

Stories of King Arthur's Knights

CLASSIC LIT FOR YOUNG READERS

TOLD BY MARY MACGREGOR

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Libraries of Hope

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Classic Literature for Young Readers

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Stories of King Arthur's Knights

Told to the Children by
MARY MACGREGOR

With Pictures by
KATHARINE CAMERON

About This Book

More than four hundred years ago there lived a diligent man called Sir Thomas Malory, who wrote in English words many of the beautiful Welsh tales about King Arthur's Knights, that the people of Wales loved so well.

All the stories in this little book were found in Malory's big book, except 'Geraint and Enid.' But it, too, is one of the old Welsh tales that tell of the brave knights and fair ladies of King Arthur's court.

Many times, since Sir Thomas Malory wrote his book, have these stories been told again to old and young, but perhaps never before have they been told to the children so simply as in this little book.

MARY MACGREGOR.

Geraint and Enid

Queen Guinevere lay idly in bed dreaming beautiful dreams. The sunny morning hours were slipping away, but she was so happy in dreamland, that she did not remember that her little maid had called her long ago.

But the Queen's dreams came to an end at last, and all at once she remembered that this was the morning she had promised to go to the hunt with King Arthur.

Even in the hunting-field, the King was not quite happy if his beautiful Queen Guinevere were not there. This morning he had waited for her in vain, for in dreamland the Queen had forgotten all about the hunt.

'If I dress quickly, I shall not be very

late,' thought the Queen, as she heard the far-off sound of the hunting-horn. And she was so quick that in a very short time she and her little waiting-maid were out, and riding up to a grassy knoll. But the huntsmen were already far away. 'We will wait here to see them ride homewards,' said the Queen, and they drew up their horses to watch and listen.

They had not waited long, when they heard the sound of horse's hoofs, and turning round, the Queen saw Prince Geraint, one of Arthur's knights. He was unarmed, except that his sword hung at his side. He wore a suit of silk, with a purple sash round his waist, and at each end of the sash was a golden apple, which sparkled in the sunlight.

'You are late for the hunt, Prince Geraint,' said the Queen.

'Like you, I have come, not to join the hunt, but to see it pass,' said the

Prince, bowing low to the beautiful Queen. And he asked to be allowed to wait with her and the little maid.

As they waited, three people, a lady, a knight and a dwarf, came out of the forest, and rode slowly past. The knight had his helmet off, and the Queen saw that he looked young and bold.

'I cannot remember if he is one of Arthur's knights. I must know his name,' she said. And she sent her little maid to find out who the strange knight was.

But when the little maid asked the dwarf his master's name, the dwarf answered rudely that he would not tell her.

'Then I will ask your master himself,' said the maid. But as she stepped towards the knight, the dwarf struck her with his whip, and the little maid, half-angry and half-frightened, hurried back to the Queen, and told her how the dwarf had

treated her.

Prince Geraint was angry when he heard how rude the dwarf had been to the Queen's little messenger, and said that he would go and find out the knight's name.

But the dwarf, by his master's orders, treated the Prince as rudely as he had treated the little maid. When Geraint felt the dwarf's whip strike his cheek, and saw the blood dropping on to his purple sash, he felt for the sword at his side. Then he remembered that while he was tall and strong, the dwarf was small and weak, and he scorned to touch him.

Going back to the Queen, Geraint told her that he had not been able to find out the knight's name either, 'but with your leave, I will follow him to his home, and compel him to ask your pardon,' said the Prince. And the Queen allowed him to follow the knight.

'When you come back, you will perhaps bring a bride with you,' said the Queen. 'If she be a great lady, or if she be only a beggar-maid, I will dress her in beautiful robes, and she shall stand among the fairest ladies of my court.'

'In three days I shall come back, if I am not slain in battle with the knight,' said Geraint. And he rode away, a little sorry not to hear the merry sound of the hunter's horn, and a little vexed that he had undertaken this strange adventure.

Through valleys and over hills Geraint followed the lady, the knight and the dwarf, till at last, in the evening, he saw them go through the narrow streets of a little town, and reach a white fortress. Into this fortress the lady, the knight and the dwarf disappeared.

'I shall find the knight there tomorrow,' thought Geraint. 'Now I must go to an inn for food and a bed,' for he

was hungry and tired after his long ride.

But all the inns in the little town were full, and every one seemed too busy to take any notice of the stranger.

'Why is there such a bustle in your town this evening?' asked Geraint, first of one person and then of another. But they hurried past him, muttering, 'The Sparrow-hawk has his tournament here to-morrow.'

'The Sparrow-hawk! that is a strange name,' thought Geraint. But he did not know that this was one of the names of the knight he had followed so far.

Soon Geraint reached a smithy, and he looked in, and saw that the smith was busy sharpening swords and spears. 'I will go in and buy arms,' thought Geraint.

And because the smith saw that the stranger was dressed like a Prince, he stopped his work for a moment to speak to him.

'Arms?' he said, when Geraint told him what he wanted. 'There are no arms to spare, for the Sparrow-hawk holds his tournament here to-morrow.'

'The Sparrow-hawk again!' thought Geraint. 'I wonder who he can be.' Then, he turned to the smith again and said, 'Though you cannot give me arms, perhaps you can tell me where to find food and a bed.'

'The old Earl Yniol might give you shelter. He lives in that half-ruined castle across the bridge,' said the smith. And he turned again to his work, muttering, 'Those who work for the Sparrow-hawk have no time to waste in talk.'

So Geraint rode wearily on across the bridge and reached the castle. The courtyard was quite empty and looked very dreary, for it was all overgrown with weeds and thistles. At the door of the half-ruined castle stood the old Earl.

'It is growing late. Will you not come in and rest,' said Earl Yniol, 'although the castle be bare, and the fare simple?'

And Geraint said he would like to stay there, for he was so hungry that the plainest food would seem a feast.

As he entered the castle, he heard some one singing. The song was so beautiful, and the voice was so pure and clear, that Geraint thought it was the sweetest song in all the world, and the old castle seemed less gloomy as he listened.

Then Earl Yniol led Geraint into a long low room, and this room was both dining-room and kitchen.

The Earl's wife sat there, and she wore a dress that must have been very grand once, but now it was old.

Beside her stood her beautiful daughter, and she wore a faded silk gown, but Geraint thought he had never seen so fair a face.

'This is the maiden who sang the beautiful song,' he thought. 'If I can win her for my bride, she shall come back with me to Queen Guinevere. But the brightest silks the Queen can dress her in, will not make her look more fair than she does in this old gown,' he murmured to himself.

'Enid,' said the Earl, 'take the stranger's horse to the stable, and then go to the town and buy food for supper.'

Geraint did not like the beautiful girl to wait on him, and he got up eagerly to help her.

'We are poor, and have no servants, but we cannot let our guest wait upon himself,' said the Earl proudly. And Geraint had to sit down, while Enid took his horse to the stall, and went across the bridge to the little town to buy meat and cakes for supper.

And as the dining-room was the



BESIDE·HER·STOOD·HER·BEAUTIFUL·DAUGHTER

kitchen too, Geraint could watch Enid as she cooked the food and set the table.

At first it grieved him that she should work at all, but afterwards he thought, 'She touches everything with such grace and gentleness, that the work grows beautiful under her white hands.'

And when supper was ready, Enid stood behind, and waited, and Geraint almost forgot that he was very hungry, as he took the dishes from her careful hands.

When supper was over, Geraint turned to the Earl. 'Who is this Sparrow-hawk of whom all the townspeople chatter? Yet if he should be the knight of the white fortress, do not tell me his real name. That I must find out for myself.' And he told the Earl that he was Prince Geraint, and that he had come to punish the knight, because he allowed his dwarf to be so rude to the Queen's messengers.

The Earl was glad when he heard his guest's name. 'I have often told Enid of your noble deeds and wonderful adventures,' he said, 'and when I stopped, she would call to me to go on. She loves to hear of the noble deeds of Arthur's knights. But now I will tell you about the Sparrow-hawk. He lives in the white fortress, and he is my nephew. He is a fierce and cruel man, and when I would not allow him to marry Enid, he hated me, and made the people believe I was unkind to him. He said I had stolen his father's money from him. And the people believed him,' said the Earl, 'and were full of rage against me. One evening, just before Enid's birthday, three years ago, they broke into our home, and turned us out, and took away all our treasures. Then the Sparrow-hawk built himself the white fortress for safety, but us he keeps in this old half-ruined castle.'

'Give me arms,' said Geraint, 'and I will fight this knight in to-morrow's tournament.'

'Arms I can give you,' said the Earl, 'though they are old and rusty; but you cannot fight to-morrow.' And the Earl told Geraint that the Sparrow-hawk gave a prize at the tournament. 'But every knight who fights to-morrow must have a lady with him,' said the Earl, 'so that if he wins the prize in fair fight from the Sparrow-hawk, he may give it to her. But you have no lady to whom you could give the prize, so you will not be allowed to fight.'

'Let me fight as your beautiful Enid's knight,' said Geraint. 'And if I win the prize for her, let me marry her, for I love her more than any one else in all the world.' Then the Earl was pleased, for he knew that if the Prince took Enid away, she would go to a beautiful home. And

though the old castle would be more dreary than ever without her, he loved his fair daughter too well to wish to keep her there.

'Her mother will tell Enid to be at the tournament to-morrow,' said the Earl, 'if she be willing to have you as her knight.'

And Enid was willing. And when she slept that night she dreamed of noble deeds and true knights, and always in her dream the face of each knight was like the face of Prince Geraint.

Early in the morning Enid woke her mother, and together they went through the meadows to the place where the tournament was to be held.

And the Earl and Geraint followed, and the Prince wore the Earl's rusty arms, but in spite of these, every one could see that he was a Prince.

A great many lords and ladies and all the townspeople came to see the tourna-

ment.

Then the Sparrow-hawk came to the front of the great crowd, and asked if any one claimed his prize. And he thought, 'No one here is brave enough to fight with me.'

But Geraint was brave, and he called out loudly, 'I claim the prize for the fairest lady in the field.' And he glanced at Enid in her faded silk dress.

Then, in a great rage, the Sparrow-hawk got ready for the fight with Enid's champion, and they fought so fiercely that three times they broke their spears. Then they got off their horses, and fought with their swords. And the lords and ladies and all the townspeople marvelled that Geraint was still alive, for the Sparrow-hawk's sword flashed like lightning round the Prince's head.

But Geraint, because he was fighting for the Queen, and to win the gracious

Enid for his bride, brought down his sword with all his strength on the Sparrow-hawk's helmet. The blow brought the knight to the ground, and Geraint put his foot on him, and demanded his name.

And all the pride of the Sparrow-hawk was gone because Enid had seen his fall, and he quickly told Geraint his name was Edyrn.

'I will spare your life,' said Geraint, 'but you must go to the Queen and ask her to forgive you, and you must take the dwarf with you. And you must give back to Earl Yniol his earldom and all his treasures.'

Edyrn went to the Queen and she forgave him; and he stayed at the court and grew ashamed of his rough and cruel deeds. At last he began to fight for King Arthur, and lived ever after as a true knight.

When the tournament was over, Geraint took the prize to Enid, and asked her if she would be his bride, and go to the Queen's court with him the next day. And Enid was glad, and said she would go.

In the early morning, Enid lay thinking of her journey. 'I have only my faded silk dress to wear,' she sighed, and it seemed to her shabbier and more faded than ever, as it hung there in the morning light. 'If only I had a few days longer, I would weave myself a dress. I would weave it so delicately that when Geraint took me to the Queen, he would be proud of it,' she thought. For in her heart she was afraid that Geraint would be ashamed of the old faded silk, when they reached the court.

