, written in the 10th or 11th century, describes a battle at a port-settlement and mentions Arthur in passing. The work is a praise-poem and elegy for the 6th-century king Geraint, and is significant in showing that this historical king was associated with Arthur at a relatively early date. It also provides the earliest known reference to Arthur as "emperor". *Geraint son of Erbin* is earliest found in the *Black Book of Carmarthen*, compiled around 1250, though it may date to the 10th or 11th century. *Y Gododdin* was similarly copied at much the same time. The two poems differ in the relative archaic quality of their language, that of *Gododdin* being the older in form. However, this could merely reflect differences in the date of the last

revision of the language within the two poems. The language would have had to have been revised for the poems to remain comprehensible.

## **The History of the Kings of Britain**

In the 12th century, Geoffrey of Monmouth's list of kings of the Britons, which was partially based on the chronology found in the *Historia Brittonum*, placed Arthur and Uther Pendragon in sequence between Aurelius Ambrosius and a Breton ruler named Constantinus (often erroneously identified with Constantine III), all of them Romano-British rulers placed in the Sub-Roman period of the 5th to 6th century. Geoffrey's historiography was ruled by an aim of proving a primordial line of British kingship that entirely bypassed the Anglo-Saxon kings.

## **Artognou and the "Arthur Stone"**

Artognou was an inhabitant of 6th century Tintagel known only from a piece of slate bearing his name discovered during excavations of the 6th century layers under Tintagel Castle. A draft inscription for a plaque, it reads "PATERN COLI AVI FICIT ARTOGNOU COL FICIT"—"Artognou descendant of Patern Colus made (this)". Pieces of expensive 6th century Mediterranean pottery have been excavated from the same area, showing the site was rich and powerful with trade links with distant civilizations.

According to Geoffrey of Monmouth and subsequent medieval writers, King Arthur was conceived at Tintagel but it is a coincidence to find a similar-looking name here. The initial element *arth* was common in Celtic personal names. Artognou was the Late Brittonic form of a name that would later be rendered as Arthnou in Old Welsh and Artnou in Old Breton, meaning "Bear-knowing" or "Famous/Well Known Bear" (from Brittonic *arto-* "bear" and *gnÄwo-* "knowing"; compare Modern Welsh *arth* "bear" and *gno* "evident, clear, manifest, well known").

# Alternative Candidates for the Historical King Arthur

Some theories suggest that "Arthur" was a byname of attested historical individuals.

## Lucius Artorius Castus

In 1924 Kemp Malone suggested that the character of King Arthur was ultimately based on one Lucius Artorius Castus, a career Roman soldier of the late 2nd century or early 3rd century. This suggestion was revived in 1994 by C. Scott Littleton and Linda A. Malcor and linked to a hypothesis (below) that the Arthurian legends were influenced by the nomadic Alans and Sarmatians settled in Western Europe in Late Antiquity. Littleton had earlier written about this hypothesis in 1978 together with Ann C. Thomas.

All that is known about Artorius' life comes from two Latin inscriptions discovered in the 19th century in Podstrana on the Dalmatian coast. After a long, distinguished career as a centurion and then *primus pilus* in the Roman army Artorius was promoted to *praefectus legionis* of the VI Victrix, a unit that had been headquartered at Eboracum (York) since c. 122 AD. The *praefectus legionis* (or *praefectus castrorum*) served as third-in-command of the legion and was responsible for the general upkeep of the legionary headquarters, a position normally held by older career soldiers who did not command soldiers in battle.

When Artorius's term as *praefectus legionis* ended he was assigned the temporary title of *dux legionum* and was put in charge of transferring some units of unknown size with British associations to the Continent for an expedition against either the *Armorici* or the Armenians. Later he became civilian governor (*procurator centenarius*) of the province of Liburnia, where he seems to have ended his days.

Malcor, in a hypothetical reconstruction of Artorius' life based in part on Malone and Helmut Nickel, proposes that he fought against Sarmatians in eastern Europe early in his military career and this led in 181 AD to his being assigned in the command of a number of Sarmatians based at Ribchester (*Bremetennacum*) that campaigned around Hadrian's Wall. 5,500 Sarmatians had been sent to Britain by the emperor Marcus Aurelius in 175 AD. Artorius led these Sarmatians against invading Caledonians, who overran Hadrian's Wall

during the period 183–185. Then, after the collapse of his legion, he returns to Eboracum, then is sent by the governor of Britannia to lead cavalry cohorts against an uprising in Armorica. Medieval sources often place Arthur's headquarters in Wales at Caerleon upon Usk, the "Fortress of Legions" (borrowed from Latin *Castra Legionum*). Eboracum, in the Vale of York, was sometimes referred to as *Urbe Legionum* or the "City of the Legion", and was the headquarters of the *legio VI Victrix*.

Malcor also suggests that Artorius' standard was a large red dragon pennant (auxiliary forces did not use eagle standards), which is proposed as the origin of the Welsh epithet Pendragon "Dragon Chief/Head" (alternately, "Leader of Warriors") in Arthurian literature. According to both Malone and Littleton/Malcor, Artorius' alleged military exploits in Britain and Armorica could have been remembered for centuries afterward, thus generating the figure of Arthur among the Welsh, Cornish and Bretons. This is linked to the original theory of Littleton, Thomas and Malcor which suggests that folk narratives of the Alano-Sarmatians settled in Western Europe formed the core of the Arthurian tradition.

The Sarmatians had a near-religious fondness for their swords: tribal worship was directed at a sword sticking up from the ground, similar to the sword in the stone. They carried standards in the form of dragons. Ossetian Nart sagas contain a number of interesting parallels to the Arthurian legends. First, the life of the Nart warrior (*batraz*) is tied to his sword, which must be thrown into the sea at his death. When one wounded *Batraz* asks his last surviving comrade to do the task for him, his companion tries to fool him twice before finally hurling the weapon into the sea; rather like Arthur's wondrous sword *Excalibur* which had to be returned to the Lady of the Lake at his death by his last surviving knight, *Bedivere*. The Nart heroes *Soslan* and *Sosryko*, collect the beards of vanquished enemies to trim their cloaks like Arthur's enemy *Rience*: both have one last beard to obtain before the cloak is complete. Two other similar motifs are the Cup of the Narts ("*Nartyamonga*"), which appeared at feasts, delivered to each person what he liked best to eat, and which was kept by the bravest of the Narts ("*Knights*")—somewhat similar to the Grail—and the magical woman, dressed in white, associated with water, who helps the hero acquire his sword, similar to the Arthurian Lady of the Lake.

There seems to be little reason for Artorius to have become a major legendary figure: no Roman historical source mentions him or his alleged exploits in Britain, nor is there any clear evidence that he ever commanded Sarmatians. Neither of Artorius' inscriptions from *Podstrana* mention command of any full legions (as proposed by Malcor, et al.), or establish his command of

the VI Victrix (nor any numeri), nor do the inscriptions provide any evidence of command of, or association with, Sarmatians, or indicate anything about his standard.

Unlike *dux legionum*, *dux bellorum* or *dux belli* were not titles or ranks in the Roman Army but generic Latin phrases. Joshua was called *dux belli* of the Israelites in the Latin Vulgate Bible, Hanno the Great was *dux belli* of Carthage in Justin's *Historiarum Philippicarum*. Closer to the time and place, Saint Germanus of Auxerre was twice styled *dux belli* by Bede). Artorius is not recorded as having fought in any known battles to match against those in the *Historia Brittonum*. However Geoffrey adds that Arthur twice took troops across the sea to Armorica, once to support the Roman emperor and once to deal with his own rebels.

The theory of a connection between the Alan and Sarmatian peoples and the legend of King Arthur depends upon the fact that the Alano-Sarmatians were steppe nomads known in the 2nd century for their skill as heavy cavalry. In 175, Marcus Aurelius, after defeating the Sarmatian Iazyges tribe during the Marcomannic Wars, took 8,000 Sarmatians into Roman service, of whom 5,500 were sent to the northern borders of Britain. The 5th century *Notitia Dignitatum* mentions a "Formation of Sarmatians" (*Cuneus Sarmatarum*; *cunei* were small auxiliary units in the late Empire) being present at *Bremetennacum* (Ribchester), where we find inscriptions dating to the 3rd century AD of a "Wing of Sarmatians" (*ala Sarmatarum*) and a "Company of Sarmatian Horsemen" (*numeri equitum Sarmatarum*).

Many of the parallels or similarities between Arthurian and Sarmatian tales only occur in writings dating from and after Geoffrey of Monmouth and do not affect the core issue of historicity. Some of the strongest similarities of Arthurian and Sarmatian tales occur in Thomas Malory's *Le Morte D'Arthur*, when Arthur and his warriors had already evolved into "knights in shining armor". Critics conclude that Sarmatian influence was limited to the post-Galfridian development of the tales instead of historical basis, if at all.