And her thoughts wandered back to the evening before her birthday, three long years ago. She could never forget

that evening, for it was then that their home had been sacked. Then she thought of the morning of that day when her mother had brought her a beautiful gift. It was a dress, made all of silk, with beautiful silk flowers woven into it. If only she could have worn that, but the robbers had taken it away.

But what had happened? Enid sat up and rubbed her eyes. For at that moment her mother came into the room, and over her arm was the very dress Enid had been thinking of.

'The colours are as bright as ever,' said the mother, touching the silk softly. And she told Enid how last night their scattered treasures had been brought back, and how she had found the dress among them.

'I will wear it at once,' said Enid, a glad look in her eyes. And with loving hands her mother helped her to put on

the old birthday gift.

Downstairs the Earl was telling Geraint that last night the Sparrow-hawk had sent back all their treasures. 'Among them is one of Enid's beautiful dresses. At last you will see her dressed as a Princess,' said the Earl gladly.

But Geraint remembered that he had first seen and loved Enid in the faded gown, and he thought, 'I will ask her to wear it again to-day for my sake.'

And Enid loved the Prince so dearly, that when she heard his wish, she took off the beautiful dress she had been so glad to wear, and went down to him in the old silk gown. And when Geraint saw Enid, the gladness in his face made her glad too, and she forgot all about the old dress.

All that day Queen Guinevere sat in a high tower and often glanced out of the window to look for Geraint and his bride.

When she saw them riding along the white road, she went down to the gate herself to welcome them. And when the Queen had dressed Enid in soft and shining silk, all the court marvelled at her beauty.

But because Geraint had first seen and loved her in the old faded silk, Enid folded it up with care and put it away among the things she loved.

And a feast was made for the wedding day, and in great joy Geraint and Enid were married.

Day by day Geraint loved his wife more dearly. And Enid was happy in this strange new life, and she wondered at the merry lords and ladies, and she loved the beautiful Queen, who was so kind to her.

And Geraint was glad that Enid was often with the Queen, till one day he heard some people say that though the Queen was very beautiful, she was not

good. And Geraint heard this so often, that he learned to believe it.

'I must take Enid away from the court,' he thought, 'for she worships the Queen and may grow like her.'

So Geraint went to King Arthur, and asked to be allowed to go to his own country. He told the King that robbers trampled down his cornfields, and carried away his cattle. 'I wish to go and fight these robbers,' he said. And King Arthur allowed him to go.

And Enid left the Queen and the lords and ladies gladly, to go with Geraint.

But all the time Geraint could not help thinking, 'Enid is longing for the knights and ladies she knew at the court.'

When Geraint reached his own country, he forgot all about the robbers, who were destroying his land. He forgot to go to the hunt, or the tournament, or

to look after the poor people. And this was all because he loved Enid so much. He thought, 'I will stay with her all day. I will be so kind to her that she will forget the gay lords and ladies, and be happy here, alone with me.'

But Enid grew sadder and paler every day. She did not wish Geraint to wait on her and forget every one else. She wanted him to be a true knight.

And the people began to scoff and jeer whenever Geraint's name was spoken. 'The Prince is no knight,' they said. 'The robbers spoil his land and carry off his cattle, but he neither cares nor fights. He does nothing but wait on the fair Lady Enid.'

Enid knew what the people said, and she thought, 'I must tell Geraint, and then surely he will be ashamed, and become a brave knight once more.' But always her courage failed.

'I think I could buckle on his armour and ride with him to battle,' thought Enid, 'but how can I tell him he is no worthy knight?'

And her tears fell fast, and Geraint coming in, saw her weeping, and thought, 'She weeps for the gay lords and ladies of Arthur's court.'

Then all at once he hated his idle life. 'It has only made Enid despise me,' he thought. 'We will go together into the wilderness, and I will show her I can still fight.' And half in anger and half in sadness he called for his war-horse.

Then Geraint told Enid to put on her oldest dress and ride with him into the wilderness. And because he was angry with himself for thinking that Enid wept for the gay knights and ladies at Arthur's court, he would not ride with her, but told her to go on in front, and 'whatever you see or hear, do not speak to me,' he

said sternly.

Then Enid remembered the old faded silk gown. 'I will wear that, for he loved me in it,' she thought.

Through woods and swamps Enid and Geraint rode in silence. And while Enid's heart cried, 'Why is Geraint angry with me?' her eyes were busy glancing into every bush and corner, in case robbers should attack her lord.

At last in the shadow of some trees, Enid saw three tall knights. They were armed, and she heard them whisper, when they saw Geraint, 'This is a craven-looking knight. We will slay him, and take his armour and his maiden.'

And Enid thought, 'Even if it makes Geraint angry, I must tell him what the knights say, or they will attack him before he knows they are there.' And Enid turned back. Geraint frowned as he saw her coming to speak to him, but Enid said


THROUGH WOODS AND SWAMPS ENID AND GERAINT RODE IN SILENCE
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bravely, 'There are three knights in front of us. They say they will fight with you.'

'I do not want your warning,' said Geraint roughly, 'but you shall see I can fight.'

Sad and pale, Enid watched the three knights spring suddenly out of their ambush and attack her lord.

But Geraint threw his spear at the tallest knight, and it pierced his breast. Then with two sword thrusts, he stunned the other two.

Geraint dismounted, and took the armour of the three fallen knights, and tied it round their horses. Twining the three bridle reins into one, he gave it to Enid.

'Drive these horses in front, and whatever you see or hear, do not speak to me,' said Geraint. But he rode a little nearer Enid than before, and that made her glad.

Soon they came to a wood, and in the wood Enid again saw three knights. One was taller and looked stronger than Geraint, and Enid trembled as she looked at him.

'The knight hangs his head, and the horses are driven by a girl,' she heard them mutter. 'We will kill the knight, and take his damsel and his horses for ourselves.'

'Surely,' thought Enid, 'I may warn Geraint this time, for he is faint and tired after the last battle.'

And Enid waited till Geraint rode up to her, and told him there were three evil men in front of them. 'One is stronger than you,' she said, 'and he means to kill you.'

And Geraint answered angrily, 'If you would but obey me, I would fight one hundred knights gladly.' Yet Geraint loved Enid all the time, though he spoke

so roughly.

Then Enid stood out of the way, and she hardly dared to look as the strongest knight attacked Geraint. But Geraint hurled his spear through the strong knight's armour, and he fell over and died.

The other two knights came slowly towards Geraint, but he shouted his battle-cry, and they turned and fled. But Geraint caught them, and killed them.

Again Geraint tied the armour of the three slain knights round their horses. Then he twisted the three reins together, and handed them to Enid.

'Drive these on in front,' said Geraint. And now Enid had six horses to drive, and Geraint saw that they were difficult to manage. Then he rode nearer Enid.

They had left the wood behind them now, and were riding through cornfields, where reapers were busy cutting down

the waving corn.

Coming down the path towards them, they saw a fair-haired boy. He was carrying food to the reapers. Geraint thought Enid looked faint, and he was very hungry, so he stopped the lad and asked for food.

'I can give you some of this; it is the reapers' dinner,' said the boy. 'But it is coarse and plain food,' and he glanced doubtfully at the lady with the sad eyes and her stern-looking knight.

But Geraint thanked him, and took the food to Enid. And to please him she ate a little, but Geraint was so hungry that he finished all the reapers' dinner.

'I will reward you,' said Geraint, for the lad was dismayed to find nothing left for the reapers to eat. And he told him to take one of the horses, with the suit of armour bound round it.

Then the boy was full of glee, and

thought himself a knight, as he led the horse away.

Geraint and Enid then went to the little village near the cornfields, and lodged there for one night.

The country they were in belonged to a cruel Earl. He had once wanted to marry Enid. When he heard that she was in his country, he made up his mind to kill Geraint, and make Enid marry him after all.

'I will go to the inn while they are still asleep,' thought the Earl, 'and kill the knight and take Enid away.'

But Geraint and Enid had got up very early that morning, and had left the five horses and the five suits of armour with the landlord, to pay him for their food and shelter.

By the time the Earl reached the inn Geraint and Enid had ridden a long way into a wild country.

Then the wicked Earl galloped after them, and Enid heard the sound of horse's hoofs coming nearer and nearer. As the horseman dashed down upon Geraint, Enid hid her face, and asked God to spare her dear lord's life once more.

The fight was long and fierce, but at last Geraint overthrew the Earl, and left him lying half-dead in the dust.

Still a little in front, Enid rode silently on, and Geraint followed, but he had been wounded in the fight with the Earl, though he did not tell Enid. And the wound bled inside his armour, till Geraint felt very faint, and suddenly everything seemed black in front of him. He reeled and fell from his horse on to a bank of grass.

Enid heard the crash of his armour as he fell, and in a moment she was beside him. She unbuckled the armour and took

off his helmet. Then she took her veil of faded silk and bound up his wound. But Geraint lay quite still.

Enid's horse wandered into a forest and was lost, but Geraint's noble war-horse kept watch with Enid, as if he understood.

About noon, the Earl, in whose country they now were, passed along with his followers. He saw the two by the way-side, and shouted to Enid, 'Is he dead?'

'No, no, not dead; he cannot be dead. Let him be carried out of the sun,' she entreated.

And Enid's great sorrow, and her great beauty, made the Earl a little less rough, and he told his men to carry Geraint to the hall. 'His charger is a noble one, bring it too,' shouted the Earl.

His men unwillingly carried Geraint to the hall, and laid him down on a

stretcher there, and left him.

Enid bent over him, chafing his cold hands, and calling him to come back to her.

After a long time Geraint opened his eyes. He saw Enid tenderly watching him, and he felt Enid's tears dropping on his face. 'She weeps for me,' he thought; but he did not move, but lay there as if he were dead.

In the evening the Earl came into the great hall and called for dinner, and many knights and ladies sat down with him, but no one remembered Enid. But when the Earl had finished eating and drinking, his eye fell on her. He remembered how she had wept for her wounded lord in the morning.

'Do not weep any more, but eat and be merry. Then I will marry you, and you shall share my earldom, and I will hunt for you,' said the wild Earl.

Enid's head drooped lower, and she murmured, 'Leave me alone, I beseech you, for my lord is surely dead.'

The Earl hardly heard what she said, but thought Enid was thanking him. 'Yes, eat and be glad,' he repeated, 'for you are mine.'

'How can I ever be glad again?' said Enid, thinking, 'Surely Geraint is dead.'

But the Earl was growing impatient. He seized her roughly, and made her sit at the table, and he put food before her, shouting, 'Eat.'

'No,' said Enid, 'I will not eat, till my lord arises and eats with me.'

'Then drink,' said the Earl, and he thrust a cup to her lips.

'No,' said Enid, 'I will not drink, till my lord arises and drinks with me; and if he does not arise, I will not drink wine till I die.'

The Earl strode up and down the hall

in a great rage. 'If you will neither eat nor drink, will you take off this old faded dress?' said the Earl. And he told one of his women to bring Enid a robe, which had been woven across the sea, and which was covered with many gems.

But Enid told the Earl how Geraint had first seen and loved her in the dress she wore, and how he had asked her to wear it when he took her to the Queen. 'And when we started on this sad journey, I wore it again, to win back his love,' she said, 'and I will never take it off till he arises and bids me.'

Then the Earl was angry. He came close to Enid, and struck her on the cheek with his hand.

And Enid thought, 'He would not have dared to strike me, if he had not known that my lord was truly dead,' and she gave a bitter cry.

When Geraint heard Enid's cry, with

one bound he leaped to where the huge Earl stood, and with one swing of his sword cut off the Earl's head, and it fell down and rolled along the floor.