## **Riothamus**

Riothamus (aka Riotimus, apparently meaning Kingliest or "Great King" (from Brittonic *\*rigo-* "king", plus the Brittonic superlative suffix *-tamo-*) was a historical figure whom ancient sources list as "a king of the Britons". He lived in the late 5th century, and most of the stories about him were recorded in the



Byzantine historian Jordanes' *The Origin and Deeds of the Goths*, written in the mid-6th century, only about 80 years after his presumed death.

About 460, the Roman diplomat and bishop Sidonius Apollinaris sent a letter to Riothamus, asking his help to quell unrest among the Bretones, British colonists living in Armorica. This letter still survives.

In the year 470, the Western Emperor Anthemius began a campaign against Euric, king of the Visigoths who were campaigning outside their territory in Gaul. Anthemius requested help from Riothamus, and Jordanes writes that he crossed the ocean into Gaul with 12,000 warriors. The location of Riothamus's army was betrayed to the Visigoths by the jealous praetorian prefect of Gaul, and Euric defeated him in a battle in Burgundy. Riothamus was last seen retreating near a town called Avallon.

Geoffrey Ashe points out that, as above, Arthur is said by the early sources to have crossed into Gaul twice, once to help a Roman emperor and once to subdue a civil war. Assuming that Riothamus was a king in Britain as well as Armorica, he did both. Arthur is also said to have been betrayed by one of his advisors, and Riothamus was betrayed by one of his supposed allies. Finally, it is well known how King Arthur was carried off to Avalon (which Geoffrey of Monmouth spells "Avallon") before he died; Riothamus, escaping death, was last known to have been in the vicinity of a town called Avallon.

It is unknown whether Riothamus was a king in Britain or of Armorica; as Armorica was a British colony and Jordanes writes that Riothamus "crossed the ocean", it is possible both are correct. The name Riothamus has been interpreted by some as a title "High King", though there is no evidence for such a title being used by ancient Britons or Gauls and the formation of the name (noun/adjective + superlative -tamo-suffix) follows a pattern found in numerous other Brittonic and Gaulish personal names (for example, Old Breton/Welsh Cunatam/Cunotami/Condam/Cyndaf, Old Welsh Caurdaf, Old Welsh/Breton Eudaf/Outham, Uorotam/Gwrdaf, Old Breton Rumatam, Gwyndaf, Breton Uentamau ).

Cognates of the name Riothamus survive in Old Welsh (Riatav/Riadaf) and Old Breton (Riatam).

## **Ambrosius Aurelianus**

Ambrosius Aurelianus (also sometimes referred to as Aurelius Ambrosius) was a powerful Romano-British leader in Britain. He was renowned for his

campaigns against the Saxons, and there is some speculation that he may have commanded the British forces at the Battle of Badon Hill. At any rate, the battle was a clear continuation of his efforts.

## **Artúr mac Áedáin and others**

Though he was the eldest son of Áedán mac Gabráin, Artúr mac Áedáin never became king of Dál Riata; his brother Eochaid Buide ruled after his father's death. However, when Áedán gave up his role and retired to monastic life, Artúr became war leader, though Áedán was officially still king. Thus it was Artúr who led the Scotti of Dál Riata in a war against the Picts, separate from the later war with Northumbria. By this theory, Artúr was predominantly active in the region between the Roman walls — the Kingdom of the Gododdin. He was ultimately killed in battle in 582. This is the solution proposed by David F. Carroll in his book *Arturius-A Quest for Camelot* published 1996 and 11 years later by Michael Wood.

# Film, TV and Theatrical Adaptations



The Matter of Britain stories, focusing on King Arthur, are one of the most popular literary subjects of all time, and have been adapted numerous times in every form of media. Catalogued here are the most notable adaptations in film, TV, stage, comics, music, and even games.

# Film Adaptations

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## Direction Adaptations on Film

- Parsifal (1904)
- Launcelot and Elaine (1909)
- Il Re Artù e i cavalieri della tavola rotonda (1910)
- Parsifal (1912)
- The Quest of the Holy Grail (1915)
- The Adventures of Sir Galahad (serial) (1949)
- Knights of the Round Table (1953), based on Le Morte d'Arthur by Thomas Malory, with Robert Taylor as Lancelot, Ava Gardner as Guinevere, and Mel Ferrer in the role of Arthur.
- Parsifal (1953)
- The Black Knight (1954)
- Prince Valiant (1954)
- The Adventures of Sir Lancelot (serial) (1956)
- Lancelot and Guinevere (1963), a film directed by Cornel Wilde and starring Mr. Wilde as Lancelot, Jean Wallace as Guinevere, and Brian Aherne as Arthur
- Siege of the Saxons (1963)
- Camelot (1967), film adaptation of the successful 1960 Broadway musical of the same name, in turn heavily based on the last three of T.H.White's quartet of novels. It starred Richard Harris as Arthur, Vanessa Redgrave as Guenevere, and Franco Nero as Lancelot.
- Gawain and the Green Knight (1973)
- Lancelot du Lac (1974)
- Monty Python and the Holy Grail (1975)
- Perceval le Gallois (1978)
- Parzival (1980)