Then all the lords and ladies were afraid, for they had thought Geraint was dead, and they fled, and Geraint and Enid were left alone.

And Geraint never again thought that Enid loved the gay lords and ladies at King Arthur's court better than she loved him.

Then they went back to their own land. And soon the people knew that Prince Geraint had come back a true knight, and the old whispers that he was a coward faded away, and the people called him 'Geraint the Brave.'

And her ladies called Enid, 'Enid the Fair,' but the people on the land called her 'Enid the Good.'

Lancelot and Elaine

Her name was Elaine. But she was so fair that her father called her 'Elaine the Fair,' and she was so lovable that her brothers called her 'Elaine the Lovable,' and that was the name she liked best of all.

The country people, who lived round about the castle of Astolat, which was Elaine's home, had another and a very beautiful name for her. As she passed their windows in her white frock, they looked at the white lilies growing in their gardens, and they said, 'She is tall and graceful and pure as these,' and they called her the 'Lily Maid of Astolat.'

Elaine lived in the castle alone with her father and her two brothers, and an old dumb servant who had waited on her

since she was a baby.

To her father Elaine seemed always a bright and winsome child, though she was growing up now. He would watch her serious face as she listened to Sir Torre, the grave elder brother, while he told her that wise maidens stayed at home to cook and sew. And he would laugh as he saw her, when Sir Torre turned away, run off wilfully to the woods.

Elaine spent long happy days out of doors with her younger brother Lavaine. When they grew tired of chasing the butterflies and gathering the wildflowers, they would sit under the pine-trees and speak of Arthur's knights and their noble deeds, and they longed to see the heroes of whom they talked.

'And the tournament will be held at Camelot this year,' Lavaine reminded his sister. 'If some of the knights ride past

Astolat, we may see them as they pass.' And Elaine and Lavaine counted the days till the tournament would begin.

Now Arthur had offered the prize of a large diamond to the knight who fought most bravely at the tournament.

But the knights murmured to each other, 'We need not hope to win the prize, for Sir Lancelot will be on the field, and who can stand before the greatest knight of Arthur's court?'

And the Queen heard what the knights said to each other, and she told Lancelot how they lost courage and hope when he came on to the field. 'They begin to think some magic is at work when they see you, and they cannot fight their best. But I have a plan. You must go to the tournament at Camelot in disguise. And though the knights do not know with whom they fight, they will still fall before the strength of Lancelot's

arm,' added the Queen, smiling up to him.

Then Lancelot disguised himself, and left the court and rode towards Camelot. But when he was near Astolat he lost his way, and wandered into the old castle grounds, where Elaine stood, with her father and brothers.

And as Elaine's father, the old Baron, welcomed the knight, Lavaine and Elaine whispered together, 'This is better than to see many knights passing on their way to Camelot.'

And Lancelot stayed at Astolat till evening, and he told many tales of Arthur's court.

As Elaine and Lavaine listened to his voice, and looked at his face, with the scars of many battles on it, they loved him. 'I will be his squire and follow him,' thought Lavaine, and Elaine wished that she might follow the strange knight too.

But Sir Torre, the grave elder brother, looked gloomily at the stranger, and wished he had not come to Astolat.

In the evening Sir Lancelot told the Baron how he was going in disguise to the tournament, and how, by mistake, he had brought his own shield with him. 'If you can lend me another, I will leave my shield with you till I come back from Camelot,' said the knight.

Then they gave him Sir Torre's shield, for Sir Torre had been wounded in his first battle, and could not go to the tournament. And Elaine came running gladly to take the strange knight's shield under her care. But none of them knew that it was Sir Lancelot's shield, for he had not told them his name.

And Elaine, carrying the shield with her, climbed the tower stair, up to her own little room. And she put the shield carefully into a corner, thinking, 'I will

sew a cover for it, to keep it safe and bright.' Then she went downstairs again, and saw that the knight was going, and that Lavaine was going too.

'He has asked the knight to take him as his squire,' she thought. 'But although I cannot go,' she murmured sadly, 'I can ask him to wear my favour at the tournament.' For in those days a knight often wore the colours of the lady who loved him.

Very shyly Elaine told the knight her wish. Would he wear her favour at the tournament? It was a red sleeve, embroidered with white pearls.

Lancelot thought how fair Elaine was, as she looked up at him with love and trust in her eyes, but he told her gently that he had never yet worn a lady's favour, and that he could not wear hers.

'If you have never worn one before, wear this,' she urged timidly. 'It will make

your disguise more complete.' And Lancelot knew that what she said was true, and he took the red sleeve embroidered with pearls, and tied it on his helmet.

So Elaine was glad, and after the knight and Lavaine had ridden away, she went up the turret stair again to her little room. She took the shield from the corner, and handled the bruises and dints in it lovingly, and made pictures to herself of all the battles and tournaments it had been through with her knight.

Then Elaine sat down and sewed, as Sir Torre would have wise maidens do. But what she sewed was a beautiful cover for the shield, and that Sir Torre would not have her do, for he cared neither for the strange knight nor his shield.

Lancelot rode on towards Camelot, with Lavaine as his squire, till they came to a wood where a hermit lived. And they stayed at the hermitage all night, and the

next morning they rode on till they reached Camelot.

And when Lavaine saw the King sitting on a high throne, ready to judge which knight was worthy to have the diamond, he did not think of the grandeur of the throne, nor of the King's marvellous dress of rich gold, nor of the jewels in his crown. He could think only of the nobleness and beauty of the great King's face, and wish that his fair sister Elaine might see him too.

Then many brave knights began to fight, and all wondered why Sir Lancelot was not there. And they wondered more at the strange knight, with the bare shield and the red sleeve with pearls on his helmet, who fought so bravely and overthrew the others one by one.

And the King said, 'Surely this is Sir Lancelot himself.' But when he saw the lady's favour on the knight's helmet, he

said, 'No, it cannot be Sir Lancelot.'

When at last the tournament was over, the King proclaimed that the strange knight who wore the red sleeve embroidered with pearls had won the prize, and he called him to come to take the diamond.

But no one came, and the knight with the red sleeve was nowhere to be seen. For Sir Lancelot had been wounded in his last fight, and when it was over, had ridden hastily from the field, calling Lavaine to follow. And when they had ridden a little way into the wood, Sir Lancelot fell from his horse. 'The head of the spear is still in my side,' he moaned; 'draw it out, Lavaine.'

At first Lavaine was afraid, for he thought of the pain it would give the knight, and he was afraid too that the wound would bleed till his knight bled to death. But because Sir Lancelot was in

great suffering, Lavaine at last took courage, and pulled the head of the spear out of Lancelot's side. Then he, with great difficulty, helped the knight on to his horse, and slowly and painfully they rode towards the hermitage.

They reached it at last, and the hermit came out and called two of his servants to carry the knight into his cell; and they unarmed him and put him to bed. Then the hermit dressed the knight's wound and gave him wine to drink.

When King Arthur found the strange knight had disappeared, and heard that he was wounded, he said that the prize should be sent to so gallant a victor. 'He was tired and wounded, and cannot have ridden far,' said the King. And turning to Sir Gawaine, he gave him the diamond, and told him to go and find the knight and give him the prize he had won so bravely.

But Sir Gawaine did not want to obey the King. He did not want to leave the feasting and merriment that followed the tournament. Yet since all Arthur's knights had taken a vow of obedience, Gawaine was ashamed not to go, so sulkily, like no true knight, he left the feast.

And Sir Gawaine rode through the wood and past the hermitage where the wounded knight lay; and because he was thinking only of his own disappointment, his search was careless, and he did not see the shelter Sir Lancelot had found. He rode on till he came to Astolat. And when Elaine and her father and her brother Sir Torre saw the knight, they called to him to come in and tell them about the tournament, and who had won the prize.

Then Sir Gawaine told how the knight with the red sleeve embroidered

with white pearls had gained the prize, but how, being wounded, he had ridden away without claiming it. He told too how the King had sent him to find the unknown knight and to give him the diamond.

But because Elaine was very fair, and because he did not greatly wish to do the order of the King, Sir Gawaine lingered there, wandering in the old castle garden, with 'the Lily Maid of Astolat.' And he told Elaine courtly tales of lords and ladies, and tried to win her love, but she cared for no one but the knight whose shield she guarded.

One day, as Elaine grew impatient with the idle Sir Gawaine, she said she would show him the shield the strange knight had left with her. 'If you know the arms engraved on the shield, you will know the name of the knight you seek, and perhaps find him the sooner,' she

said.

And when Sir Gawaine saw the shield he cried, 'It is the shield of Sir Lancelot, the noblest knight in Arthur's court.'

Elaine touched the shield lovingly, and murmured, 'The noblest knight in Arthur's court.'

'You love Sir Lancelot, and will know where to find him,' said Sir Gawaine. 'I will give you the diamond, and you shall fulfil the King's command.'

And Sir Gawaine rode away from Astolat, kissing the hands of the fair Elaine, and leaving the diamond with her. And when he reached the court he told the lords and ladies about the fair maid of Astolat who loved Sir Lancelot. 'He wore her favour, and she guards his shield,' he said.

But when the King heard that Sir Gawaine had come back, without finding

the strange knight, and leaving the diamond with the fair maid of Astolat, he was displeased. 'You have not served me as a true knight,' he said gravely; and Sir Gawaine was silent, for he remembered how he had lingered at Astolat.

When Elaine took the diamond from Sir Gawaine she went to her father. 'Let me go to find the wounded knight and Lavaine,' she said. 'I will nurse the knight as maidens nurse those who have worn their favours.' And her father let her go.

With the grave Sir Torre to guard her, Elaine rode into the wood, and near the hermitage she saw Lavaine.

'Take me to Sir Lancelot,' cried the Fair Elaine. And Lavaine marvelled that she knew the knight's name.

Then Elaine told her brother about Sir Gawaine, and his careless search for Lancelot, and she showed him the diamond she brought for the wounded

knight.

'Take me to him,' she cried again. And as they went, Sir Torre turned and rode gloomily back to Astolat, for it did not please him that the Fair Elaine should love Sir Lancelot.

When Lavaine and Elaine reached the hermitage, the hermit welcomed the fair maid, and took her to the cell where Lancelot lay.

'The knight is pale and thin,' said Elaine; 'I will nurse him.'

Day by day and for many nights Elaine nursed him tenderly as a maiden should, till at last one glad morning the hermit told her she had saved the knight's life.

Then when Sir Lancelot grew stronger, Elaine gave him the diamond, and told him how the King had sent him the prize he had won so hardly. And Lancelot grew restless, and longed to be

at the King's court once more.

When the knight was able to ride, he went back to Astolat with Elaine and Lavaine. And as he rested there, he thought, 'Before I go, I must thank the Lily Maid, and reward her for all she has done for me.'

But when he asked Elaine how he could reward her, she would answer only that she loved him, and wished to go to court with him, as Lavaine would do.

'I cannot take you with me,' said the knight courteously; 'but when you are wedded, I will give you and your husband a thousand pounds every year.'

But Elaine wanted nothing but to be with Sir Lancelot.

'My Lily Maid will break her heart,' said her father sadly, 'unless the knight treats her less gently.'

But Sir Lancelot could not be unkind to the maid who had nursed him so

tenderly. Only, next morning when he rode away, carrying his shield with him, though he knew Elaine watched him from her turret window, he neither looked up nor waved farewell. And Elaine knew she would never see Sir Lancelot again.

Then day by day she grew more sad and still. 'She will die,' said her father sadly, as he watched her; and the grave Sir Torre sobbed, for he loved his sister dearly.

One day Elaine sent for her father to come to her little turret room.