- Excalibur (1981), John Boorman's film based largely on Malory and probably the highest rated serious Arthurian film. It features Nicol Williamson as Merlin and Helen Mirren as Morgan Le Fay.
- Parsifal (1982) (a film version of the performance of the Wagner opera by Hans-Jurgen Syberberg)
- Camelot (a videotaped stage performance of the musical, presented on HBO) (1982)
- Sword of the Valiant: The Legend of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight (1984)
- Merlin and the Sword (aka Arthur the King),TV movie (1982,aired 1985)
- Les Chevaliers de la table ronde (1990)
- Ginevra (1992)
- Guinevere (1994)
- First Knight (1995), movie based on the abduction of Guinevere by the knight Malagant. It featured Sean Connery as Arthur, Richard Gere as Lancelot, and Julia Ormond as Guinevere.
- Prince Valiant (1997)
- The Mists of Avalon (2001)
- King Arthur (2004), claiming (despite being heavily criticized for its historical inaccuracies) to be more historically accurate about the legend of Arthur as a 5th-century, British-born, Roman commander, with respect to new archaeological findings; similar in story line to Jack Whyte's books.
- The Last Legion (2007)
- Pendragon: Sword of His Father (2008)
- Merlin and the War of the Dragons (2008)
- Merlin and the Book of Beasts (2009), Laura Harris plays the daughter of Guenevere and Arthur. She must defeat Mordred her half brother and his book of beasts.
- Choir of Camelot (2009)

## **Modernization**

- Knights of the Square Table (1917)

- King Arthur Was a Gentleman (1942)
- Knightriders (1981)
- Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade (1989)
- The Fisher King (1991)
- Seaview Knights (1994)
- The Four Diamonds (1995)
- Kids of the Round Table (1995)
- Merlin's Shop of Mystical Wonders (1996)
- Lancelot, Guardian of Time (1997)
- Arthur's Quest (1999)
- Merlin the Return (2000)
- Avalon (2001)
- Stargate SG1 Season 9 to 10 (2006–2007)
- The Sorcerer's Apprentice (2010)
- Avalon High (TV 2010)

## **Animation**

- The Sword in the Stone (1963), Disney animated film about Arthur's childhood, loosely adapted from T.H. White's take on the legend.
- Arthur! and the Square Knights of the Round Table - Australian animated cartoon series of the late 1960s
- A Connecticut Rabbit in King Arthur's Court (1978)
- King Arthur - Japanese animated cartoon series (1979-1980)
- Merlin and the Dragons (1991)
- The Legend of Prince Valiant (1991–1994)
- King Arthur & the Knights of Justice (1992–1993)
- Quest for Camelot (1998)
- Tristan et Yseut (2002)
- Fate/stay night (2006)
- A scene in No Time for Nuts (2007)
- Shrek the Third (2007)
- Fate/Zero (2011)

## **Humor**

- Monty Python and the Holy Grail (1975)
- Sir Gadabout: The Worst Knight in the Land (2002)

## **Films based on Mark Twain's novel A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court**

- A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court (1921)
- A Connecticut Yankee (1931)
- A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court (1949), a musical film adaptation of Twain's novel, with Bing Crosby as the time-traveling Yankee and Cedric Hardwicke as Arthur.
- A Connecticut Yankee (1955 TV movie)
- A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court (1970)
- Unidentified Flying Oddball, also known as The Spaceman and King Arthur (1979)
- New Adventures of a Yankee in King Arthur's Court (1988)
- A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court (1989 TV movie)
- Army of Darkness (1992)
- A Young Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court (1995)
- A Kid in King Arthur's Court (1995)
- A Knight in Camelot (1998)
- Black Knight (2001)

## References to Arthur in other films

- Sam Raimi's *Army of Darkness* has time-travelling hero Ash meet a king called Arthur, in 14th century England.
- *Shrek the Third* has a character named Arthur "Artie" Pendragon (voiced by Justin Timberlake), who is the next king of Far Far Away.
- *The Last Legion* - a film about the last Roman Emperor Romulus Augustus who survives his fall from power and finds a new life in Britain. The movie links Romulus to the legends of King Arthur. In this movie, Arthur's father Uther Pendragon is brought up by a Roman general and a Malayalee woman (Aishwarya Rai)
- *The Mighty* - A story about two children in whose exploits are influenced by the story of King Arthur.