'Promise me that when I die you will do as I wish. Fasten the letter I shall write tightly in my hand, and clothe me in my fairest dress. Carry me down to the river and lay me in the barge, and, alone with our old dumb servant, let me be taken to the palace.'

And her father promised. And when

Elaine died there was great sadness in Astolat.

Then her father took the letter and bound it in her hand, and by her side he placed a lily. And they clothed her in her fairest dress, and carried her down to the river, and laid her in the barge, alone with the old dumb servant.

And the barge floated quietly down the stream, guided by the old dumb man.

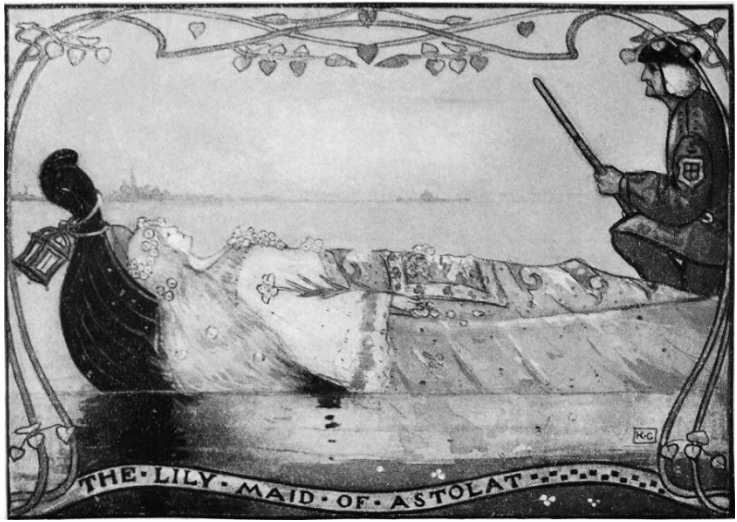
Then when it reached the palace steps, it stopped, and the King and the Queen and all the knights and ladies came to see the strange sight.

And the King took the letter from the fair maid's hand and read it aloud.

'I am the Lily Maid of Astolat, and because Sir Lancelot left me, I make unto all ladies my moan. Pray for my soul.'

When they heard it the lords and ladies wept with pity.

And Sir Lancelot buried Elaine sadly.


THE · LILY · MAID · OF · ASTOLAT

And sometimes when those who loved him were jealous and unkind, he thought tenderly of the pure and simple love of the Lily Maid of Astolat.

Pelleas and Ettarde

Far away in a dreary land there lived a lad called Pelleas. The men were rough and the women grave in the dreary land where Pelleas lived.

To this far-away country there had come tales of the gay lords and ladies of Arthur's court.

Pelleas heard, in great astonishment, that the men in Arthur's country were brave and gentle, and that the women smiled. He would go away from his own land, he thought, and see these strange and happy people.

Soon the rough men in his country laughed at Pelleas, for he began to grow brave and gentle like the knights who were so often in his thoughts.

And the grave women looked at each

other in surprise, as they saw the lad's bright face and caught the smile on his lips. Pelleas had been dreaming about the gay ladies he had heard of, till some of their gladness had passed into his face.

When he was older Pelleas left his country and all the land that belonged to him there. He would take his horse and his sword and ask the great King Arthur to make him one of his knights, for had he not learned knightly ways from the wonderful tales he had heard long ago?

After many days Pelleas reached the court. And when the King had listened to the young man's story, and had seen his beauty and strength, he gladly made him his knight.

Then Pelleas was ready to begin his adventures. He would go to Carleon, where, for three days, the King's tournament was to be held.

The King had promised a golden

circlet and a good sword to the knight who showed himself the strongest. The golden circlet was to be given to the fairest lady in the field, and she was to be called the 'Queen of Beauty.'

On his way to Carleon, Pelleas rode along a hot and dusty road. There were no trees to shelter him from the scorching sun, but he rode on steadfastly, for he knew that a great shady forest lay before him.

When at last Pelleas reached the forest, he was so hot and tired that he dismounted, and tying his horse to a tree, he lay down gratefully under a large oak and fell asleep.

Sounds of laughter and merriment woke him, and opening his eyes he saw a group of maidens close by.

Pelleas was bewildered. Could they be wild woodland nymphs, he thought, as, only half-awake, he lay there, and

watched them flitting in and out among the tall trees.

They wore bright dresses, blue and yellow and purple, and to Pelleas the forest seemed all aglow.

The maidens were talking together, and looking first in one direction and then in another. They were lost in the forest, on their way to the great tournament at Carleon.

Then the lost maidens caught sight of the knight, lying half-asleep under the oak-tree. 'He will be able to show us the way,' they said joyfully to one another, for they guessed that he too was on his way to the tournament.

'I will speak to the knight,' said the Lady Ettarde, the tallest and most beautiful of all the maidens, and she left the others and went towards Pelleas. But when she told the knight that she and her lords and ladies had lost their way,

and asked him to tell her how to reach Carleon, he only looked at her in silence. Was she one of the woodland nymphs? Was he still dreaming, and was she the lady of his dreams?

As the lady still stood there, he roused himself and tried to speak. But because he was bewildered by her beauty, he stammered and answered foolishly.

The Lady Ettarde turned to the merry lords and ladies who had followed her. 'The knight cannot speak, though he is so strong and good-looking,' she said scornfully.

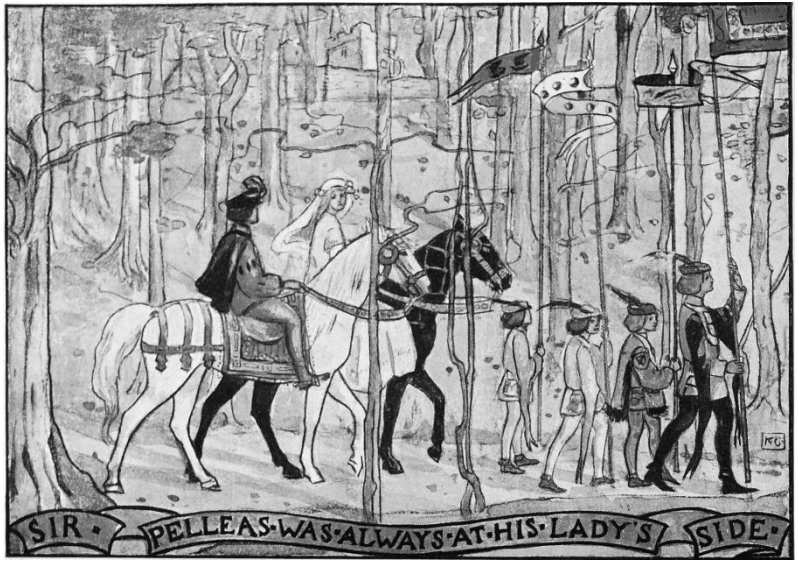
But Sir Pelleas was wide-awake at last. He sprang to his feet, and told the Lady Ettarde that he had been dreaming, and that she had seemed to him a part of his dream. 'But I too am going to Carleon,' he added, 'and I will show you the way.'

And as they rode through the forest

Sir Pelleas was always at his lady's side. When the branches were in her way he pushed them aside, when the path was rough he guided her horse. In the evening when the Lady Ettarde dismounted, Pelleas was there to help her, and in the morning again it was Pelleas who brought her horse and helped her to mount.

Now the Lady Ettarde was a great lady in her own land; knights who had fought many battles and won great fame had served her, and she cared nothing for the young untried knight's love and service.

'Still he looks so strong, that I will pretend to care for him,' she thought, 'and then perhaps he will try to win the golden circlet for me, and I shall be called the "Queen of Beauty."' For the Lady Ettarde was a cruel and vain lady, and cared more for the golden circlet and to be called the 'Queen of Beauty,' than for


SIR · PELLEAS · WAS · ALWAYS · AT · HIS · LADY'S · SIDE ·

the happiness of the young knight Pelleas. And so for many days the Lady Ettarde was kind to Sir Pelleas, and at last she told him that she would love him if he would win the golden circlet for her.

'The lady of my dreams will love me,' the knight murmured. And aloud he said proudly that if there were any strength in his right arm, he would win the prize for the Lady Ettarde.

Then the lords and ladies that were with Ettarde pitied the young knight, for they knew their lady only mocked him.

At last they all reached Carleon, and the next morning the tournament began.

And the Lady Ettarde watched her knight merrily, as each day he overcame and threw from their horses twenty men.

'The circlet will be mine,' she whispered to her lords and ladies. But they looked at her coldly, for they knew how unkindly she would reward Sir Pelleas.

At the end of three days the tournament was over, and King Arthur proclaimed that the young knight Pelleas had won the golden circlet and the sword.

Then in the presence of all the people, Sir Pelleas took the golden circlet and handed it to the Lady Ettarde, saying aloud that she was the fairest lady on the field and the Queen of Beauty.

The Lady Ettarde was so pleased with her prize, that for a day or two she was kind to her knight, but soon she grew tired of him, and wished that she might never see him again.

Still even when she was unkind, Sir Pelleas was happy, for he trusted the beautiful lady, and said to himself, 'She proves me, to see if I really love her.'

But the Lady Ettarde knew she would never love Sir Pelleas, even if he died for her.

Then her ladies were angry, as they

saw how she mocked the knight, for they knew that greater and fairer ladies would have loved Sir Pelleas for his strength and great knightliness.

'I will go back to my own country,' said the Lady Ettarde, 'and see my faithful knight no more.'

When Pelleas heard that the Lady Ettarde was going home he was glad. He remembered the happy days he had spent as they rode together through the forest, and he looked forward to other happy days in the open air, when he could again shield the lady from the roughness of the road.

But when the Lady Ettarde saw that Sir Pelleas was following her into her own country, she was angry.

'I will not have the knight near me,' she said proudly to her ladies. 'I will have an older warrior for my love.' And they knew their lady's cruel ways, and in pity

kept the knight away.

As they rode along the days seemed long to Pelleas, for he neither saw nor spoke to the Lady Ettarde.

When she got near her own castle, she rode on more swiftly, telling her lords and ladies to follow her closely. The drawbridge was down, and the Lady Ettarde rode across it, and waiting only till her lords and ladies crossed it, ordered the bridge to be drawn up, while Pelleas was still on the other side.

The knight was puzzled. Was this a test of his love too, or did the lady for whom he had won the golden circlet indeed not care for him? But that he would not believe. 'She will grow kinder if I am faithful,' he thought, and he lived in a tent beneath the castle walls for many days.

The Lady Ettarde heard that Pelleas still lingered near the castle, and in her

anger she said, 'I will send ten of my lords to fight this knight, and then I shall never see his face again.'

But when Pelleas saw the ten lords coming towards him, he armed himself, and fought so bravely that he overthrew each of them.

But after he had overthrown them, he allowed them to get up and to bind him hand and foot, and carry him into the castle. 'For they will carry me into the presence of the Lady Ettarde,' he thought.

But when she saw Pelleas, the Lady Ettarde mocked him, and told her lords to tie him to the tail of a horse and turn him out of the castle.

'She does it to find out if I love her truly,' thought Sir Pelleas again, as he struggled back to his tent below the castle.

Another ten lords were sent to fight

the faithful knight, and again Pelleas overthrew them, and again he let himself be bound and carried before the Lady Ettarde.

But when she spoke to him even more unkindly than before, and mocked at his love for her, Sir Pelleas turned away. 'If she were good as she is beautiful, she could not be so cruel,' he thought sadly.

And he told her that though he would always love her, he would not try to see her any more.

Now one of King Arthur's knights, called Sir Gawaine, had been riding past the castle when the ten lords attacked Sir Pelleas.

And Sir Gawaine had looked on in dismay. He had seen the knight overthrow the ten lords, and stand there quietly while the conquered men got to their feet. He had seen them bind him

hand and foot, and carry him into the castle.

'To-morrow I will look for him, and offer him my help,' thought Sir Gawaine, for he was sorry for the brave young knight.

The next morning he found Sir Pelleas in his tent, looking very sad. And when Sir Gawaine asked the knight why he was so sad, Sir Pelleas told him of his love for the Lady Ettarde and of her unkindness. 'I would rather die a hundred times than be bound by her lords,' he said, 'if it were not that they take me into her presence.'

Then Sir Gawaine cheered Sir Pelleas and offered to help him, for he too was one of Arthur's knights.

And Sir Pelleas trusted him, for had not all King Arthur's knights taken the vows of brotherhood and truth?

'Give me your horse and armour,'

said Sir Gawaine. 'I will go to the castle with them, and tell the Lady Ettarde that I have slain you. Then she will ask me to come in, and I will talk of your great love and strength, till she learns to love you.'

And Sir Gawaine rode away, wearing the armour and helmet of Sir Pelleas, and promising to come back in three days.

The Lady Ettarde was walking up and down outside the castle, when she saw the knight approaching. 'Sir Pelleas again,' she thought angrily, and turned to go into the castle.

But Sir Gawaine called to her to stay. 'I am not Sir Pelleas, but a knight who has slain him.'

'Take off your helmet that I may see your face,' said the Lady Ettarde, as she turned to look at him.

When she saw that it was really a strange knight, she took him into her castle. 'Because you have slain Sir

Pelleas, whom I hated, I will love you,' said the cruel Lady Ettarde.

Sir Gawaine saw how beautiful the lady was, and he forgot her unkindness to Sir Pelleas, and he loved her. And because he was not a true knight, Sir Gawaine did not think of Pelleas, who waited so anxiously for his return.

Three days passed, but he did not go back, and in the castle all was joy and merriment.

Six days passed, and still Sir Gawaine stayed with the beautiful Lady Ettarde.

At last Sir Pelleas could bear his loneliness no longer. That night he went up to the castle, and swam across the river. When he reached the front of the castle, he saw a great many tents. And all the lords and ladies were asleep in their tents, and Sir Gawaine was there too.

'He has forgotten me, and will stay here always with the Lady Ettarde,'

muttered Sir Pelleas in scorn, and he drew the sword he had won at the tournament, to slay the false knight Sir Gawaine.

Then, all at once, he remembered the vows he had taken, when the great King had knighted him, and slowly he sheathed his sword, and went gloomily down to the river.

But Sir Pelleas could not make up his mind to go away, and again he turned and went back to the tent, where Sir Gawaine lay, still asleep.

Once more Sir Pelleas drew his sword, and laid it across the false knight's bare neck.

When Sir Gawaine woke in the morning, he felt the cold steel, and putting up his hand, he found the sword that Sir Pelleas had left.

Sir Gawaine did not know how the sword had come there, but when he told

the Lady Ettarde what had happened, and showed her the sword, she knew it was the one that Sir Pelleas had won at the tournament, when he had given her the golden circlet.

'You have not slain the knight who loved me,' cried the Lady Ettarde, 'for he has been here, and left his sword across your throat.' And then she hated Gawaine because he had told her a lie, and she drove him from her castle.

And the Lady Ettarde thought of her true knight Sir Pelleas, and at last she loved him with all her heart.

But when he had left his sword across Sir Gawaine's throat, Pelleas had gone sadly back to his tent, and taking off his armour, had lain down to die.

Then the knight's servant was in great distress, because his master would neither eat nor sleep, but lay in his tent getting more pale and more thin day by

day. And the servant was wandering sadly along the bank of the river, wondering how he could help his master, when he met a beautiful maiden called the 'Lady of the Lake.'

The maiden asked why he looked so sad, and, won by her gentleness, he told her how his master had been hated by the Lady Ettarde, and betrayed by the false knight Sir Gawaine.

'Bring me to your master,' said the Lady of the Lake.

And when she had come to the tent and saw Sir Pelleas, she loved him.

'I will send him to sleep,' she murmured, 'and when he wakes he will be well.' And she threw an enchantment over him, and he slept.

When Sir Pelleas awoke, he felt strong once more, and at last he knew that the cruel Lady Ettarde had never been the lady of his dreams, and he loved

her no longer.

But when the Lady Ettarde knew that Sir Pelleas loved her no more, she wept sorrowfully, and died of her grief.

Then the gentle Lady of the Lake asked Pelleas to come with her to her own beautiful Lake-land. And as they rode together, her simple kindness made the knight happy again, and he learned to love the Lady of the Lake, and they lived together and loved each other all their lives long.

Gareth and Lynette

Gareth was a little prince. His home was an old grey castle, and there were great mountains all round the castle. Gareth loved these mountains and his beautiful home at the foot of them. He had lived there all his life.

Gareth had no little boys or girls to play with, for there were no houses near his mountain home.

But Gareth was happy all day long. Sometimes in the bright summer mornings the streams would call to him. Then he would follow them up the mountains, till he found the place where the streams ended in tiny silver threads.

Sometimes the birds and beasts, his woodland friends, would call to him, and then Gareth would wander about in the


SOMETIMES·THE·BIRDS·&·BEASTS·HIS·
·WOODLAND·FRIENDS·WOULD·CALL·TO·HIM

forest with them till evening came. Then he would tell his mother the wonderful things he had seen, and the wonderful things he had heard in the forests and on the mountain-sides.

Gareth's mother, the Queen of Orkney, loved the little prince so much that she was never dull. She had no one to talk to except her little son, for her husband was old, so old that he could not talk to his Queen. And if she talked to him, he was almost too deaf to hear what she said.

But though the Queen was never dull, she was sometimes unhappy. She was afraid that some day, when Gareth was older, he would want to leave her to go into the world, perhaps to go to the great King Arthur's court, as his three brothers had done.

Now Gareth had already heard stories about the brave deeds of King

Arthur's knights. He knew that they were strong men, and that they fought for the weak people, and that they often had great adventures, when they were sent to punish the King's enemies. And Gareth longed to be a man, for 'when I am a man, I will be one of Arthur's knights, too,' he thought.

At last, one day, his mother knew that what she had been afraid of had come to pass. She knew that Gareth would not be content to stay among the mountains much longer. But when he threw his arms round her, and coaxed her to let him go, she thought, 'Surely I can keep him a little longer.' And she said, 'Your father is old, and your brothers have left me, you will not leave me alone, Gareth. You will stay and be a great huntsman and follow the deer.' But all the time her heart whispered, 'He will not stay.'

And Gareth said, 'Let me go, sweet mother. Now I am a man, I must do a man's work. "Follow the deer!" No; now I must follow the King.'

But still his mother would not let him go. 'The next time he asks me, I will try another way,' she thought. And when Gareth came again and pleaded to be allowed to go to the court, she said, 'Yes, you may go, if for one whole year you will tell no one your name, or that you are a prince, and if for that whole year you will go into the King's kitchen and work there.' 'These things will be too difficult for my princely boy,' she thought.

But Gareth wanted to go so much, that he promised not to tell any one his name, nor that he was a prince. 'And I will go to the court, only to work in the King's kitchen for a year,' promised Gareth proudly. And then his mother knew that her plan had failed, and she

wept.

But Gareth was glad. He got up early one morning, and without saying good-bye to his mother, for he could not bear to see her sad face again, he left his mountain home, and went out into the wide world.

When three men, dressed like ploughmen, left the castle, no one would have known that one of them was a prince. For Gareth had left all his beautiful clothes behind him, and was dressed just like the two servants he took with him. But still he was glad, for though he remembered he was going to work in a kitchen, he thought a year would soon pass, and then, perhaps, King Arthur would make him one of his knights.

On a certain day, every year, there was a great feast at Arthur's court. Now the King would not sit down to the feast

till he had heard if any of his people were in trouble, and if they wished one of his knights to go to help them. And on this day too, people could come into the King's presence to ask for any boon or good thing they wished. Gareth reached the court, with his two servants, on one of these feast-days.

'The King will listen to my wish to-day. I will go to him at once,' thought Gareth. And leaning on the shoulders of his servants, so as to look less princely, he came into the large dining-hall.

'Grant me only this boon,' Gareth entreated the King, 'that I may work in your kitchen and eat and drink there for a year. After that I will fight.'

And King Arthur looked at Gareth, and saw that though he leaned on his servants he was tall and strong, and that though he wore rough clothes, he was as noble-looking as any of his knights.

'You ask but a small boon,' said the King. 'Would you not rather serve me as my knight?'

And Gareth longed to say, 'Yes.' But as he could not break the promise he had given to his mother, he said again, that the only boon he asked was to be allowed to work in the King's kitchen.

Then the King sent for Sir Kay, the steward of his kitchen, and told him to make Gareth one of his kitchen-boys. But Sir Kay did not wish this noble-looking lad in his kitchen, and he made fun of him and mocked him, because he would not tell his name, nor where his home was.

But Sir Lancelot, the noblest knight in all the land, was kind to Gareth, and Gareth's brother, Sir Gavaine, who had gone to Arthur's court long ago, was kind to him too. Yet Sir Gavaine did not know that Gareth was his brother, for the little

prince he had left at home looked very different to the King's new kitchen-boy.

In the kitchen Gareth soon began to find out what a difficult task he had undertaken, for the sake of one day being a knight. He ate his meals with rough kitchen-boys, and as Gareth's mother had taught her little prince daintily, he did not like their rough ways; and at night he slept in a shed with dirty kitchen-boys.

And because Sir Kay did not like Gareth, he would bustle and hurry him, and make him work harder than any of the other lads, and give him all the roughest work to do. It was Gareth who had to draw the water and cut the wood, while the other servants played.

But when at last his work was done, Gareth would listen gladly as the servants talked of Lancelot and the King. He loved to hear how Lancelot had twice

saved the King's life, and how since then there had grown up a great friendship between the King and his brave knight.

And Gareth was glad when he heard that though Lancelot was first in all the tournaments or mock battles, yet on the battlefield his hero King was mightiest of all.

But when the servants' talk was rough and rude, Gareth would not listen, but sang some of his old mountain-songs, carolling like any lark, and the servants stopped their talk to listen.

It seemed a long year to Gareth, the longest year in all his life, but at last it came to an end. A whole year had passed, and another of the King's great feast-days had begun.

Gareth woke up on that morning, thinking, 'Now at last I can be one of King Arthur's knights; now at last I am free.'

In the dining-room he sprang eagerly to the King's side. 'A boon, King Arthur, grant me this boon,' he cried, 'that I serve you no longer as a kitchen-page, but as a knight.'

Arthur loved the noble-looking lad, and was pleased with his eagerness. 'I make you my knight, to win glory and honour for our land,' said the King. But the secret of Gareth's knighthood was to be kept from all but Sir Lancelot, till the new knight, Sir Gareth, had won for himself great fame.

'You shall begin at once,' said the King. And he promised Gareth that he should be the first of all his knights to leave his court that day.

As he spoke, a beautiful lady called Lynette came into the hall in great haste. 'A knight to rescue my sister, King Arthur,' she cried.

'Who is your sister, and why does she

need a knight?' asked the King.

And Lynette told Arthur that her sister was called the Lady Lyonors, and that Lyonors was rich and had many castles of her own, but a cruel knight, called the Red Knight, had shut her up in one of her own castles. The name of the castle in which she was a prisoner was Castle Dangerous. And the Red Knight said he would keep Lady Lyonors there, till he had fought King Arthur's bravest knight. Then he would make Lyonors his wife. 'But,' said Lynette, 'my sister will never be the bride of the Red Knight, for she does not love him.'