# Television



## TV Movies and Miniseries

- The 1998 television mini series Merlin showing a tale of Arthur and his knights.
- Marion Zimmer Bradley's The Mists of Avalon was made into a miniseries by TNT in 2001.
- BBC Series The Legend of King Arthur 1979 directed by Rodney Bennett Released BBC Video 1985 BBCV 9024

## Special Presentations

- The 2004 History Channel special Quest for King Arthur, hosted by Patrick Stewart, with an introduction by Ioan Gruffudd, highlights several historical figures who may have contributed to Arthurian legend. It was shown on the History Channel just prior to the release of the film King Arthur (2004), which featured Gruffudd as the character Lancelot and doing a voice-over introduction. The obvious tie-in was to assert the historical accuracy of the film.

## TV Series

- The 1950s British television series *The Adventures of Sir Lancelot*, based around the knight's exploits, featured Arthur and many other characters from the legends. This was the first British television series ever to be made in colour (although surviving episodes are in black and white) and one of the first to be aired by an American network.
- The 1970s British television series, *Arthur of the Britons*, starring Oliver Tobias, sought to create a more "realistic" portrait of the period and to explain the origins of some of the myths about the Celtic leader.
- The French series *Kaamelott* features a humorous take on the legend.
- The 2008 BBC series *Merlin* is a reimagining of the legend in which the future King Arthur and Merlin are young contemporaries, however Arthur's father Uther Pendragon has banned magic in Camelot on pain of death. It showed the growth of King Arthur from a young, self-absorbed boy to the mighty king we all know as well as Merlin's colossal role in the creating the powerful Camelot. It was immensely popular and very well received by the public. It ran for five seasons and ended in December 2012, with a total of 65 episodes.
- *Camelot* is a series on Starz that debuted April 1, 2011. It begins at the very earliest story, with twenty year-old, long lost son Arthur being crowned king after half-sister Morgan poisons their father King Uther. A more adult-oriented take on the Arthurian legends than the concurrent series *Merlin*, it was cancelled after one season.

## Animation

- The late 1969 Australian animated cartoon series *Arthur! and the Square Knights of the Round Table* was a typically wacky take on Arthurian legend.

- King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table (Entaku no Kishi Monogatari: Moero Arthur), a Japanese anime series produced by Toei Animation in 1979, followed by King Arthur: Prince on White Horse (Moero Arthur: Hakuba no Oji) in 1980
- The animated series The Legend of Prince Valiant followed the adventures of three young warriors training to become Knights of the Round Table. Originally aired in the early 1990s, it featured Arthur, Merlin, Guinevere, and Gawain in its main cast and several other Arthurian characters in recurring roles.
- The animated series King Arthur & the Knights of Justice premiering in 1992 featured an American Football team called the Knights led by quarterback Arthur King. When the "real" Knights of the Round Table are captured, Merlin magically transports the Knights football team to Camelot to defend the kingdom and rescue the captured knights. The show was cancelled in 1993.
- The British animated cartoon series King Arthur's Disasters in 2005. Where Arthur is voiced by Rik Mayall.
- In the Japanese anime adaption of the visual novel Fate/stay night, Arthur is portrayed as having been a woman (named Arturia) whose spirit is resurrected to serve a mage in the modern day with history recording her as a man for political correctness. She reprises this role in Fate/zero.

## **References in Other Series**

- The animated series Gargoyles featured several tales of Arthur (who was prematurely awakened in Avalon by Elisa Maza in a time of need) and the magic and inhabitants of Avalon. Arthur would later deputize a London Clan gargoyle, "Griff", as his knight and champion within the storyline. A proposed spin-off, named "Pendragon", for the character never materialized.
- The 100th episode of the television show Hercules: The Legendary Journeys, Once Upon A Future King, featured a young Arthur sent back in time by Merlin to learn from Hercules.