Then Arthur, looking round his knights, saw Gareth's eyes growing bright, and heard Gareth's voice ringing out, 'Your promise, King.'

And the King said to Gareth, 'Go and rescue the Lady Lyonors from the Red Knight.'

'A kitchen-page go to rescue the Lady Lyonors!' shouted Sir Kay in scorn.

When Lynette heard that, she was angry, and said, 'I came for Sir Lancelot, the greatest of all your knights, and you give me a kitchen-boy.' In her anger, she walked out of the palace gates, and rode quickly down the streets. She neither looked nor waited to see if Gareth followed.

'I will wait for nothing,' thought the new knight, and he hurried after Lynette to the palace gates, but there he was stopped.

Gareth's mother had not forgotten that a year had passed since her boy had left her. In her quiet castle she had been busy planning a surprise for her prince.

'Gareth will be a knight to-day,' she thought. 'I will send our dwarf to him with a noble war-horse and armour fit for a knight. Surely he will begin his adven-

tures the more gladly, that I help to send him forth,' she murmured, thinking half-regretfully of the long year she had made him spend in the kitchen.

And Gareth was glad when he saw his mother's gift; and when he had put on the armour, there was no more handsome knight in all King Arthur's court than Sir Gareth. He mounted his horse, and, telling the dwarf to follow, rode quickly after Lynette.

But Gareth had not gone far, when he heard shouts behind him, and, turning, he saw that Sir Kay was riding after him.

'If it is possible, I will bring my kitchen-boy back again,' thought Sir Kay, 'for he works well.' 'Have you forgotten that I am your master?' he shouted, as he reached Gareth.

'You are no longer my master,' said Gareth, 'and I know that you are the

most unkind of all Arthur's knights.'

Then Sir Kay was so angry that he drew his sword, and Gareth drew his and struck Sir Kay so hard a blow, that he tumbled off his horse, and lay on the ground as if he were dead. Then Gareth took away his old master's sword and shield, and telling the dwarf to take Sir Kay's horse, he once more hurried on to reach Lynette.

Both Lancelot and Lynette had seen Sir Gareth fight with Sir Kay, for the King had asked Sir Lancelot to ride on before Gareth, that he might know if his new knight could use his sword.

When Lancelot had seen Sir Kay fall to the ground, he rode back to the court to tell King Arthur that his knight, Sir Gareth, was strong and true. And he sent men to bring home the wounded Sir Kay.

Now Lynette was more cross than ever because Lancelot had left her, and

when Gareth at last rode up to her, she cried rudely, 'You are only a kitchen-knave. Your clothes smell of cooking, and your dress is soiled with grease and tallow. Ride further off from me.'

But what she said was not true, for Gareth had put on the beautiful armour his mother had sent him.

As Lynette mocked, Gareth rode quietly behind. In spite of her unkindness, he was happy. After the long days spent in the hot kitchen, the forest breeze seemed to touch him more gently than in the old days, and the trees seemed to him more beautiful. But though the streams seemed more clear, they still called to him, just as the streams in his own mountains used to do.

But Gareth had not much time to think of the trees and streams, for suddenly he heard the steps of some one hurrying through the forest, crushing the

fallen twigs and crisp leaves underfoot in his great haste. Was it an adventure?

'Where are you running to?' said Gareth, as a man came in sight.

'O sir, six thieves have fallen upon my lord, and bound him to a tree, and I am afraid they will kill him.'

'Show me where your lord is,' said Gareth. And they rode together to the place where the knight was tied to a tree.

Then Gareth struck the first robber down with his sword, and killed another, and slew the third as he turned to run away.

'There were six thieves,' thought Gareth; but when he turned to look for the other three, they were nowhere to be seen. They had all run away in great fright.

Then Gareth unbound the knight. And the knight was very grateful, and said, 'Come and stay at my castle to-

night, and to-morrow I will reward you.'

'I want no reward,' said Gareth. 'And besides, I must follow this lady.' But when he rode up to Lynette, she said, 'Ride further off, for still you smell of the kitchen. You are no knight, though you killed the robbers.'

Then the knight who had been set free rode up, and asked Lynette to come to his castle, and as it was getting dark in the forest, she was glad to stay with him that night.

At supper-time, the knight put a chair for Gareth beside Lynette.

'Sir Knight, you are wrong to put a kitchen-knave beside me,' said the lady, 'for I am of noble birth.'

'The noble-looking knight a kitchen-knave! What does the lady mean!' But he took Gareth to another table, and sat there himself with him.

The next morning Gareth and

Lynette thanked the knight, and rode on, till they came to another great forest, and at the end of the forest they reached a broad river. There was only one place where the river was narrow and could be crossed, and this passage was guarded by two knights.

'Will you fight two knights,' mocked Lynette, 'or will you turn back again?'

'Six knights would not make me turn back,' said Gareth, as he rushed into the river. One knight rushed in from the further side, and Gareth and he fought with their swords in the middle of the stream. At last Gareth smote him on the helmet so violently that he fell down into the water and was drowned.

Then Gareth spurred his horse up the bank where the other knight stood waiting for him, and this knight fought so fiercely that he broke Gareth's spear. Then they both drew their swords, and

fought for a long time, till in the end Gareth won the victory.

Gareth then crossed over the river again to Lynette, and told her to ride on, for the passage across the river was clear.

'Alas, that a kitchen-page should kill two brave knights!' cried Lynette. 'But do not think your skill killed these men.' And she told Gareth she had seen the horse of the first knight stumble, and that that was why he was drowned. 'And, as for the second knight, you came behind and slew him like a coward,' she said.

'Lady,' said Gareth, 'say what you like; but lead on, and I follow to deliver your sister.' So Gareth and the lady rode on till evening.

In the evening they came to a strange and dreary country, where everything looked black. On one side of a black hawthorn hung a black banner, on the

other side hung a black shield. Beside the shield there was a long black spear, and close to the spear there was a great black horse, covered with silk, and the silk was black. And looking blacker than all the rest was a huge black rock.

Through the darkness they could see some one sitting near the rock. It was a knight, and he was armed in black armour, and his name was 'the Knight of the Black Land.'

Lynette saw the knight. 'Flee down the valley, before the Black Knight saddles his horse,' she called to Gareth. But she knew that even the Black Knight would not frighten her kitchen-knave.

The Black Knight saddled his horse and rode up to them. 'Is this your knight, and has he come to fight me?' he asked Lynette.

'He is only a kitchen-boy, he is no knight of mine,' Lynette answered. And

in a cruel voice she added, 'I wish you could slay him and take him out of my way; but he does wonderful deeds with his sword, and has just slain two knights.'

'If he is no knight, I will take his horse and armour, and let him go. It would be a shame to take his life,' said the Black Knight.

Gareth was very angry when he heard this. 'I am on my way to Castle Dangerous, and I mean to reach it,' he said to the Black Knight. 'And as for my horse and armour, you cannot have them unless you take them from me in fair fight.'

Then they began to fight on foot, and the Black Knight wounded Gareth, but Gareth smote him with such strength, that his sword cut through the knight's armour, and then the Black Knight fell to the ground and died. This was the fiercest fight Gareth had ever fought, and

it lasted for an hour and a half.

Once more Gareth went back to Lynette a conqueror, but still she cried, 'Do not come near me, kitchen-knave. You have slain a noble knight. Let me ride on alone.'

'Whatever happens I will follow you till we reach the Lady Lyonors,' said Gareth.

They were coming near to Castle Dangerous now, but before they reached it, a knight dressed all in green stopped them.

And Gareth fought the Green Knight too. But when he had struck him to the ground, the Green Knight begged Gareth to spare his life.

'It is useless to ask me to spare your life, for you shall die, unless the Lady Lynette asks me to set you free,' said Gareth. And he began to undo the helmet of the Green Knight, as if he

meant to slay him.

'I will never ask a favour of a kitchen-page,' said Lynette haughtily. 'I will never ask you to spare the Green Knight's life.'

'Spare my life,' entreated the Green Knight, 'and I and my thirty followers will serve you for ever.'

'It is useless for you to ask me,' repeated Gareth. 'Only the Lady Lynette can save your life.' And again he lifted his sword, as if to slay the Green Knight.

'You will not slay him, for if you do, you will be sorry,' stammered Lynette, as she saw Gareth's sword coming down to kill the knight.

Gareth heard Lynette's voice, and at once put away his sword, and gave the Green Knight his freedom.

In his gratitude the knight persuaded Gareth and Lynette to stay with him that night, 'and in the morning I will help you

to reach Castle Dangerous,' he said.

That evening at supper-time, Lynette again mocked Gareth. He had never asked her to be more gentle to him, but now he said, 'Mock me no more, for in spite of all your taunts I have killed many knights, and cleared the forests of the King's enemies.'

Now Lynette had begun to feel ashamed of her unkindness, and as she listened to Gareth, and thought how loyally he had served her, she felt sorry that she had been so unkind. And she asked Gareth to forgive her for being so rude.

'I forgive you with all my heart,' said Gareth, and at last they rode on happily side by side.

Then Gareth sent his dwarf on in front to tell Lynette's sister that they were near her castle. And the Lady Lyonors asked the dwarf a great many

questions about his master.

'He is a noble knight and a kind master,' said the dwarf; and he told the lady of all the adventures they had met on their way to her castle. And Lyonors longed to see the knight who had fought so often and so bravely to reach her.

And now there was only the Red Knight between Gareth and the Lady Lyonors.

On the great tree, outside the castle, Gareth saw hanging the bodies of forty knights, with their shields round their necks and their spurs on their heels. As he looked at this terrible sight, Gareth was afraid.

Then Lynette reminded him of all his victories, and of how even the Black Knight had yielded to him. But what encouraged Gareth more than all Lynette said was that, when he looked up to the castle, he saw a beautiful lady at one

of the windows. She smiled and waved her hands to him, and he knew that this was the Lady Lyonors. Then all his courage came back.

'This is the fairest lady I have ever seen,' thought Gareth. 'I ask nothing better than to be allowed to do battle for her, and win her from the Red Knight.'

Outside the castle, hanging on a sycamore tree, was a great horn, made of an elephant's bone, and whoever wished to fight the Red Knight must blow this horn.

Gareth looked again at the window where Lyonors still watched, and hesitating no longer, blew the horn so piercingly and so long, that he woke all the echoes of the wood.

Then the Knight of the Red Lands armed himself in great haste, and his barons brought him a red spear, and a steed covered with red silk. And the Red

Knight rode proudly down into the valley, to slay Gareth, as he had slain the other forty knights.

'Do not look any longer at the castle window,' said the Red Knight roughly to Gareth. 'The Lady Lyonors is mine. I have fought many battles for her.'

'I know that the Lady Lyonors does not love you nor your ways, for they are cruel,' said Gareth, 'and I will rescue her from you, or die.'

'Look at the dead knights on those trees, and beware,' said the Red Knight, 'or soon I will hang your body beside theirs.'

'That is a sight that makes me only more anxious to fight,' said Gareth, 'for you break the rules of all true knights by your cruelty.'

'Talk no more,' said the Red Knight, 'but get ready for the combat.'

Then Gareth told Lynette to go

further off, to a place of safety.

And the two knights smote each other so fiercely in the front of their shields that they both fell off their horses, still holding the reins in their hands. And they lay stunned on the ground so long, that those who were watching from the castle thought their necks were broken.

But after a time, leaving their horses, they fought on foot. And the battle was so rough that great pieces of their shields and armour were knocked off, and left lying on the field.

And they fought till twelve o'clock. But by that time they were so worn out that they staggered about, scarcely knowing where they went, and their wounds bled so much that they were faint.

They fought till evening, and then they both agreed to rest for a little while.

Then Gareth took off his helmet, and looked up to the castle window. And

when he saw the Lady Lyonors looking down at him, with great kindness in her eyes, his heart felt all at once light and glad.

And her kindness made him strong, and he started up quickly and called to the Red Knight to fight, 'and this time to the death,' said Gareth.

In his fury the Red Knight knocked the sword out of Gareth's hand, and before he could get it again, he gave him such a blow on his helmet that Gareth stumbled and fell to the ground.

Then Lynette called out, 'O Gareth, have you lost your courage? My sister weeps and breaks her heart, because her true knight has fallen.'

When Gareth heard that, he got up, and with a great effort leaped to where his sword lay, and caught it in his hand, and began to fight as if he fought a new battle.


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THE·LADY LYONORS·

And his strokes fell so quickly on his foe, that the Red Knight lost his sword and fell to the ground, and Gareth threw himself on him to slay him. But the knight begged piteously for his life.

'Go to the castle and yield your homage to the Lady Lyonors,' said Gareth. 'And if she is willing to pardon you, you are free, after you restore the lands and castles you have taken from her.'

Then the Red Knight gladly restored all he had stolen. And after he had been forgiven by the Lady Lyonors, he journeyed to the court, and told Arthur all that Sir Gareth had done.

And Lynette came and took off Gareth's armour and bathed his wounds, and he rested in his tent for ten days.

'I will go to the castle and ask Lyonors to come home with me and be my wife,' thought Gareth, as soon as his wounds were healed. But when he came

to the castle, he found the drawbridge pulled up, and many armed men were there, who would not let him enter.

'But Lyonors, I must see Lyonors,' thought Gareth. 'Surely she will wish to see me,' and he looked wistfully up to the window, and there beautiful as ever, was his Lady Lyonors.

'I cannot love you altogether,' said Lyonors, 'till you have been King Arthur's knight for another year, and helped to clear the land from his enemies.'

Though he was a good knight, Gareth's heart was heavy as he listened. 'If I do not see Lyonors for a year,' he thought, 'the months will pass more slowly and seem more empty than those long months I spent in the King's kitchen.' But as Gareth was a right loyal knight, he bowed to his lady's will. He had freed the castle from the Red Knight, and now it was open to every one, only

he himself was banished. And he went away sadly but faithfully to find new adventures.

And when Gareth slept in the forests or on the wild mountain-sides, he often dreamed of the day that would come when his year's wanderings were over, when Lyonors would be his wife, and together they would go back to King Arthur's court, and he would at last be known to every one as Sir Gareth and a prince.

He dreamed, too, of the happier day, when he would take the beautiful Lyonors to his mother, and show her the mountain home he loved so well.

Sir Galahad and the Sacred Cup

> 'My strength is as the strength of ten,
> Because my heart is pure,'

sang Galahad gladly. He was only a boy, but he had just been made a knight by Sir Lancelot, and the old abbey, where he had lived all his life, rang with the echo of his song.

Sir Lancelot heard the boy's clear voice singing in triumph. As he stopped to listen, he caught the words,

> 'My strength is as the strength of ten,
> Because my heart is pure,'

and the great knight wished he were a boy again, and could sing that song too.

Twelve nuns lived in the quiet abbey, and they had taught Galahad lovingly and carefully, ever since he had come to

them as a beautiful little child. And the boy had dwelt happily with them there in the still old abbey, and he would be sorry to leave them, but he was a knight now. He would fight for the King he reverenced so greatly, and for the country he loved so well.

Yet when Sir Lancelot left the abbey the next day, Galahad did not go with him. He would stay in his old home a little longer, he thought. He would not grieve the nuns by a hurried farewell.

Sir Lancelot left the abbey alone, but as he rode along he met two knights, and together they reached Camelot, where the King was holding a great festival.

King Arthur welcomed Sir Lancelot and the two knights. 'Now all the seats at our table will be filled,' he said gladly. For it pleased the King when the circle of his knights was unbroken.

Then all the King's household went

to service at the minster, and when they came back to the palace they saw a strange sight.

In the dining-hall the Round Table at which the King and his knights always sat seemed strangely bright.

The King looked more closely, and saw that at one place on this Round Table were large gold letters. And he read, 'This is the seat of Sir Galahad, the Pure-hearted.' But only Sir Lancelot knew that Sir Galahad was the boy-knight he had left behind him in the quiet old abbey.

'We will cover the letters till the Knight of the Pure Heart comes,' said Sir Lancelot; and he took silk and laid it over the glittering letters.

Then as they sat down to table they were disturbed by Sir Kay, the steward of the King's kitchen.

'You do not sit down to eat at this

festival,' Sir Kay reminded the King, 'till you have seen or heard some great adventure.' And the King told his steward that the writing in gold had made him forget his usual custom.

As they waited a squire came hastily into the hall. 'I have a strange tale to tell,' he said. 'As I walked along the bank of the river I saw a great stone, and it floated on the top of the water, and into the stone there has been thrust a sword.'

Then the King and all his knights went down to the river, and they saw the stone, and it was like red marble. And the sword that had been thrust into the stone was strong and fair. The handle of it was studded with precious stones, and among the stones there were letters of gold.

The King stepped forward, and bending over the sword read these words: 'No one shall take me away but he to whom I

belong. I will hang only by the side of the best knight in the world.'

The King turned to Sir Lancelot. 'The sword is yours, for surely there lives no truer knight.'

But Sir Lancelot answered gravely, 'The sword is not mine. It will never hang by my side, for I dare not try to take it.'

The King was sorry that his great knight's courage failed, but he turned to Sir Gawaine and asked him to try to take the sword.

And at first Sir Gawaine hesitated. But when he looked again at the precious stones that sparkled on the handle, he hesitated no longer. But he no sooner touched the sword than it wounded him, so that he could not use his arm for many days.

Then the King turned to Sir Percivale. And because Arthur wished it, Sir Percivale tried to take the sword; but

he could not move it. And after that no other knight dared to touch the fair sword; so they turned and went back to the palace.

In the dining-hall the King and his knights sat down once more at the Round Table, and each knight knew his own chair. And all the seats were filled except the chair opposite the writing in gold.

It had been a day full of surprise, but now the most wonderful thing of ill happened. For as they sat down, suddenly all the doors of the palace shut with a loud noise, but no one had touched the doors. And all the windows were softly closed, but no one saw the hands that closed them.

Then one of the doors opened, and there came in a very old man dressed all in white, and no one knew whence he came.

By his side was a young man in red armour. He had neither sword nor shield, but hanging by his side was an empty sheath.

There was a great silence in the hall as the old man said slowly and solemnly, 'I bring you the young knight Sir Galahad, who is descended from a king. He shall do many great deeds, and he shall see the Holy Grail.'

'He shall see the Holy Grail,' the knights repeated, with awe on their faces.

For far back, in the days of their boyhood, they had heard the story of the Holy Grail. It was the Sacred Cup out of which their Lord had drunk before He died.

And they had been told how sometimes it was seen carried by angels, and how at other times in a gleam of light. But in whatever way it appeared, it was

seen only by those who were pure in heart.

And as the old man's words, 'He shall see the Holy Grail,' fell on their ears, the knights thought of the story they had heard so long ago, and they were sorry, for they had never seen the Sacred Cup, and they knew that it was unseen only by those who had done wrong.

But the old man was telling the boy-knight to follow him. He led him to the empty chair, and lifted the silk that covered the golden letters. 'This is the seat of Sir Galahad, the Pure-hearted,' he read aloud. And the young knight sat in the empty seat that belonged to him.

Then the old man left the palace, and twenty noble squires met him, and took him back to his own country.

When dinner was ended, the King went over to the chair where his boy-knight sat, and welcomed him to the

circle of the Round Table. Afterwards he took Sir Galahad's hand, and led him out of the palace to show him the strange red stone that floated on the river. When Sir Galahad heard how the knights could not draw the sword out of the stone, he knew that this adventure was his.

'I will try to take the sword,' said the boy-knight, 'and place it in my sheath, for it is empty,' and he pointed to his side. Then he laid his hand on the wonderful sword, and easily drew it out of the stone, and placed it in his sheath.

'God has sent you the sword, now He will send you a shield as well,' said King Arthur.

Then the King proclaimed that the next day there would be a tournament in the meadows of Camelot. For before his knights went out to new adventures, he would see Sir Galahad proved.

And in the morning the meadows lay

bright in the sunshine. And the boy-knight rode bravely to his first combat, and over-threw many men; but Sir Lancelot and Sir Percivale he could not overthrow.

When the tournament was over the King and his knights went home to supper, and each sat in his own seat at the Round Table.

All at once there was a loud crashing noise, a noise that was louder than any peal of thunder. Was the King's wonderful palace falling to pieces?

But while the noise still sounded a marvellous light stole into the room, a light brighter than any sunbeam.

As the knights looked at one another, each seemed to the other to have a new glory and a new beauty in his face.

And down the sunbeam glided the Holy Grail. It was the Sacred Cup they had all longed to see. But no one saw it,

for it was invisible to all but the pure-hearted Sir Galahad.

As the strange light faded away, King Arthur heard his knights vowing that they would go in search of the Holy Grail, and never give up the quest till they had found it.

And the boy-knight knew that he too would go over land and sea, till he saw again the wonderful vision.

That night the King could not sleep, for his sorrow was great. His knights would wander into far-off countries, and many of them would forget that they were in search of the Holy Grail. Would they not have found the Sacred Cup one day if they had stayed with their King and helped to clear the country of its enemies?

In the morning the streets of Camelot were crowded with rich and poor. And the people wept as they watched the

knights ride away on their strange quest. And the King wept too, for he knew that now there would be many empty chairs at the Round Table.

The knights rode together to a strange city and stayed there all night. The next day they separated, each going a different way.

Sir Galahad rode on for four days without adventure. At last he came to a white abbey, where he was received very kindly. And he found two knights there, and one was a King.

'What adventure has brought you here?' asked the boy-knight.

Then they told him that in this abbey there was a shield. And if any man tried to carry it, he was either wounded or dead within three days.

'But to-morrow I shall try to bear it,' said the King.

'In the name of God, let me take the

shield,' said Sir Galahad gravely.

'If I fail, you shall try to bear it,' said the King. And Galahad was glad, for he had still no shield of his own.

Then a monk took the King and the young knight behind the altar, and showed them where the shield hung. It was as white as snow, but in the middle there was a red cross.

'The shield can be borne only by the worthiest knight in the world,' the monk warned the King.

'I will try to bear it, though I am no worthy knight,' insisted the King; and he took the shield and rode down into the valley.

And Galahad waited at the abbey, for the King had said he would send his squire to tell the young knight how the shield had protected him.

For two miles the King rode through the valley, till he reached a hermitage.

And he saw a warrior there, dressed in white armour, and sitting on a white horse.

The warrior rode quickly towards the King, and struck him so hard that he broke his armour. Then he thrust his spear through the King's right shoulder, as though he held no shield.

'The shield can be borne only by a peerless knight. It does not belong to you,' said the warrior, as he gave it to the squire, telling him to carry it back to the abbey and to give it to Sir Galahad with his greeting.

'Then tell me your name,' said the squire.

'I will tell neither you nor any one on earth,' said the warrior. And he disappeared, and the squire saw him no more.

'I will take the wounded King to an abbey, that his wounds may be dressed,'

thought the squire.

And with great difficulty the King and his squire reached an abbey. And the monks thought his life could not be saved, but after many days he was cured.

Then the squire rode back to the abbey where Galahad waited. 'The warrior who wounded the King bids you bear this shield,' he said.