- Arthurian legend is central to the plot during the 9th and 10th seasons of the science-fiction series *Stargate SG-1* (1997–2007). The idea was that, like other mythologies present in the show, the legends were influenced by the interference of powerful alien beings—in this case Merlin and Morgan le Fay—with the people of Earth. Other notable elements of Arthurian legend used in the show include Avalon (the place where Merlin showed Arthur how to ascend to a "higher plane of existence") and the Sangraal (Holy Grail), actually a powerful weapon created by Merlin, capable of destroying ascended beings. It was hidden by Morgan le Fay, who set up a series of tests to prevent the weapon from falling into the wrong hands.
- King Arthur appears in the *Babylon 5* Episode "A Late Delivery from Avalon." See *Babylon 5* influences for more discussion on the King Arthur myths evident in *Babylon 5*.
- In the seventh season of *MacGyver*, the two part episode "Good Knight MacGyver" has MacGyver apparently transported to the court of Camelot after a blow to the head.
- In the sixth season of the supernatural drama *Charmed*, King Arthur is reincarnated in Wyatt Halliwell, Piper (a Charmed One) and Leo's (a powerful whitelighter) first-born, a twice-blessed child believed to be the future leader of the magical community, as prophesied by an apothecary from the 18th century.
- The *Doctor Who* serial "Battlefield" is based on the Arthurian legends, featuring Mordred and Morgaine as warlords from another dimension, as well as the Seventh Doctor discovering that he will apparently become their version of Merlin in his future. The earlier serial *The Stones of Blood* indicated that Morgaine was based on an alien posing as a Celtic goddess. The later BBC *Past Doctor Adventures* novel *Wolfsbane* features the amnesic Eighth Doctor working with a young man from Arthur's era who has been awakened in 1936, having been imprisoned by a dryad after discovering the Holy Grail, to defeat a woman who believes herself to be the reincarnation of Morgaine le Fay, the story concluding with a briefly described trip made by the Fourth Doctor-unaware of the presence of his future self-to take the young man back to his own time.
- In the *Labyrinth* TV series, the last episode had an appearance by King Arthur.
- The animated series *Thundercats* episode, *Excalibur*, featured the villain Mumra disguising himself as King Arthur in order to obtain the sword Excalibur to destroy the Sword of Omens.
- The *Pokémon* episode "A Crowning Achievement!" is a subtle parody of

King Arthur. In the episode, all the Slowpoke want to become Slowking, but only one, named Arthur, succeeds.

- In the 27th episode of The Time Tunnel (1967), Merlin presses the time travelers into service to help preserve the life of young Arthur Pendragon so that he may become king in his future.
- In an episode of the Nickelodeon television series Fairly Odd Parents, Timmy wishes himself back to the time of King Arthur and Excalibur.
- The TV Anime Code Geass Features many mecha, battleships, locations, and people named after various characters from King Arthur's Story.
- In the Anime / Manga Cardfight!! Vanguard two units from the Royal Paladin clan are possibly based on King Arthur; King of Knights, Alfred and Alfred Early respectively.

# Theatre

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- John Arden and Margaretta D'Arcy: *The Island of the Mighty* (1972)
- Laurence Binyon: *King Arthur* (1923), with music by Edward Elgar
- D. G. Bridson: *King Arthur* (1937), with music by Benjamin Britten
- J. Comyns Carr: *King Arthur* (1895), with music by Arthur Sullivan
- *Camelot* (1960), by Alan Jay Lerner and Frederick Loewe. It is based on the King Arthur legend as adapted from the T. H. White novel *The Once and Future King*. The main thrust of the novel and the musical play is the affair between Arthur's wife, Guenevere, and his great friend, Sir Lancelot. *Camelot* was filmed in 1967. Created by the team responsible for *My Fair Lady*, Moss Hart, Alan Jay Lerner, and Frederick Loewe, it starred Richard Burton as Arthur, Julie Andrews as Guinevere, and introduced Robert Goulet as Lancelot. The original cast album of the show was a particular favorite of then-President John F. Kennedy, and the "Camelot" metaphor has been often associated with his presidency.
- *Merlin* was a Broadway musical in 1983 featuring illusionist Doug Henning and music by Elmer Bernstein.
- *Spamalot*, adapted from the film *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*. It won the 2004–2005 Tony Award for Best Musical. Arthur was played by Tim Curry in the original production.

# Opera

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- Henry Purcell: King Arthur (1691), libretto by John Dryden
  - Richard Wagner: Lohengrin (1848), libretto by composer
  - Richard Wagner: Tristan und Isolde (1865), libretto by composer
  - Richard Wagner: Parsifal (1882), libretto by composer
  - Karl Goldmark: Merlin (1886), libretto by Siegfried Lipiner
  - Hubert Parry: Guinevere (1886)
  - Amadeu Vives: Arthús (1895)
  - Isaac Albéniz: Merlin (1897–1902), intended to be the first of a trilogy, libretto by Francis Money-Coutts, 5th Baron Latymer
  - Ernest Chausson: Le roi Arthus (1903), libretto by composer
  - Rutland Boughton: The Birth of Arthur (1909), libretto by Reginald Buckley
  - Harrison Birtwistle: Gawain (1991), libretto by David Harsent

# Comics

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- In 1937, a newspaper comic strip by Hal Foster, Prince Valiant was first published, with the byline "In the Days of King Arthur". Since the death of Foster in 1982, John Cullen Murphy has continued producing this comic strip.
- DC Comics uses King Arthur's Camelot as a recurring piece of its fictional history, and there have been "several Arthurs," including a pagan general in Roman Britain, and a medieval Christian mystic. The various Arthurs were served by various versions of the character Shining Knight while The Demon, under the control of Merlin, defended Camelot during its final days.
- The original version of the Marvel Comics character Black Knight was also at Arthur's court.
- In Marvel Comic's New Excalibur series, King Arthur and his entire court is depicted when the team of mutants travels back in time to aid Black Knight during his years as a member of Arthur's Court. During the mission, Peter Wisdom advertently causes Guinevere and Lancelot into committing their affair behind Arthur's back.
- Several comic book titles have explored the "Once and Future King" aspect of the legend by bringing Arthur and his knights back from the dead at the time of Britain's greatest need. Arthur and company re-emerge to battle an alien menace in AD 3000 in Camelot 3000.
- The heroes of Knights of Pendragon likewise assemble in the spirit of Arthur's Round Table.
- Simon Bisley's Treasure of Britain starring the character Sláine, features Arthurian characters and themes.
- The comic book Dracula vs King Arthur from Silent Devil Productions takes Arthur as he begins his quest for the Grail and pits him against a time-crossing Dracula, who creates a vampire army to take on The Knights of the Round Table.
- King Arthur makes several appearances throughout De Rode Ridder (The Red Knight), a Flemish comic book series.



- The webcomic Arthur, King of Time and Space retells the legend in real time, in several settings.
- The Caliber comics Legends of Camelot series began to cover stories from the Arthurian tradition.
- The French comic book Arthur, by David Chauvel and Jérôme Lereculey, draws inspiration from early medieval Welsh legends, such as the Mabinogion.
- In Hellboy, Hellboy is descended from King Arthur through his son, Mordred, by a daughter who was hidden away.
- In 1984 Colleen Doran's A Distant Soil introduced Sir Galahad to her space opera series.

# Games



## Board Games

- The board game *Shadows over Camelot* features King Arthur as one of the main playable characters in the game.
- In the science fiction board game *Warhammer 40k*, the Emperor of Mankind drew many similar inspiration from Arthurian legends while the treacherous Warmaster Horus and *Horus Heresy* is similar to Mordred.
- The Bretonnia army from *Warhammer Fantasy Battles* features many elements from Arthurian Legends. This Includes: Knights make up the bulk of the army, Grail Knights, The Green Knight (special character), and The Fay Enchantress.

## Role Playing Games

- The role-playing game *Pendragon* details how to run adventure games set in the time of the Round Table. Its setting integrates Malory with post-Roman Britain, Celtic myth and English Folklore.
- In *Rifts* from Palladium Books, the main story of Britain revolves around the future equivalent of King Arthur and his knights. It should be noted that this is not the original King Arthur awoken from Avalon and he has many different characteristics and strengths, not the least of which is his new blade, Calibur-X, a vibrating gun blade with magical properties.

- The King Arthur Supplement for the GURPS role-playing game gives three different Arthurian settings, a historical setting based upon post-Roman Britain, a legendary setting based upon Malory, and a cinematic setting based upon modern stories.

## Video Games

- King Arthur: The Role-playing Wargame a real time strategy and role-playing game by Neocore Games from 2009
- King Arthur by Krome Studios is based on the 2004 film of the same name.
- King Arthur & the Knights of Justice by Enix is based on the cartoon series of the same name.
- Stronghold Legends by Firefly Studios campaign includes King Arthur's legend
- Conquests of Camelot by Sierra Entertainment centers around the quest for the Holy Grail.
- Knights Of The Round by Capcom is a light-hearted take on the Arthurian legend in a sword fighting beat-em-up similar to the video game Final Fight.
- Tomb Raider: Legend by Crystal Dynamics revolves around the King Arthur legend resembling those of other cultures around the world; pieces of artifacts are forms of Excalibur.
- Tomb Raider: Underworld by Crystal Dynamics revolves around Lara trying to find Avalon to find her mother.
- Arthurian mythology is a prevalent element in Namco Bandai's Ace Combat Zero: The Belkan War, including elements such as Excalibur, Avalon and the Round Table, amidst other things.
- In Final Fantasy VII, the final and most powerful summon materia is Knights of the Round which has 12 knights striking an enemy with the last knight obviously being King Arthur through his extended entrance and grander appearance.
- The visual novel/eroge and anime Fate/stay night features a young female knight called Saber whose true name is Arturia. She became King by

pulling free the sword from the stone. Knowing that armies wouldn't follow a woman, she renamed herself King Arthur and used Merlin's magic to hide her gender.