Galahad hung the shield round his neck joyfully, and rode into the valley to seek the warrior dressed in white.

And when they met they saluted each other courteously. And the warrior told Sir Galahad strange tales of the white shield, till the knight thanked God that now it was his. And all his life long the white shield with the red cross was one of his great treasures.

Now Galahad rode back to the abbey, and the monks were glad to see him again. 'We have need of a pure

knight,' they said, as they took Sir Galahad to a tomb in the churchyard.

A pitiful noise was heard, and a voice from the tomb cried, 'Galahad, servant of God, do not come near me.' But the young knight went towards the tomb and raised the stone.

Then a thick smoke was seen, and through the smoke a figure uglier than any man leaped from the tomb, shouting, 'Angels are round thee, Galahad, servant of God. I can do you no harm.'

The knight stooped down and saw a body all dressed in armour lying there, and a sword lay by its side.

'This was a false knight,' said Sir Galahad. 'Let us carry his body away from this place.'

'You will stay in the abbey and live with us,' entreated the monks. But the boy-knight could not rest. Would he see the light that was brighter than any sun-

beam again? Would his adventures bring him at last to the Holy Grail?

Sir Galahad rode on many days, till at last he reached a mountain. On the mountain he found an old chapel. It was empty and very desolate. Galahad knelt alone before the altar, and asked God to tell him what to do next.

And as he prayed a voice said, 'Thou brave knight, go to the Castle of Maidens and rescue them.'

Galahad rose, and gladly journeyed on to the Castle of Maidens.

There he found seven knights, who long ago had seized the castle from a maiden to whom it belonged. And these knights had imprisoned her and many other maidens.

When the seven knights saw Sir Galahad they came out of the castle. 'We will take this young knight captive, and keep him in prison,' they said to each

other, as they fell upon him.

But Sir Galahad smote the first knight to the ground, so that he almost broke his neck. And as his wonderful sword flashed in the light, sudden fear fell on the six knights that were left, and they turned and fled.

Then an old man took the keys of the castle to Galahad. And the knight opened the gates of the castle, and set free many prisoners. He gave the castle back to the maiden to whom it belonged, and sent for all the knights in the country round about to do her homage.

Then once again Sir Galahad rode on in search of the Holy Grail. And the way seemed long, yet on and on he rode, till at last he reached the sea.

There, on the shore, stood a maiden, and when she saw Sir Galahad, she led him to a ship and told him to enter.

The wind rose and drove the ship,


MY·STRENGTH·IS·AS·THE
STRENGTH·OF·TEN·BECAUSE
MY·HEART·IS·PURE

with Sir Galahad on board, between two rocks. But when the ship could not pass that way, the knight left it, and entered a smaller one that awaited him.

In this ship was a table, and on the table, covered with a red cloth, was the Holy Grail. Reverently Sir Galahad sank on his knees. But still the Sacred Cup was covered.

At last the ship reached a strange city, and on the shore sat a crippled man. Sir Galahad asked his help to lift the table from the ship.

'For ten years I have not walked without crutches,' said the man.

'Show that you are willing, and come to me,' urged the knight.

And the cripple got up, and when he found that he was cured, he ran to Sir Galahad, and together they carried the wonderful table to the shore.

Then all the city was astonished, and

the people talked only of the great marvel.

'The man that was a cripple for ten years can walk,' each said to the other.

The King of the city heard the wonderful tale, but he was a cruel King and a tyrant. 'The knight is not a good man,' he said to his people, and he commanded that Galahad should be put in prison. And the prison was underneath the palace, and it was dark and cold there.

But down into the darkness streamed the light that had made Galahad so glad long ago at Camelot. And in the light Galahad saw the Holy Grail.

A year passed and the cruel King was very ill, and he thought he would die. Then he remembered the knight he had treated so unkindly, and who was still in the dark, cold prison. 'I will send for him, and ask him to forgive me,' murmured the King.

And when Galahad was brought to the palace, he willingly forgave the tyrant who had put him in prison.

Then the King died, and there was great dismay in the city, for where would they find a good ruler to sit on the throne?

As they wondered, they heard a voice that told them to make Sir Galahad their King, and in great joy the knight was crowned.

Then the new King ordered a box of gold and precious stones to be made, and in this box he placed the wonderful table he had carried away from the ship. 'And every morning I and my people will come here to pray,' he said.

For a year Sir Galahad ruled the country well and wisely.

'A year ago they crowned me King,' thought Galahad gravely, as he woke one morning. He would get up early, and go

to pray at the precious table.

But before the King reached the table he paused. It was early. Surely all the city was asleep. Yet some one was already there, kneeling before the table on which, uncovered, stood the Sacred Cup.

The man kneeling there looked holy as the saints look. Surrounding him was a circle of angels. Was it a saint who kneeled, or was it the Lord Himself?

When the man saw Sir Galahad, he said, 'Come near, thou servant of Jesus Christ, and thou shalt see what thou hast so much longed to see.'

And with joy Sir Galahad saw again the Holy Grail. Then as he kneeled before it in prayer, his soul left his body and was carried by angels into heaven.

The Death of King Arthur

It was not to win renown that King Arthur had gone far across the sea, for he loved his own country so well, that to gain glory at home made him happiest of all.

But a false knight with his followers was laying waste the country across the sea, and Arthur had gone to wage war against him.

'And you, Sir Modred, will rule the country while I am gone,' the King had said. And the knight smiled as he thought of the power that would be his.

At first the people missed their great King Arthur, but as the months passed they began to forget him, and to talk only of Sir Modred and his ways.

And he, that he might gain the

people's praise, made easier laws than ever Arthur had done, till by and by there were many in the country who wished that the King would never come back.

When Modred knew what the people wished, he was glad, and he made up his mind to do a cruel deed.

He would cause letters to be written from beyond the sea, and the letters would tell that the great King Arthur had been slain in battle.

And when the letters came the people read, 'King Arthur is dead,' and they believed the news was true.

And there were some who wept because the noble King was slain, but some had no time to weep. 'We must find a new King,' they said. And because his laws were easy, these chose Sir Modred to rule over them.

The wicked knight was pleased that

the people wished him to be their King. 'They shall take me to Canterbury to crown me,' he said proudly. And the nobles took him there, and amid shouts and rejoicings he was crowned.

But it was not very long till other letters came from across the sea, saying that King Arthur had not been slain, and that he was coming back to rule over his own country once more.

When Sir Modred heard that King Arthur was on his way home, he collected a great army and went to Dover to try to keep the King from landing.

But no army would have been strong enough to keep Arthur and his knights away from the country they loved so well. They fought fiercely till they got on shore and scattered all Sir Modred's men.

Then the knight gathered together another army, and chose a new battlefield.

But King Arthur fought so bravely that he and his men were again victorious, and Sir Modred fled to Canterbury.

Many of the people began to forsake the false knight now, and saying that he was a traitor, they went back to King Arthur.

But still Sir Modred wished to conquer the King. He would go through the counties of Kent and Surrey and raise a new army.

Now King Arthur had dreamed that if he fought with Sir Modred again he would be slain. So when he heard that the knight had raised another army, he thought, 'I will meet this traitor who has betrayed me. When he looks in my face, he will be ashamed and remember his vow of obedience.'

And he sent two bishops to Sir Modred. 'Say to the knight that the King would speak with him alone,' said

Arthur.

And the traitor thought, 'The King wishes to give me gold or great power, if I send my army away without fighting.' 'I will meet King Arthur,' he said to the bishops.

But because he did not altogether trust the King he said he would take fourteen men with him to the meeting-place, 'and the King must have fourteen men with him too,' said Sir Modred. 'And our armies shall keep watch when we meet, and if a sword is lifted it shall be the signal for battle.'

Then King Arthur arranged a feast for Sir Modred and his men. And as they feasted all went merrily till an adder glided out of a little bush and stung one of the knight's men. And the pain was so great, that the man quickly drew his sword to kill the adder.

And when the armies saw the sword

flash in the light, they sprang to their feet and began to fight, 'for this is the signal for battle,' they thought.

And when evening came there were many thousand slain and wounded, and Sir Modred was left alone. But Arthur had still two knights with him, Sir Lucan and Sir Bedivere.

When King Arthur saw that his army was lost and all his knights slain but two, he said, 'Would to God I could find Sir Modred, who has caused all this trouble.'

'He is yonder,' said Sir Lucan, 'but remember your dream, and go not near him.'

'Whether I die or live,' said the King, 'he shall not escape.' And seizing his spear he ran to Sir Modred, crying, 'Now you shall die.'

And Arthur smote him under the shield, and the spear passed through his body, and he died.

Then, wounded and exhausted, the King fainted, and his knights lifted him and took him to a little chapel not far from a lake.

As the King lay there, he heard cries of fear and pain from the distant battle-field.

'What causes these cries?' said the King wearily. And to soothe the sick King, Sir Lucan said he would go to see.

And when he reached the battle-field, he saw in the moonlight that robbers were on the field stooping over the slain, and taking from them their rings and their gold. And those that were only wounded, the robbers slew, that they might take their jewels too.

Sir Lucan hastened back, and told the King what he had seen.

'We will carry you farther off, lest the robbers find us here,' said the knights. And Sir Lucan lifted the King on one

side and Sir Bedivere lifted him on the other.

But Sir Lucan had been wounded in the battle, and as he lifted the King he fell back and died.

Then Arthur and Sir Bedivere wept for the fallen knight.

Now the King felt so ill that he thought he would not live much longer, and he turned to Sir Bedivere: 'Take Excalibur, my good sword,' he said, 'and go with it to the lake, and throw it into its waters. Then come quickly and tell me what you see.'

Sir Bedivere took the sword and went down to the lake. But as he looked at the handle with its sparkling gems and the richness of the sword, he thought he could not throw it away. 'I will hide it carefully here among the rushes,' thought the knight. And when he had hidden it, he went slowly to the King and told him

he had thrown the sword into the lake.

'What did you see?' asked the King eagerly.

'Nothing but the ripple of the waves as they broke on the beach,' said Sir Bedivere.

'You have not told me the truth,' said the King. 'If you love me, go again to the lake, and throw my sword into the water.'

Again the knight went to the water's edge. He drew the sword from its hiding-place. He would do the King's will, for he loved him. But again the beauty of the sword made him pause. 'It is a noble sword; I will not throw it away,' he murmured, as once more he hid it among the rushes. Then he went back more slowly, and told the King that he had done his will.

'What did you see?' asked the King.

'Nothing but the ripples of the waves as they broke on the beach,' repeated the

knight.

'You have betrayed me twice,' said the King sadly, 'and yet you are a noble knight! Go again to the lake, and do not betray me for a rich sword.'

Then for the third time Sir Bedivere went to the water's edge, and drawing the sword from among the rushes, he flung it as far as he could into the lake.

And as the knight watched, an arm and a hand appeared above the surface of the lake. He saw the hand seize the sword, and shaking it three times, disappear again under the water. Then Sir Bedivere went back quickly to the King, and told him what he had seen.

'Carry me to the lake,' entreated Arthur, 'for I have been here too long.'

And the knight carried the King on his shoulders down to the water's side.

There they found a barge lying, and seated in it were three Queens, and each



Queen wore a black hood. And when they saw King Arthur they wept.

'Lay me in the barge,' said the King. And when Sir Bedivere had laid him there, King Arthur rested his head on the lap of the fairest Queen. And they rowed from land.

Sir Bedivere, left alone, watched the barge as it drifted out of sight, and then he went sorrowfully on his way, till he reached a hermitage. And he lived there as a hermit for the rest of his life.

And the barge was rowed to a vale where the King was healed of his wound.

And some say that now he is dead, but others say that King Arthur will come again, and clear the country of its foes.