- The prequel Fate/Zero features not only the above King Arthur/Saber, but also Lancelot as a Black Knight under the class Berserker. The spinoff game Fate/extra features Gawain as an enemy-exclusive Saber-class character.
- In the MMORPG RuneScape, King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table are portrayed as having settled in the game's fictional world while awaiting Britain's 'time of greatest need'.
- The MMORPG Dark Age of Camelot takes place after King Arthur's death.
- Namco's Soul series features Arthur as a samurai. He wields a katana named Gassan.
- The Wii game Sonic and the Black Knight features the main protagonist, Sonic the Hedgehog saving the city Camelot from King Arthur after he becomes corrupt and calls himself the Black Knight. After defeating the Black Knight/King Arthur, Merlin's granddaughter Merlinia reveals to Sonic & the Knight of the Roundtable that the King Arthur they knew was a fake created by her grandfather. In the end, Sonic was revealed to be King Arthur himself, as Caliburn (actually Excalibur) said he was the one who decides who is worthy of the crown.
- Sir Lancelot is used as character in a 1984 platform / arcade game for the Sinclair ZX Spectrum.
- The tactical JRPG Fire Emblem: Fuin no Tsurugi contains many characters whose names allude to the King Arthur legend. Although there is no Arthur, characters include: Guinevere, Igraine, Gorlois, Lance, Percival, Uther, Lot, Bors, Merlinus, Niime and Nacien. The game's prequel, Fire Emblem: Rekka no Ken, introduces Ninian, but on the whole this game draws more from medieval French mythology than British and Arthurian.
- The Facebook-based game Kingdoms of Camelot is a medieval sim whose premise is based on King Arthur making them a Lord or Lady of Camelot and granting them a tract of land on which they build a city. Players grow their cities, build further cities and control armies that conquer wildernesses and battle other players to grow might. Merlin also features as a prominent character, and there are mentions of Guenevere and Morgan Le Fay as well as various knights.

# Music

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- The concept album *The Myths and Legends of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table* (1975) by Rick Wakeman tells a version of the legend.
- The 1995 album *Imaginations from the Other Side* by the power-metal band Blind Guardian contains numerous songs referencing Arthurian legends, including "A Past and Future Secret," about the battle of Camlann, and "Mordred's Song."
- The 2004 expanded edition of heavy metal singer Bruce Dickinson's 6th solo album *The Chemical Wedding* features a song called "Return of the King," which heavily references Arthurian elements including Uther Pendragon.
- The American power-metal band Kamelot has many songs with Arthurian elements in their discography. (Once and Future King and Shadow of Uther)
- In 2003 hard rock musician Gary Hughes put out two albums, *Once and Future King Part I* and *Once and Future King Part II*, based on the legend.
- The German metal band Grave Digger released a concept album about the story of King Arthur called *Excalibur*
- Australian post modern retro band Revolver have a song titled "Cross in the Sky/ Wastelands" written by James Montgomery on their 2006 album "In Absinthia". The song is about the Arthurian legend and the desolation that occurs in the country after Arthur's death.
- Heather Dale often records songs having to do with the legends, including "Mordred's Lullaby" and "Lily Maid".
- English folk singer Maddy Prior released a 2001 concept album *Arthur the King*
- The 2011 medieval rock song "Merlin's Cage" by French-American songwriter Laurent Carrer tells of Merlin's captivity.
- The 1995 album *The Final Experiment* by Ayreon, its concept is located in King Arthur's timeline.
- England based metalband Cradle of Filth wrote a song called *Haunted Shores*, which deals with the subject of King Arthur from a pagan perspective.

# Audio Recordings

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Librivox offers free audio recordings (audiobooks) of the King Arthur works in this collection. Play the files directly from a computer or smart phone, or download for use on-the-go.

## **Le Morte d'Arthur**

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## **Sir Gawain and the Green Knight**

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## **King Arthur and His Knights, by Maude L. Radford**

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## **Idylls of the King by Alfred, Lord Tennyson**

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